



EMBRACING
CULTURAL
DIVERSITY
FOR SUCCESS

Project Evaluation Report

September 2018

FREEDOM TO ACHIEVE: INTERIM PROJECT REPORT

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Freedom to Achieve (FTA) is DMU's commitment to ensure that everyone, whatever their background, can achieve their potential and can see themselves and people like them reflected in the institution. The project is a multi-faceted programme with a number of individual projects designed to enhance our cultural diversity and support success for all. This report presents the work completed over the last academic year. It is organised into four key sections, each of which are summarised below:

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The latest data from the sector show that the attainment gap between white students and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students obtaining first-class and 2:1 degrees is 15 percentage points¹. DMU has a smaller, though still significant, difference of 10.7 percentage points. In response to the attainment gap, DMU have partnered with a group of institutions, through an Office for Students (OfS) funded project to explore positive ways of addressing this issue.

- ▼ Kingston University
- ▼ University of Hertfordshire
- ▼ University of Greenwich
- ▼ University College London
- ▼ University of Wolverhampton

In line with DMU's University Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy, student voice via co-creation is a core element of the project work². The project moves away from the traditional student deficit model perspective and focuses instead on the wider student experience and how we can ensure that all students, regardless of their background, feel a part of the DMU community and can see their identities, experiences and history reflected in what they learn and how they are assessed.

1.2 DMU FREEDOM TO ACHIEVE

The project was designed with a different focus for each year.

- ▼ **Year One:** understanding Kingston University's Value Added (VA) metric and Inclusive Curriculum Framework (ICF) and how they can be integrated into existing DMU pedagogic practices. Disseminating these approaches across the 40 programmes and working with programme teams to explore their attainment gap data.
- ▼ **Year Two:** beginning to implement curriculum change across the 40 programmes and more widely across the institution. Engaging in co-creation with our students to ensure that their voice is heard throughout this process.
- ▼ **Year Three:** embedding changes in practice at both an institutional and programme level to ensure that culturally inclusive practice is considered 'business as usual' at DMU.

Running in parallel to this activity, the evaluation strand of the project seeks to identify how DMU have integrated Kingston University's work into their existing practices, and what impact this has had on the attainment gap. A critical race-grounded methodology is utilised to allow for the exploration of data, without the influence of a hypothesis, to develop a theory with explanatory power rather than merely description. The guiding principle behind grounded theory is the notion that theory is emergent, rather than predefined, and through a critical race theory lens, the approach helps to

¹ ECU (2017) *Equality in higher education: statistical report 2017*

² De Montfort University (2018) *University Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2018 – 2023: Providing a Transformative and Co-Created Education and Student Experience*. Leicester: DMU.

illuminate the experiences of those who are marginalised³. A multiple-case design has been chosen to ensure that students and staff from each faculty are represented in the research. In this way, the research will aid the sharing of best practice not only within faculties, but also across the wider institution.

1.3 INITIAL FINDINGS

During the initial six months of the evaluation strand of the project, there have been three main phases of data collection and analysis:

1.3.1 CO-CREATION EVENTS

- ▼ A total of 142 students and staff participated in the pilot co-creation events.
- ▼ Six themes were generated out of these collaborations: Relationships, Teaching & Learning, Community, Development, Employability and Exclusion.
- ▼ Relationships - 34 per cent of all references related to students' relationships on campus. Discussions within this theme included: role models, student integration, student-staff relationships, improved communication and transparency of processes for dealing with issues of racism.
- ▼ Teaching and Learning - 20 per cent of all references relating to this theme. Discussion within this category focused on: cultural examples used in lectures, learning resources, student experience of learning and lecturers' delivery methods and assessment styles.
- ▼ Community - 18 per cent of statements referred to this theme. Here attendees discussed: belonging, cultural inclusivity, co-creation, student societies and campus development.
- ▼ Development - 17 per cent of all statements were focused around this theme. Three key areas of discussion surfaced: development of academic skills, access to support and development opportunities and support specifically for international students.
- ▼ Employability – with 8 per cent of references this theme was discussed in relation to three main topics: practical experience, specialised careers advice and placements.
- ▼ Exclusion - Whilst only 3 per cent of statements related to students feeling excluded at University, these experiences are crucial to highlight so that the reasons behind them can be explored. Attendees noted a feeling of not belonging at University, due to the inherent white culture present in many UK Higher Education institutions.

1.3.2 STUDENT BASELINE SURVEY

- ▼ A total of 233 students from the 40 pilot programmes participated in the student baseline survey. The majority represented programmes with the Health and Life Sciences Faculty (NUMBER), though students from all four faculties engaged.
- ▼ Of those students, 45 per cent were unaware of the attainment gap.
- ▼ In relation to this project, 54 per cent of students were unaware of the work undertaken as part of Freedom to Achieve.
- ▼ None of the students who took the baseline survey has engaged with project activity. This was, again, largely due to a lack of awareness that activities were taking place (63 per cent).

³ Malagon, M.C., Perez Huber, L. and Velez, V.N. (2009) Our Experiences, Our Methods: Using Grounded Theory to inform a Critical Race Theory Methodology. *Seattle Journal for Social Justice*, vol.8 (1), pp. 253-272

These findings highlight the importance of reflecting on how we communicate with students about our project work and the wider attainment gap debate. In particular, it would be of value to learn more about the communication channels utilised by our students, so that we may communicate with them more effectively.

- ▼ Students were asked the extent to which they felt represented in their learning experience at DMU. The learning experience was broken down into five categories: curriculum content; teaching methods; learning materials; assessment and feedback.
- ▼ On average 75 per cent of students felt reflected in their learning experience.
- ▼ Students of Pakistani, Caribbean and ‘Other White’ heritage were most likely to feel unrepresented within their learning experience.

This would suggest that further work should be done with these groups to identify if this is a wider institutional trend and how these student groups can be supported more effectively.

- ▼ Finally, students were asked to reflect on the last academic year and consider if they had experienced changes that had resulted in greater inclusivity. The majority, 55 per cent, had not experienced any changes.
- ▼ Where students had experienced change in each of the five areas, this was expressed as change which resulted in:

Curriculum content	Greater representation	Listening to student voice
Teaching methods	Increased access	Relationships
Learning materials	Increased access	Greater opportunity for personal development
Assessment	Removing barriers	Greater variety of approached
Feedback	Greater opportunity for personal development	Improved timing of feedback

1.3.3 STAFF BASELINE SURVEY

- ▼ A total of 44 members of staff, from across the 40 pilot programmes engaged with the staff baseline survey. Similarly to the student survey, the majority of these (56 per cent) represented the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences.
- ▼ Most staff had heard of the attainment gap (77 per cent).
- ▼ Seventy per cent of staff had made changes to their practice in response to their programmes’ attainment data. Most commonly these were changes to the way staff dealt with students during teaching, changes to curriculum content or changes to the way staff dealt with tutees.
- ▼ Of those who had not made changes, the majority felt that they were already working in an inclusive manner (60 per cent).
- ▼ Most staff had been using the UDL review template for over 6 months (64 per cent).
- ▼ As a result of learning about their programme’s UDL compliance, sixty-six per cent of staff had made changes to their practice. Most commonly these were changes to the way staff dealt with students during teaching, revisions to assignment styles, changes to curriculum content or changes to the way staff dealt with tutees.
- ▼ Of those who had not made changes, the majority felt that they were already working in an inclusive manner (67 per cent).

- ▼ Most staff met with their Fair Outcomes Champion (FOC) at least once per term (43 per cent), though a significant minority had yet to meet their FOC (30 per cent).
- ▼ The majority of staff (61 per cent) believed the role of FOC to be important to the wider success of the project.
- ▼ Use of the attainment data and engagement with the UDL audit template were how most staff had engaged with the project to date (30 and 26 per cent respectfully). A further 20 per cent had participated in co-creation and 12 per cent in training.
- ▼ On average, the majority of staff (84 per cent) felt confident in their ability to develop inclusive approaches across the five areas of their teaching: curriculum content, teaching methods, learning materials, assessment and feedback.

1.4 NEXT STEPS

In response to the outcomes and findings of this first year of activity, the Freedom to Achieve team have identified a number of priority areas for further work. Over the coming academic year, project activity will focus on greater engagement with our staff and students. In particular we will begin our main phase of co-creation and this will be supplemented with additional activity to support staff and student progress. A Freedom to Achieve seminar series, Team Talks, will be established in the autumn term, alongside both an academic reading group and a leisure reading club, that focus on culturally inclusive materials. These will help to raise greater awareness of our project work and will also provide safe spaces in which to engage in challenging conversations on campus.

The project team have also recruited four Frontrunners within the role of Student Curriculum Advisors who will work with the project team to consider the curriculum and offer insight into how curricula can be more culturally inclusive. The inclusion of students within the project team will also enable us to reflect on how we can better communicate our work with the student body.

The evaluation strand of the research will continue to respond flexibly to the outcomes of ongoing project work. The launch of an Evaluation Support Group will create a forum for discussion around the evaluation methodology. Additionally, a phase of deeper qualitative data collection will begin, including student focus groups, programme team interviews and Fair Outcomes Champion interviews. The purpose of these sessions will be to explore the notion of belonging at DMU and to discuss the impact that the project is having on student and staff experience.

2 PROJECT BACKGROUND

Freedom to Achieve is a direct response to the attainment gap – the difference between the proportion of white students who are awarded good honours degrees (1st or 2:1), and the proportion of BAME students who are awarded the same degrees. Within this report BAME will be used to refer to all non-white students as this is the prevalent term within the literature. At DMU we are beginning to move away from this terminology due to concerns that it masks the needs of smaller ethnic communities who sit under this umbrella term. Future work within the project will seek to gain consultation from our student body regarding the terminology used as the project progresses.

To situate the work of DMU's FTA project, this section introduces the wider debate surrounding the attainment gap and the Office for Students-funded project with which DMU are partnering.

2.1 THE ATTAINMENT GAP

Despite research spanning back over a decade, progress on addressing the difference in attainment between BAME students and their white counterparts has been slow in UK Higher Education⁴. The latest data from the sector show that the gap between white students and BAME students obtaining first-class and 2:1 degrees is 15 percentage points⁵. DMU has a smaller, though still significant, difference of 10.7 percentage points. It is important to highlight that BAME is not a homogenous group and that great variation exists across different ethnicities. Whilst a larger gap exists for students of African (26 per cent), Caribbean (22.5 per cent) and other black backgrounds (27.9 per cent), it is much smaller than the national average for students of Indian (7.7 per cent), Chinese (6.2 per cent) and Mixed heritage (5.8 per cent). This variation illustrates the complexities of using terms such as BAME, and their tendency to obscure the needs of specific ethnic groups.

Historically, the prevalent counter to these data has been to identify the cause of the issue as related to the students' background. This is referred to as the deficit model – *'a view that the problem lies with the students and that it is some attribute of the student that means they attain less well, rather than because of an institutional factor such as curriculum design/development'*⁶. This perspective causes issues for addressing the attainment gap as it shifts the focus away from what the institution can do and places the onus on the student to fix the issue. Recent research has also proven this perspective unfounded, as even when a range of factors are controlled for, including prior attainment, an unexplained difference still occurs between BAME and white students⁷. This suggests that further exploration is needed to identify potential causes and, as is being implemented at DMU, students should increasingly be included in the conversation. This is in line with wider institutional goals around co-creation of the curriculum between DMU staff and students⁸.

Indeed, some students nationally have become increasingly vocal on the issue, launching campaigns such as 'Why is my curriculum white?' and 'Why isn't my professor black?'. These campaigns helped to bring greater depth to the conversation around the attainment gap, highlighting the colonial

⁴ Sanders, J. and Rose-Adams, J. (2014) Black and minority ethnic student attainment: a survey of research and exploration of the importance of teacher and student expectations, *Widening participation and lifelong learning*, Vol.16 (2), pp. 5-20

⁵ See 1

⁶ Millar, M. (2016) The Ethnicity Attainment Gap: literature review

⁷ Broecke, S. and Nicholls, T. (2007) Ethnicity and Degree Attainment. Department for Education and Skills.

⁸ See 2

traditions of the university as an institution and querying why these principles are still upheld. Students have noted that traditional curricula prioritise white, Eurocentric perspectives over others, often dismissing vast bodies of provocative work from authors and scholars of colour⁹. The lack of roles models within the institution has also been identified as a major issue, with only 8.9 per cent of UK HE staff coming from a BAME background¹⁰. In this context it is easy to see how a BAME student could struggle to feel a sense of belonging at university.

Following the move away from deficit model thinking and the increase in student voice around this issue, work in this area is beginning to focus on the 'softer' measures of success for student experience. As Singh¹¹ notes:

Soft measures of success are generally related to a student's sense of personal accomplishment and satisfaction with the educational experience. This might stem from the student's personal priorities, expectations of their chosen course of study and university life in general. While such measures tend to be highly subjective, they can nonetheless be important to register for building up a holistic picture of success.

Whilst students' degree outcomes sparked the debate over the attainment gap, it is important to remember that student experience is much broader than grades alone. As more and more BAME students enter HE it is crucial that university life is representative of all students, and not just those of a white background. Greater cultural inclusivity in the curriculum has been seen to increase students' sense of belonging, alongside retention and attainment¹².

The work of the Freedom to Achieve project has been particularly influenced by the work of Mountford-Zimdars *et al.* (2015) which considered the wider student experience, identifying four explanatory factors of difference in attainment¹³:

- ▼ **Curricula and learning** - teaching and learning approaches, including assessment and feedback methods;
- ▼ **Relationships between staff and students** - developing a sense of belonging on campus, including between student groups;
- ▼ **Social, cultural and economic capital** – how students draw on external support and differences faced by student groups in their overall experience of HE; and
- ▼ **Psychosocial and identity factors** – how supported and encouraged students feel.

These factors reflect themes generated by discussion with staff and students at DMU (see Initial Findings) and portray the multi-faceted nature of the issue. There is no one solution, but rather a holistic approach must be taken to create an atmosphere in which all students can thrive.

⁹ Hussain, M. (2015) Why is my curriculum white? National Union of Students.

¹⁰ ECU (2017) Equality in higher education: staff statistical report 2017

¹¹ Singh, G. (2011). Black and minority ethnic (BME) students' participation in higher education: improving retention and success. A synthesis of research evidence. Coventry: HEA

¹² National Union of Students (2011) Liberation, Equality, and Diversity in the Curriculum.

¹³ Mountford-Zimdars, A., Sabri, D., Moore, J., Sanders, J., Jones, S. and Higham, L. (2015) Causes of differences in student outcomes. HEFCE.

2.2 CLOSING THE BAME ATTAINMENT GAP

In response to the attainment gap, DMU have partnered with a number of other institutions to explore positive ways of addressing the attainment gap. The project is funded by the OfS and is led by Kingston University. The other institutions involved in the project are:

- ▼ Wolverhampton University
- ▼ Greenwich University
- ▼ Hertfordshire University
- ▼ University College London

The aim of the project is to implement Kingston University's approach within a number of other institutions to test the transferability of their work. Kingston developed a value-added (VA) metric and inclusive curriculum framework (ICF) that, used in conjunction, have helped the University to become more culturally inclusive. The project varies across each institution, with most of the partners embedding the VA metric and ICF into their existing practices. In this way, the project will be able to demonstrate a variety of ways in which the tools can be implemented, to suit the needs of many institutions.

2.2.1 VALUE-ADDED METRIC

The VA metric is calculated using three datasets: degree outcomes of all students graduating across higher education over the last five years; subject of study; and, fifty entry qualification bands.

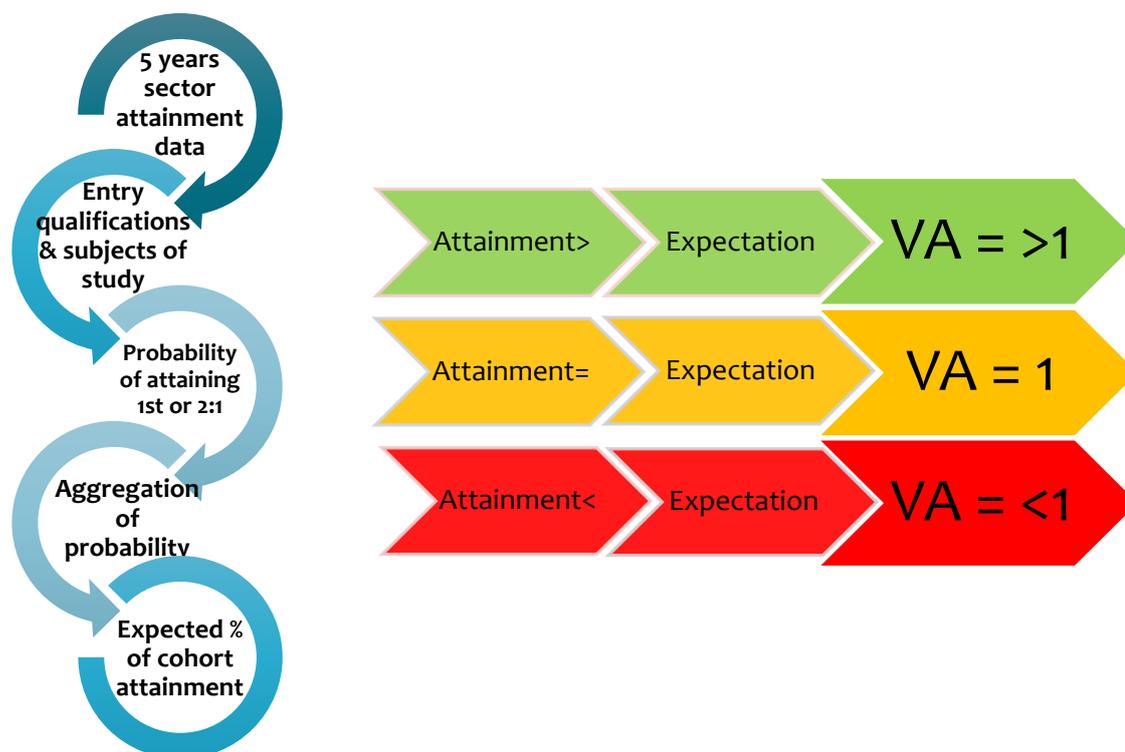


FIGURE 1 HOW THE VA METRIC IS CALCULATED

This allows a statistically-expected percentage of good honours degrees to be calculated for any cohort of students which can then be compared with the actual attainment of that cohort. Where the attainment exceeds the 'expected', the VA score is proportionately above 1 and where the outcome

is below expectation the VA score is below 1. The scores can then be filtered for different characteristics such as gender and ethnicity. This method helps to challenge deficit model thinking, by demonstrating that when entry qualifications are considered, there is still an attainment gap.

2.2.2 INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

The Inclusive Curriculum Framework was designed to support staff in reflecting on their practice to ensure that all students are valued, supported and reflected in their learning experience. The framework is underpinned by three core principles:

- ▼ Create an accessible curriculum;
- ▼ Enable students to see themselves reflected in the curriculum;
- ▼ Equip students with the skills to positively work in a global and diverse environment.

These principles can be delivered and enacted from concept to review: through curriculum content, learning & teaching and assessment strategies, as well as through feedback mechanisms and the evaluation and review of teaching practices. The design of the framework means it can be used at various levels across the institution. It can be used to inform individual teaching sessions as well as to shape the development and enhancement of modules and academic programmes.

The underlying principles of ICF were synthesised with DMU's existing framework for inclusion – Universal Design for Learning. The resulting elements of UDL that relate specifically to the Freedom to Achieve project work are highlighted in bold overleaf in figure 2. The principles of UDL are the product of decades of research about how people learn, and are based on more than 800 different research studies. At the heart of the UDL approach is the recognition that 'when it comes to learning, natural (learner) variability is the rule, not the exception'¹⁴. Similarly to the ICF, UDL is built upon 3 principles:

- ▼ Flexible ways of learning
- ▼ Flexible study resources
- ▼ Flexible ways of testing learning

Work within these three areas will support staff in improving the cultural inclusivity of their curricular, through considering their teaching methods, learning materials and assessment and feedback approaches.

¹⁴ DMU (2015) Universal Design for Learning Position Statement.



Flexible study resources

- ▼ learning materials are uploaded to Blackboard 48 hours in advance in modifiable and PDF format. Blackboard shells meet DMU thresholds (link below)
- ▼ DMU Replay policy is followed. A screencast (minimum requirement of audio with visual) of all academic-led activities is provided
- ▼ technical language, symbols and key terms are defined clearly and background information is made clear
- ▼ students are encouraged to use scaffolds e.g. concept maps, tables and summaries to link ideas, structure information and highlight key concepts
- ▼ **wide range of culturally inclusive learning resources is used within which students can recognise their own identities e.g. images, videos and demonstrations**
- ▼ learning resources from a diverse range of socially, culturally and globally relevant sources are signposted which account for a diverse global community.



Flexible ways to learn

- ▼ varied and innovative teaching methods motivate and engage students (e.g. flipped classroom, voting technology)
- ▼ students participate actively in classes and have frequent knowledge checks
- ▼ **students are encouraged to work in an inclusive and engaged manner with their peers with opportunities for group work, collaboration, co-creation and peer support**
- ▼ **differentiation provides an appropriate balance of support and challenge, with direction to culturally inclusive independent study resources**
- ▼ **students are supported to become autonomous, resilient and reflective learners who can self-check and identify their most effective learning strategies** Students can identify themselves and their experiences in their learning
- ▼ learning is authentic and contextualised; it is socially, culturally & globally relevant and takes into account learners' identities, experience and history.



Flexible ways to show learning

- ▼ a variety of assessments besides timed, unseen exams provide flexible ways to meet the learning outcomes (e.g. videos, practicals, presentations, blogs, internet tasks, lay explanations, reflections)
- ▼ assessments only test the learning outcomes (e.g. if speed of response is not relevant then don't time the test)
- ▼ clear and contextualised marking descriptors are available to students and staff before assessments
- ▼ formative assessments and timely, specific feedback and feed-forward help students to improve and excel
- ▼ **students are guided to set aspirational goals and track their own progress; students embrace mistakes and risk-taking as valuable learning opportunities**
- ▼ assessments test "real world" problems; assessments are socially, culturally & globally relevant and take into account learners' identities, experience and history.

FIGURE 2 UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING INTEGRATION WITH INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

3 DMU FREEDOM TO ACHIEVE

DMU's FTA project began in March 2017 and will run for three years, until 2020. FTA is a multi-faceted programme with a number of individual projects designed to enhance our cultural diversity and support success for all. Freedom to Achieve is not the only work being undertaken to improve inclusivity on campus, work is also focused on the campus environment, staff development, mentoring and actions from our recent Race Equality Charter Mark application.

The student work stream of the project, and focus of this report, was designed with a different focus for each year.

- ▼ **Year One:** understanding the VA metric and ICF and how they can be integrated into existing DMU pedagogic practices. Disseminating these approaches across the 40 programmes and working with programme teams to explore their attainment gap data.
- ▼ **Year Two:** beginning to implement curriculum change across the 40 programmes and more widely across the institution. Engaging in co-creation with our students to ensure that their voice is heard throughout this process.
- ▼ **Year Three:** Embedding changes in practice at both an institutional and programme level to ensure that culturally inclusive practice is considered 'business as usual' at DMU.

This element of the project is now in the early stages of its second year, moving towards greater engagement with our student body. Over the last year, the team have focused primarily on introducing our 40 pilot programmes to the VA metric and ICF (embedded within DMU's Universal Design for Learning). This has often taken place in the form of meetings with teams, introducing them to the main concepts of the project and then supporting programme teams in reflecting on the cultural inclusivity of their curricula. In parallel to this work, our Fair Outcomes Champion for the Library and Learning Services has been working to promote and further develop the diversity of library stock through the work of the Academic Liaison Librarians across the faculties and in the library. The focus was to encourage the development of more diverse reading lists through the Validation guidelines and to headline the availability and the need to utilise culturally diverse research and materials through various displays and initiatives.

In preparation for greater involvement of students, two institution-wide and two programme-level co-creation events were held. Staff and students came together to discuss the attainment gap around four themes derived from the literature¹⁵:

- ▼ Curriculum
- ▼ Environment
- ▼ Development
- ▼ Community and Belonging

Perspectives were captured using post-it notes and were later analysed to generate themes around which later discussions will be held. The co-creation events were not only a valuable way to begin conversations with our students, but also to review how we communicate with our students and if our current channels of communication are reaching all of the groups we wish to work with.

¹⁵ See 13

Alongside our co-creation events, we ran two Programme Forums for pilot programme staff. The forums provided an opportunity to update staff about the project, explain the next stage commencing in September 2018, share early feedback from our co-creation events and offer a platform for programme teams to share their ideas with colleagues. The forum events also helped to bring together staff from a range of disciplines to share practice across faculties and foster a greater sense of community around the FTA project work.

Finally, the project have successfully recruited four Frontrunners to hold the role of Student Curriculum Advisors (SCAs) who will be working with the project team and pilot programme staff. Their role is explained in more detail in the Next Steps section of this report. Our SCAs will aid the project team in supporting the pilot programmes to ensure their curricula are culturally inclusive and to enhance our engagement with students.

3.1 EVALUATION RESEARCH APPROACH

The evaluation strand of the project seeks to identify how DMU have integrated Kingston University's VA metric and ICF into their existing practices, and what impact this has had on the attainment gap. To this end, the following research question was devised, to act as an overarching aim of the evaluation:

How has the implementation of the Value-added metric (VA) and Inclusive Curriculum Framework (ICF) impacted the attainment gap at De Montfort University (DMU)?

The work of the project evaluation is two-fold. Firstly, to meet the requirements of DMU's collaboration with Kingston University and the wider OfS-funded project needs. Secondly, to address DMU's own interests in the wider impact of the project. Through conversations with key project stakeholders the following areas of priority were identified:

- ▼ Student and Staff awareness of the attainment gap in H.E.
- ▼ Student and Staff awareness of the Freedom to Achieve project
- ▼ Staff and Student engagement with the Freedom to Achieve project
- ▼ Staff experience of developing a culturally inclusive curriculum
- ▼ The impact on student experience at DMU
- ▼ The impact of the Fair Outcomes Champion role

A mixed methodology will be utilised, with a multiple-case study design to provide a full account of student and staff experience at DMU. By creating cases from a range of subject areas and perspectives, the evaluation strategy provides a richer account of how the project has been implemented across campus. The research is influenced by critical race theory, with a focus on utilising non-dominant voices. A multiple-case design has been chosen to ensure that students and staff from each faculty are represented in the research. In this way, the research will aid the sharing of best practice not only within faculties, but also across the wider institution.

A range of methods will be used in the multiple-case studies to create a rich picture of the Freedom to Achieve project's implementation and impact. The primary methods of data collection will be surveys, interviews and the VA metric data. Surveys will be used to collect data across all 40 programmes in the study as a baseline of current practice and experiences. This will be iteratively re-administered over the course of the project to measure change for both students and staff.

Additionally, interviews will be conducted with Fair Outcomes Champions, staff and students to gain further insight into the experience of implementing the project work.

The metric data itself can also be used as a measure of the project's impact, as changes in attainment can be monitored. Documents related to the project, such as Fair Outcomes Champion meeting logs, resources from the project Blackboard shell, event feedback and attendance logs, and reflective diaries will also be utilised to demonstrate engagement with the project.

As the evaluation strand of the project work is only a few months underway, the focus of this report will be on the project's co-creation activity and the first iteration of the student and staff baseline surveys only. Case studies will be shared later in the project timeline.

3.1.1 DATA COLLECTION

Two pilot co-creation sessions were held across the institution, one in the Faculty of Technology and one in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences. Due to the nature of the academic timetable in Arts, Design and Humanities, and a change in the Freedom to Achieve team within Business and Law, we were unable to hold pilots within these faculties. A total of 14 students participated in the two events, accompanied by four members of programme team staff and five members of the FTA team. A brief summary of each session is presented below.

Two forms of data were collected during the institutional co-creation events: attendees' thoughts and suggestions on the attainment gap and their feedback on the organisation and structure of the events themselves. In both cases the data collected were of a qualitative nature. Attendees presented their thoughts of the attainment gap via post-it notes and feedback was obtained from open comments left on postcards. Data collected during the pilot programme-level co-creation events held later in the year were also qualitative. The evaluation for these sessions, however, was more structured but retained open questions. In this case, the evaluation focused on participants' experience of co-creation, what worked well in the session, what other questions could be asked, what improvements could be made, if participants would be interested in co-creating in the future and how their understanding around the attainment gap had changed.

A mixture of multiple choice and open text questions were used in the student and staff baseline surveys, creating a mix of data to analyse. Only students and staff on the 40 programmes associated with the project were recruited to take part in the surveys.

3.1.2 DATA ANALYSIS

Both quantitative and qualitative data have been collected to date, in the form of co-creation event feedback and student and staff baseline responses. Descriptive statistics will be used to explore event feedback, attendance over time and the VA metric data. Additional comparative analysis will be carried out on the VA metric data to compare changes year on year.

Qualitative data collected via surveys and interviews will be analysed using grounded theory analysis. These will be transcribed and the transcriptions will be checked back against the recordings to ensure accuracy. Coding and analysis of the data will then take place, influenced by Charmaz's coding methods and Alan Bryman's four stage approach¹⁶¹⁷. These systems have been combined in order to

¹⁶ Charmaz, K. (2014) *Constructing Grounded Theory*. Second edition. London: Sage.

¹⁷ Bryman, A. (2012) *Social Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

create a process which best fits a grounded theory approach, and which incorporates all three types of grounded theory coding; open, axial and selective¹⁸.

▼ *Get to know the data*

Transcript is read and summarised, with initial ideas noted.

▼ *Initial coding*

Transcript is read again the text is broken up into units, compared and systematically coded. New codes and categories may be generated at this stage. In keeping with Charmaz's notion of initial coding, analysis is open-ended during this stage. In vivo coding, words directly from the participant's own language, and process coding, gerunds used to signify observable actions, are used widely at this stage. As each new unit of data is coded, it is reviewed in comparison to the previous codes chosen to ensure that it is the most appropriate option.

▼ *Focused coding*

Codes and categories are reviewed in order to create links between them and to ensure best fit for the data. Codes and categories may be condensed at this stage.

▼ *Reviewing themes*

Themes are checked back against the dataset and a core code is identified. The generation of a core code is the main purpose of coding and analysis as it provides 'some new understanding of the data and constitute[s] the foundations for any theory or general conclusions to emerge from the research'¹⁹.

A critical race-grounded methodology allows for the exploration of data, without the influence of a hypothesis, to develop a theory with explanatory power rather than merely description. The guiding principle behind grounded theory is the notion that theory is emergent, rather than predefined, and through a critical race theory lens, the approach helps to illuminate the experiences of those who are marginalised²⁰.

This process adopts the method of constant comparison, whereby new data is compared with existing data and categories to ensure the best possible fit. This form of comparison takes place across all coding stages until theoretical saturation is reached, which 'occurs when in coding and analysing both no new properties emerge and the same properties continually emerge as one goes through the full extent of the data'²¹. Given the range of data compared, this is often seen as consistent with the methodological notion of triangulation.

¹⁸ Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2011) *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge.

¹⁹ Denscombe, M. (2014) *The Good Research Guide: for small-scale social research projects*. Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education, p.288.

²⁰ See 3

²¹ Glaser, B. (1978) *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory*. Mill Valley: Sociology Press, p.53.

4 INITIAL FINDINGS

During the initial six months of the evaluation strand of the project, there have been three main phases of data collection and analysis:

- ▼ Co-creation event evaluation
- ▼ Student baseline survey
- ▼ Staff baseline survey

Together these have allowed the project team to test out approaches for the next phase of project activity and to create a baseline of student and staff experience from which to evaluate future work. The baseline surveys also helped to identify early issues with the project that can be addressed over the coming year. Below we present the findings that have been generated to date, along with reflections for how the project can be improved going forward.

4.1 CO-CREATION EVENTS

Themes arising from both institutional and programme-level co-creation events were in alignment, so they will be presented together here. It is important to highlight, however, the difference in prevalence in the themes from the institutional events and the programme-level events. It is likely that further variation will be found when the main phase of programme-level co-creation takes place from October 2018.

Institution co-creation themes		Pilot programme co-creation themes	
Themes	References	Themes	References
Relationships	83	Community	44
Teaching and Learning	36	Relationships	43
Development	34	Teaching and Learning	37
Community	24	Development	30
Exclusion	7	Employability	28
		Exclusion	4

4.1.1 RELATIONSHIPS



The primary concern, with 34 per cent of all references, related to students' relationships on campus. This theme encapsulated five main areas of discussion:

▼ role models

There was a clear call for greater visibility of role models for BAME students. The discussion predominantly focused on the need for role models. It was suggested that BAME alumni could be invited to act as relatable and local inspiration for students. Other proposals included encouraging current students to act as role models for school/college students, to address concerns about the accessibility of University study for BAME students. It is important to note, however, that students also made it clear that they wanted role models with experience and knowledge in their discipline to ensure relevance to their learning needs.

▼ student integration

It was noted that students tended to stick within their cultural groupings. It was also highlighted that commuter students, those living at home and travelling in to study, were most likely to feel isolated from their peers. A number of suggestions were made for how students could be supported in integrating more effectively. Greater interaction between societies, use of social spaces across campus and introducing more events and socials that encourage cultural integration were seen as potential methods for bringing students together. At programme-level, it was also suggested that more mixing of student groups for seminars and assessments would facilitate greater student integration.

▼ student-staff relationships

When discussing student-staff relationships, the value of students feeling that they are known was highlighted in around a third of statements. Comments noted that tutors knowing the names of their students was a simple way to make students feel recognised. Smaller group sizes, to aid student-staff interaction, were also suggested and would support staff in learning more about their students. It was also recommended that staff receive training to support them in understanding how they can support BAME students more effectively. There was also acknowledgement from student attendees of staff making a clear effort to be available to their students through personal tutoring time.

▼ improved communication

In relation to communication, students expressed a desire to be better informed about opportunities and events on campus. They felt that email was not always the most effective form of communication and that other approaches should be considered, but did not specify solutions. Communication with programme teams was felt to be effective by students. Attendees noted that cultural events were not always well publicised across the University, invitation emails were often long and difficult for international students to decipher. One suggestion was to ensure that staff are up-to-date on current events and initiatives so that they are able to signpost students to relevant content.

▼ transparency of processes for dealing with issues of racism

Finally, students wanted greater transparency around how race issues are handled, or as one student put it 'demystifying procedures'. It was felt that greater transparency would improve BAME students' sense of security and would reassure them that should an incident occur it will be handled appropriately.

4.1.2 TEACHING AND LEARNING



Students and staff discussed how teaching and learning was experienced across their programmes, with 20 per cent of all references relating to this theme. Discussion within this category focused primarily on:

▼ examples used in lectures

Of the highest priority to attendees was the importance of BAME inclusive examples and resources. Statements requested more culturally diverse, globalised curricula to increase the relevance of content to BAME students and the sense of belonging that students have here at DMU. This included more representative learning resources, to include a variety of voices and perspectives. The need to positively portray BAME individuals was also highlighted, with specific mention of the ways in which BAME communities are often negatively portrayed across curricula.

▼ learning resources

Learning materials were seen as easily accessible, however, it was noted that literature relating to race issues is scarce.

▼ student experience of learning and lecturers' delivery methods

The delivery of the curriculum was identified as an area for improvement. Attendees requested more engaging and inspiring delivery of curriculum content. There are connections here to a more relatable curriculum, as greater relevance will improve engagement for BAME students.

▼ assessment styles

Additionally, suggestions were made for assessment methods that allowed students to reflect on their cultural background and experience. Links can, again, be made to the importance of relevance and representativeness of the curriculum here. At programme-level, however, students noted that assessments allowed them to incorporate their own skills and backgrounds and that feedback was effective in helping students to improve. This disparity could be due to the programme-level events taking place in HLS and TECH whilst students from BAL were the most represented at the institutional co-creation events. There is clearly room for additional work in this area, regardless of faculty.

4.1.3 COMMUNITY



The notion of community was also highlighted in 18 per cent of statements. Here attendees discussed:

▼ belonging

The concept of *Belonging* was highlighted 33 times during the programme-level co-creation sessions, making it the most prominent individual code within the data. Attendees noted that they felt comfortable and safe at DMU, included in their courses and socially at ease with their course mates. The many opportunities to engage with university life, such as volunteering and societies, had helped students to feel a part of the wider DMU community as well as within their courses.

▼ cultural inclusivity

It was suggested, however, that wider culturally-inclusive events could help to improve BAME students' sense of belonging at the University. Events that could bring students together to celebrate different cultural holidays and practices were seen a positive way to increase student integration. Requests were also made for students' cultural practices to be considered in wider University planning, for example contemplating the interaction between prayer times and lesson times.

▼ co-creation

It was felt that further co-creation work could aid the University in addressing the BAME attainment gap. This could include collaboration on displays in the library, providing input on their course (such as suggested readings), designing DMU global trips and explicitly working with staff on inclusivity.

▼ student societies

Student societies, particularly the African and Caribbean Society, were viewed as a potentially valuable resource in engaging with BAME students. This may also be a useful channel for improving communication with the BAME student community.

▼ campus development

Finally, recent campus developments were seen as a positive change, resulting in an increasingly welcoming environment.

4.1.4 DEVELOPMENT



Discussions around development, 17 per cent of all statements, were focused around three key areas:

▼ development of academic skills

It was felt that BAME students would benefit from support in raising academic confidence and ambition. Additionally, greater study support specifically for BAME students was identified as needed, and CLaSS was seen as a valuable resource in achieving this. More one-to-one support for students around aspiration and wider personal development was also suggested.

▼ access to support and development opportunities

Students found support sessions run through the library and CLASS very helpful, though some noted issues in gaining access to workshops and 1-2-1 sessions. It was also felt that tutors could support students by being aware of what help was available and signposting students to this.

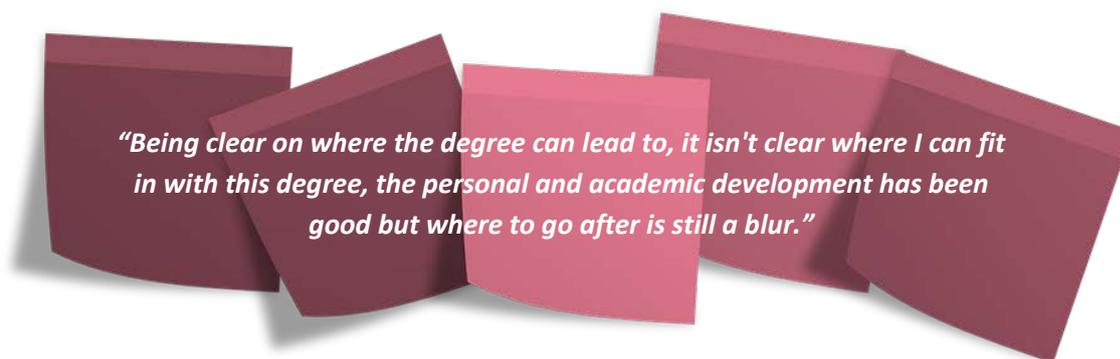
▼ support specifically for international students

Related to this was the specific request for increased support for International students. Statements suggested that International students experienced a significant culture shock when arriving at the University, not only in terms of their interactions on campus but also in relation to the organisation of their study. One student noted in particular that having not studied in UK Higher Education previously, the jump to postgraduate education was felt as a difficult hurdle for International students:

'Coming from a developing country it would be more helpful if there was a structure to PhD research with timely and structured workshops in time with milestones. Most of our background is with structured work and it would be good if it were eased into as opposed to just a free fall.'

Statements referring to employability were also discussed under this theme at the institutional events, however, they were significantly prominent in the programme-level co-creation sessions and so will be presented separately below.

4.1.5 EMPLOYABILITY



Employability, with 8 per cent of references, was discussed in relation to three main topics:

▼ practical experience

Students identified a need for more opportunities to gain practical experience and develop the practical skills they will need to succeed in their careers. It was explicitly noted that whilst BAME students were aware of employability support across the University, they did not feel that they were able to access it as easily as their white peers. Reasons for this were not given.

▼ specialised careers advice

It was also highlighted that the programme had a very broad range of applicability, but many students were not clear of what they could do with their degree after graduation. This was in relation to both career choices and further study. Students believed that greater involvement of alumni could help to alleviate this concern. By inviting past students back to the university to share their journey after graduation, current students would be given a clearer idea of what they can do with their qualification.

▼ placements

The value of placements was also recognised, though BAME students also felt they had reduced access to these opportunities. There may be links here to the relationships category and issues around communication with students. Particularly, it may be useful to consider how BAME students interact most frequently with information at University, to ensure that those channels are effectively utilised. Suggestions were also made regarding the use of enhancements weeks to allow short term work placement.

It is important to note that the HLS students were all in their final year of undergraduate study, so this may have skewed the focus of discussions. Though during the institutional co-creation sessions, nearly half of all development statements, 47 per cent, referred directly to employability and placements suggesting that this is an important area of work across campus.

4.1.6 EXCLUSION



"I feel most comfortable at home in my flat. I used to feel comfortable in my safe spaces, like prayer rooms, but due to higher surveillance I am prevented. And I know students don't feel comfortable talking about such issues."

Whilst only 3 per cent of statements related to students feeling excluded at University, these experiences are crucial to highlight so that the reasons behind them can be explored. Attendees noted a feeling of not belonging at University, due to the inherent white culture present in many UK Higher Education institutions. There was also a feeling that much of the representation of BAME communities within their curricula was negative, as noted within the Teaching and Learning category, perpetuating this feeling that they do not belong at University.

Some students in the programme-level co-creation pilot were international students and had experienced issues at the university due to their international status. One of the students, when arriving as part of a January intake of students, was not met at the airport and had to find his own way to campus. This was his first experience of being a DMU student, feeling forgotten.

4.1.7 EVENT EVALUATION

"Everyone got to speak freely, led by people who want to listen and make a difference."

To inform future co-creation sessions, feedback was gathered at both the institutional and programme-level events. On the whole feedback was very positive and constructive, helping us to consider how the sessions can be improved going forward. Overall, participants were pleased and reassured to see that DMU are working openly on the attainment gap and that student voice is a valued aspect of this work. Students felt that their opinions were heard and that DMU was attempting to affect real change through the Freedom to Achieve project. Working in small groups with their peers, in an environment where they were encouraged to speak openly, was seen as a strength of the co-creation approach. Question prompts for each of the four themes were also seen as a helpful and stimulating resource. Students felt that greater awareness of the events would have improved student attendance.

Staff found the insights from students very interesting and found the overall experience of working with their students in this way positive. They were grateful to see that students were honest and open about their experiences of studying on their programme and found that a number of manageable changes were identified that could improve student experience. They felt that the willingness of students to talk freely was a particular strength of the session, but that staff positionality within that space could have been discussed further. Staff also felt that greater representation of the diversity of their students would improve the session.

Staff were also keen to continue to engage with co-creation activities and felt that the experience had strengthened their desire to work towards making positive changes at DMU. All eleven of the responding students stated that they would be happy to engage with co-creation activities again in the future. They also noted that the session had changed their understanding of DMU's position on the attainment gap. They were now more aware of the work that DMU is undertaking and the importance that the attainment gap has at DMU.

The events held over the last term provided an opportunity to learn valuable lessons about the situations that encouraged participation. Based on the findings, feedback and reflections of the FTA team on the sessions held, the following recommendations were generated for the main phase of programme-level co-creation events. These recommendations will help to shape the sessions held between October and December, in relation to their design, organisation and promotion.

1. For staff to engage confidently and productively in the co-creation process, staff development around co-creation would be beneficial.
2. To promote the sessions and give students a better idea of what the sessions will involve, Fair Outcomes Champions should be invited to attend the beginning of a lecture for each programme, to personally introduce the project and co-creation events. SCAs can also support this.
3. The introductory segment of the co-creation events should be upfront, honest and transparent to encourage students and staff to share their experiences and ideas in a similarly open way.
4. The introductory segment of the co-creation events should also outline how the data collected during the session will be used in support of Freedom to Achieve.
5. The specific themes used within each of the co-creation sessions may need to be locally negotiated with programme teams to ensure relevance and full potential benefit.
6. The content of the co-creation schedule can now be adjusted to focus around the key themes identified in the institutional and pilot sessions.
7. Incentives, such as refreshments, could be provided as a thank you to participants.

4.2 STUDENT BASELINE

The student baseline survey was designed to collect information regarding students' awareness of the attainment gap and DMU's Freedom to Achieve project, any impact on student experience that has occurred to date and the extent to which students have engaged directly with the project. As a baseline measure, it was expected that engagement and awareness may be low at this stage, though these data will help us to demonstrate impact as the project progresses.

A total of 233 students from across the 40 pilot programmes engaged with the student baseline survey. The majority of these students, with 56 per cent representation, were from the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences. It is possible that this is due to the nature of the subjects taught within this faculty. Students from each of the three remaining faculties: Art, Design and Humanities (11 per cent), Business and Law (12 per cent) and Technology (20 per cent) also engaged with the survey.

Representation across the three undergraduate levels of study were relatively even, with slightly greater engagement from third year students (35 per cent). This may be because those students in their first (29 per cent) and second (30 per cent) years of study have less experience of practice before

the Freedom to Achieve project began. A small number of postgraduate students also completed the survey (6 per cent). Most of the students taking the survey did not identify themselves as having a disability (67 per cent), though this is still lower than the institutional figures (82 per cent). Similarly, 72 per cent of participants were female and this is not in line with institutional representation (56 per cent). These figures may be influenced by the greater engagement of students from the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, which has the greatest number of female students and students with disabilities.

When asked about their religious beliefs, the majority of students identified themselves as Christian (32 per cent), Non-religious (23 per cent) or Muslim (11 per cent). Institutional data was not available for this protected characteristic, so comparisons against the institutional ratios were not possible. A wide range of ethnicities were represented by the students taking the survey. The majority of those completing the survey identified as White (51 per cent) with the next greatest representation from students of African (13 per cent) and Indian (11 per cent) heritage. The institutional data on ethnicity does not collect data at the same level of detail as this survey, so direct comparisons are difficult to make. It is possible to see, however, that a slightly higher representation of white students is present in our survey sample than across the university (46 per cent). Again the skew in representation across the four faculties may be responsible for this. It is important to note here that some ethnic groups are represented by very small numbers within this survey, making generalisations about particular student groups inappropriate. It is still important to highlight these nuances, however, as they may help to identify areas for further exploration and validation.

Student Ethnicity

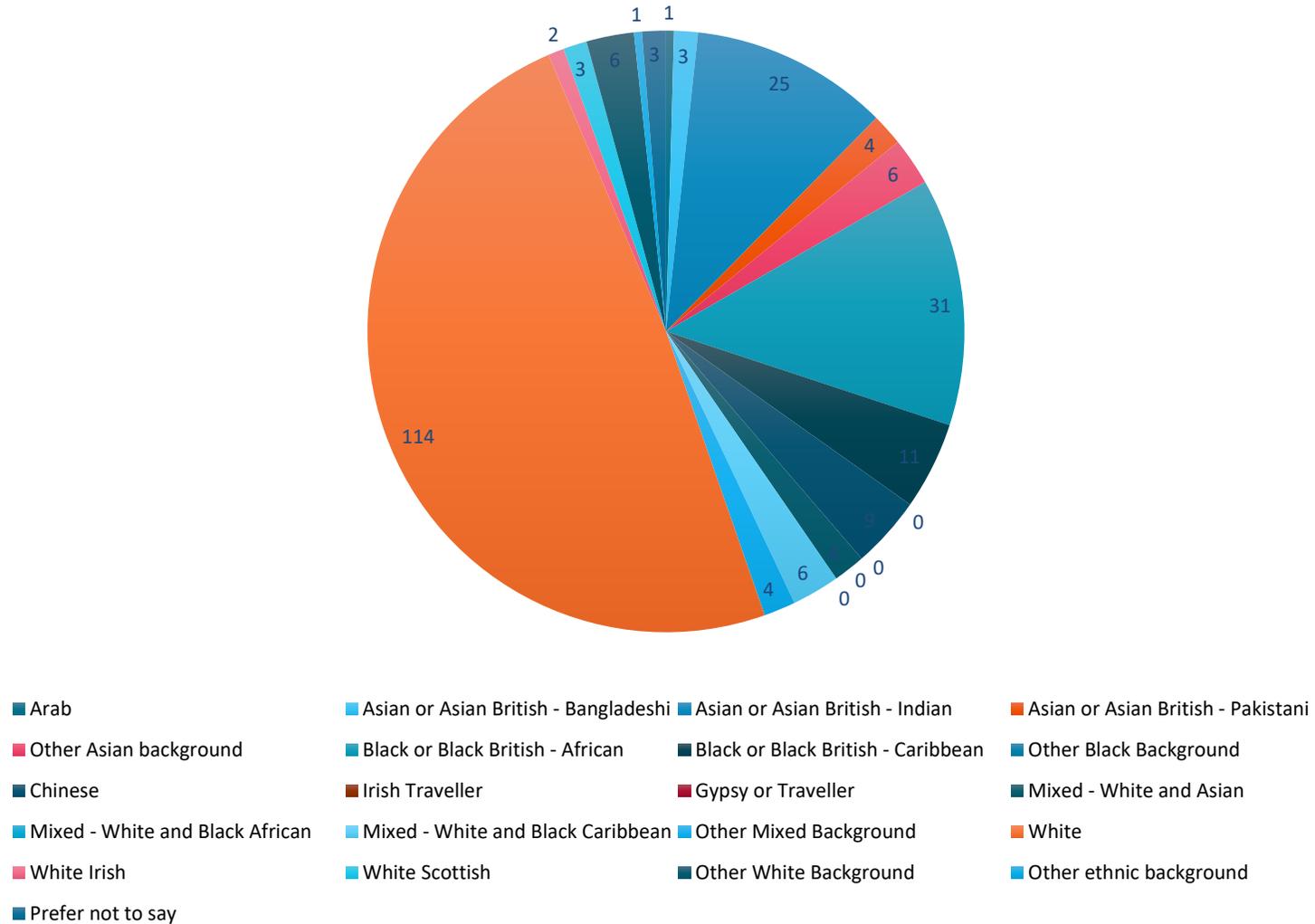


FIGURE 2 STUDENT REPRESENTATION BY ETHNICITY

The primary focus of the survey was to ascertain student awareness of the attainment gap and their awareness of and engagement with Freedom to Achieve. Additionally, the survey asked students to consider how well they felt they were represented within their programme of study and how any recent changes to their programme may have impacted this.

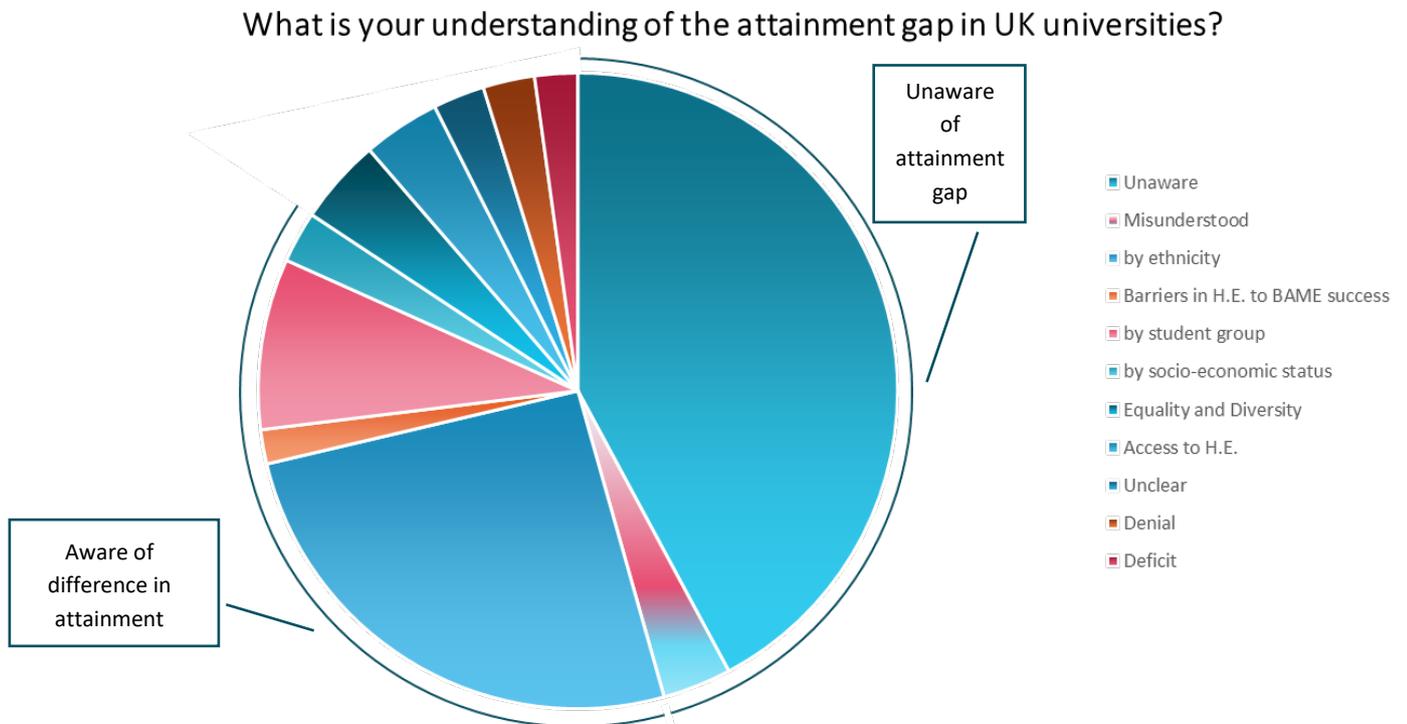


FIGURE 3 STUDENT UNDERSTANDING OF THE ATTAINMENT GAP

Of the 233 students, 105 (45 per cent) were unaware of what the attainment gap is. Of those remaining, 63 students (28 per cent) were aware that the issue related to a difference in attainment between students of different ethnicities. A further 26 students (12 per cent) understood that the attainment gap referred to a difference in attainment between student groups, but were not aware that this was related to student ethnicity specifically. Ten students (4 per cent) linked the attainment gap to equality and diversity more broadly, but were not clear on the specific link to a difference in attainment and 11 students (5 per cent) demonstrated a reluctance to acknowledge that the issue exists.

This highlights a major area of work for the FTA project, in raising the awareness of our students to this important issue. What the data highlight here is that a lack of clarity exists around the attainment gap and many students are unsure of what the term specifically relates to. This could be, to some degree, due to hesitancy on the part of institutions across the UK in having open conversations about the topic of the attainment gap and the cultural inclusivity of UK Higher Education. Now is the time for greater transparency in our communication with students about this issue and for universities across the UK, as academic institutions, to be at the forefront of those challenging conversations that are necessary for solutions to arise.

When asked if they had been informed about the attainment gap during their studies, the majority had not (51 per cent). Of those that had been informed, the primary routes for this information were through lectures (21 per cent) and via the Student Union (13 per cent). A similar picture emerged

when students were asked if they had heard of the Freedom to Achieve project, with 125 of the 233 students unaware of the project (54 per cent). Again, those that has heard of the project had done so primarily through the Students' Union (21 per cent) and lectures (18 per cent).

When asked about their engagement with Freedom to Achieve activities, 100 per cent of student participants had not engaged with the project. When asked why they had not engaged, the majority had been unaware that activities were taking place (63 per cent) or where unable to attend due to restrictions on their time from their studies and personal responsibilities (12 per cent).

Communication with our students is a key area of work going forward, to ensure the maximum possible benefit to our students. Without greater awareness of the issue and of the work that DMU are undertaking to positively address it, we cannot guarantee that students from all ethnicities at our institution will be adequately represented in our project work.

In the final section of the survey, students were asked to reflect on the degree to which they felt represented within five areas of their study: curriculum content, teaching methods, learning materials, assessment and feedback.

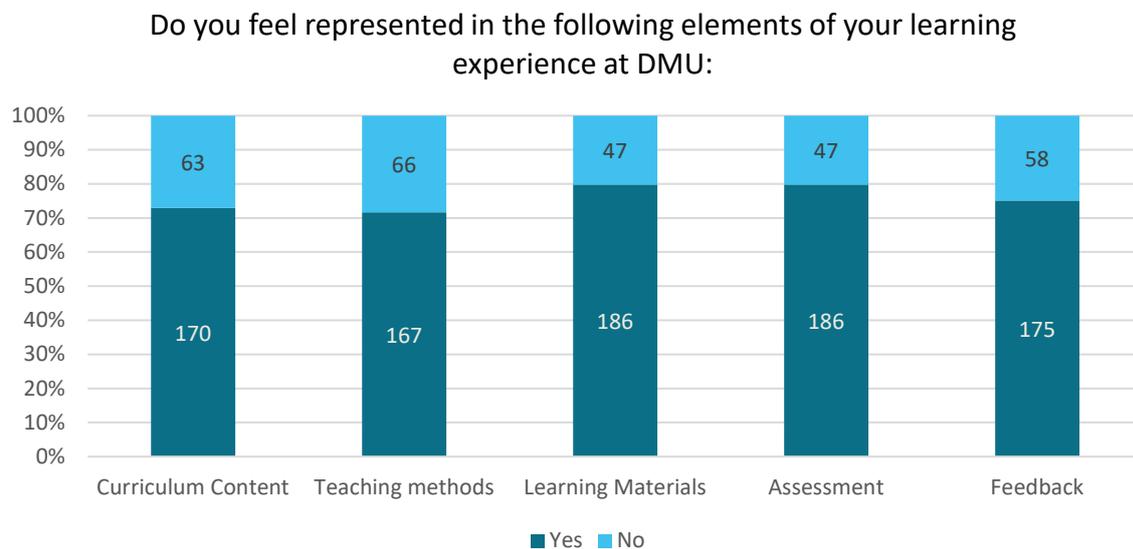


FIGURE 4 STUDENT REPRESENTATION IN THE CURRICULUM

On average, 75 per cent of student respondents felt reflected in their learning experience at DMU. A significant minority, however, do not feel this way and it is of value to explore which voices are present here. Under each of the five areas of the learning experience a range of student backgrounds were represented. In relation to curriculum content, those most likely to select no were of Pakistani, Caribbean, 'Other mixed' and 'Other white' heritage. In relation to teaching methods, those most likely to select no were of Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Caribbean, 'Other Asian', 'Other Mixed' and 'Other White' heritage. In reference to learning materials, those of Pakistani, Caribbean and 'Other White' heritage were most likely to select no. Students from a Pakistani or 'Other White' background were most likely to feel unrepresented in assessment styles. Finally, in relation to feedback approaches, Pakistani and Caribbean students were mostly likely to feel unrepresented.

It is interesting to note that the same groups of students are represented across the board here. This would suggest that further work should be done with these groups to identify if this is a wider institutional trend and how these student groups can be supported more effectively.

Can you identify any changes in the following elements of your learning experience that offered more opportunity to see yourself reflected:

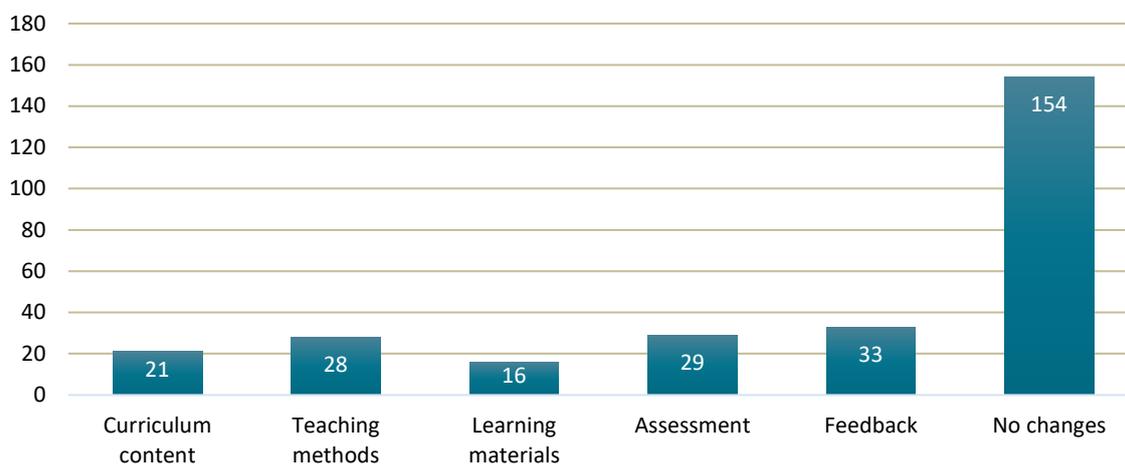


FIGURE 5 STUDENT PERCEPTION OF CHANGE

Following on from this question, students were asked to reflect on the last academic year and consider if they had experienced any changes in these five areas that had improved the extent to which they felt represented (as shown in figure 5). Of those taking the survey, 154 students (55 per cent) indicated that they had not experienced any changes to their learning experience. Where changes had been experienced, students were asked to provide examples of these. Following analysis of these responses, several themes emerged, focused upon changes resulting in:

- ▼ Greater opportunity for personal development
- ▼ Greater variety of approaches
- ▼ Increased access to learning
- ▼ Improved timing of assessments
- ▼ Greater opportunity to develop practical skills
- ▼ Improved relationships
- ▼ Greater representation
- ▼ Removal of barriers to learning
- ▼ Programme teams listening to student voice

Some themes were more commonly related to the five areas than others, the table below shows the most common themes under each.

Curriculum content	Representation	Student voice
Teaching methods	Access	Relationships
Learning materials	Access	Personal development
Assessment	Removing barriers	Variety
Feedback	Personal development	Timing

Students were most likely to recognise changes that had resulted in greater opportunities for personal development (14 per cent). These opportunities were related to changes regarding the quality and specificity of feedback from assignments and placements, improved clarity and relevance of assessments and support from lecturers and tutors. Students also noted changes that resulted in greater variety of approaches. Variety was most often experienced in assessment and teaching styles. Participants noted increased access due to changes in their learning experience. Students were primarily concerned with the accessibility of learning materials and being able to access their lecturers for support. Changes resulting in improved timing of assessments and course dates were also highlighted.

Students noted when changes had resulted in greater opportunity to develop practical skills. These were often changes to assessment and feedback methods that provided students with a chance to learn new skills, such as peer marking. Improved relationships were also found to be a result of some changes to students' experience. These changes were most likely to be in relation to time spent with lecturers and opportunities for one-to-one support. Changes to assessment methods and curriculum content resulted in students feeling more represented in their learning. In relation to assessments, changes were also seen as helping to remove barriers to engagement and success for students – for example, through the introduction of anonymous marking. Finally, students appreciated changes that demonstrated that student voice was being heard in the institution.

4.3 STAFF BASELINE

The staff baseline survey was designed to collect information regarding staff awareness of the attainment gap and DMU's FTA project, any impact on staff experience that has occurred to date, the extent to which staff have engaged directly with the project and how staff have experienced integrating the VA metric and ICF (as included within UDL) into their practice. As a baseline measure, it was expected that engagement and awareness may be low at this stage, though this data will help us to demonstrate impact as the project progresses.

The staff baseline survey was made up of three key elements.

- ▼ Part One collected demographic information.
- ▼ Part Two focused on the use of attainment data and the UDL audit tool.
- ▼ Part Three focused on staff experience of reflecting on their curriculum.

A total of 44 staff members from across the 40 pilot programmes engaged with the staff baseline survey. Similarly, to the student facing survey, the majority of these, with 56 per cent representation, were from the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences. Staff from each of the three remaining faculties: Art, Design and Humanities (18 per cent), Business and Law (16 per cent) and Technology (27 per cent) also engaged with the survey. The majority of participants did not identify themselves as having a disability (77 per cent). Sixty-six per cent of staff taking the survey were white and an even spread could be seen between male (46 per cent) and female (43 per cent) participants. When asked about their religious beliefs, the majority of staff identified themselves as Atheist (23 per cent) or chose not to disclose this information (23 per cent). A further 40 per cent of staff identified themselves as either Christian or holding no religious beliefs (20 per cent each).

In part two of the survey, staff were primarily asked about their experience of being informed about the attainment gap and UDL audit tool and how this had impacted their practice. Most staff had heard of the attainment gap for over 6 months (77 per cent). Prior to the FTA project, the majority of staff

had, at most, only some awareness of the university's attainment data (41 per cent), though over a quarter were familiar with the statistics for their own programme (27 per cent). As a result of learning about their programme's attainment data, seventy per cent of staff had made changes to their practice. Most commonly these were changes to the way staff dealt with students during teaching, changes to curriculum content or changes to the way staff dealt with tutees. Most were unsure as to whether these changes would have occurred outside of the Freedom to Achieve project (58 per cent). Of those who had not made changes, the majority felt that they were already working in an inclusive manner (60 per cent). When asked for any further comment on their use of the attainment data, responses referred to concerns regarding the data, the lack of a gap on their programme, the need to raise awareness and that the data was extremely useful as a catalyst for culturally inclusive practice. In relation to the data, staff were concerned about its accuracy, integrity and timeliness.

Most staff had been using the UDL review template for over 6 months (64 per cent). The majority of staff had either no awareness (20 per cent) or only a general awareness, not specific to their own teaching, (20 per cent) of the UDL review. As a result of learning about their programme's UDL compliance, sixty-six per cent of staff had made changes to their practice. Most commonly these were changes to the way staff dealt with students during teaching, revisions to assignment styles, changes to curriculum content or changes to the way staff dealt with tutees. Most felt that these changes would have occurred outside of the Freedom to Achieve project, possibly due to the separate institutional push for engagement with universal design for learning. Of those who had not made changes, the majority felt that they were already working in an inclusive manner (67 per cent). When asked for any further comment on their use of the UDL review, responses referred to programmes already being UDL compliant, finding the review patronising and being unaware of the tool.

Most staff met with their FOC at least once per term (43 per cent), though a significant minority had yet to their FOC (30 per cent). Factoring in this 30 per cent, the majority of staff found meeting with their FOC useful (49 per cent). Of those who did not find their engagement with their FOC useful, reasons stated for this were a lack of understanding of subject area, not taking them beyond existing practice and use of generic examples. Finally, one individual did not wish to comment, due to the fact that their FOC had only recently been appointed (BAL). The majority of staff (61 per cent) believed the role of Fair Outcomes Champion role to be important to the wider success of the project, with one participant noting:

'I'm glad we have a fair outcomes champion to raise issues and awareness, this has to be a good thing.'

Use of the attainment data and engagement with the UDL audit template were how most staff had engaged with the project to date (30 and 26 per cent respectively). A further 20 per cent had participated in co-creation and 12 per cent in training. Where staff had not taken part in the project, they noted that more information about the project would aid their involvement. Staff had spoken with their colleagues about the project, both within their own programmes (53 per cent) and more widely across the institution (86 per cent). The majority had also shared their practice in relation to the project. This was primarily within the institution, through completion of best practice templates, engagement with programme forums and sharing of progress at meetings.

Do you feel confident in developing inclusive practices?

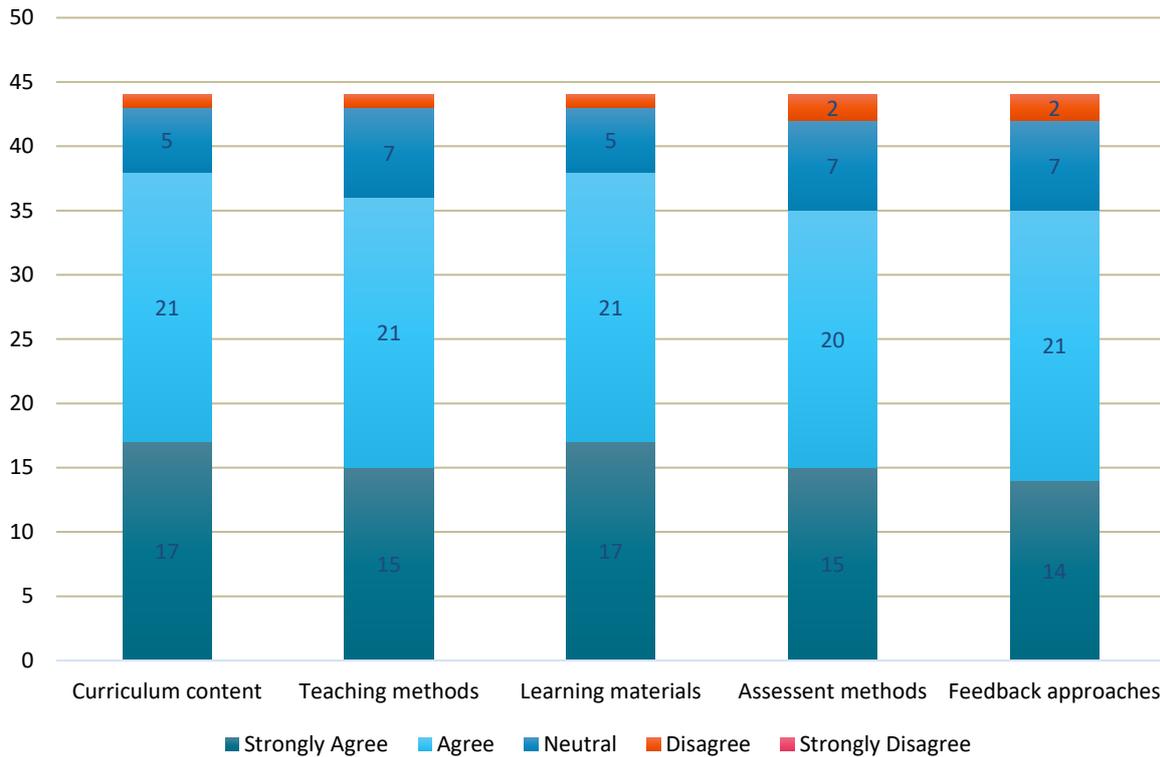


FIGURE 6 STAFF CONFIDENCE IN DEVELOPING INCLUSIVE PRACTICE

The majority of staff felt confident in their ability to develop inclusive approaches across five areas of their teaching: curriculum content, teaching methods, learning materials, assessment and feedback. Less than half had spoken with their students about the attainment gap (46 per cent), Freedom to Achieve (43 per cent) or inclusive practice in H.E (48 per cent). Additionally, only a quarter of staff had participated in co-creation with their students, however, as the main phase of co-creation within the project does not begin until October 2018 this was to be expected. Where staff have co-created with their students, this has primarily been around reviewing assessment methods.

5 NEXT STEPS

In response to the outcomes and findings of this first year of activity, the Freedom to Achieve team have identified a number of priority areas for further work in the next academic year. These can be broken down into two primary categories: core project activity and evaluation work.

5.1 CORE PROJECT ACTIVITY

Over the coming academic year, project activity will focus on greater engagement with our staff and students. In particular we will begin our main phase of co-creation and this will be supplemented with additional activity to support staff and student progress.

5.1.1 PROGRAMME-LEVEL CO-CREATION EVENTS

Having piloted programme-level co-creation (PLCC) sessions this academic year, the main phase of events will begin in the 2018/2019 autumn term. Each programme will hold a co-creation session between staff and students, facilitated by the Freedom to Achieve team. The findings generated from the previous co-creation sessions will be used as the focus themes going forward. These are: relationships, community, teaching and learning and development. These themes help to structure the co-creation around topics that have already been highlighted as important by our students and staff. The pilot sessions also helped to refine the organisation of the sessions themselves. Beginning in October 2018, the sessions will be structured as follows:

- ▼ Programme staff introduce concept of attainment gap
- ▼ Freedom to Achieve team introduce co-creation activity
- ▼ Staff and students work together
- ▼ Freedom to Achieve team facilitate this collaboration
- ▼ Evaluation Research Associate implements evaluation of session
- ▼ Freedom to Achieve team wraps up session

In support of programme staff, events will be held in September 2018 to outline the PLCC events and provide an opportunity for staff to ask questions and prepare beforehand. These events will run in a similar fashion to the previous Programme Forum events, with a mixture of information from the FTA team and activities for programme staff. The events will include:

- ▼ Introduction to co-creation and its principles.
- ▼ Overview of previous co-creation approach and findings.
- ▼ Walkthrough of co-creation schedule for PLCCs, including theme summaries.
- ▼ Opportunity for staff to ask questions and voice concerns.
- ▼ Exercise for staff, at their tables, to discuss how they might wish to personalise their PLCCs – what additional foci may they wish to include.

5.1.2 STUDENT CURRICULUM ADVISORS

As noted above in 'Project Progress', we have successfully appointed four Student Curriculum Advisors (SCAs) to work with the project team to consider the curriculum and offer insight into how curricula can be more culturally inclusive. They will also lead on engaging the students across the 40 programmes, and more widely across the University, to share their thoughts and insights into the needs of BAME students and consider how these views can be relayed to lecturers and wider University staff to support changes in practice. The SCAs will have three primary duties:

- ▼ **Providing BAME students' perspective on course materials** - such as programme handbooks, module guides, assessment instructions and online material and provide feedback to lecturers/programme teams to advise them of inclusive curriculum practices and provide the perspective of BAME students and so engage in curriculum co-creation.
- ▼ **Collating BAME student voice via small group sessions** - to understand their needs and discuss how best to consider these needs when developing curriculum, course materials, and teaching methods in a culturally inclusive manner.
- ▼ **Creating best practice curriculum co-creation guides** - which will bring together the good practice being developed by programme teams in developing culturally competent curricula.

Our SCAs will begin their roles in October 2018 and will work with the project for six months. Meet and Greet events will be organised with the SCAs once they are in role.

5.1.3 TEAM TALKS

Team Talks is a programme of lunchtime talks to be held once every 6 weeks. The purpose of the sessions is to foster a culture and forum for the sharing, informing and development of culturally cognisant learning and teaching across DMU FTA selected programmes and beyond. A variety of formats will be included and resources from the sessions will be shared with the presenters' permission. Through Team Talks the project aims to:

- ▼ disseminate best practice of culturally aware pedagogy across DMU;
- ▼ enable cross fertilisation of ideas for use in other programmes;
- ▼ stimulate academic debate;
- ▼ enable reflective practice for tutors across the 40 selected FtA programmes.

Sessions will be held Tuesday lunchtimes 12:00 – 13:30, every 6 weeks during term time. Refreshments will be provided at each session. Please see the [Freedom to Achieve project blog](#) for specific dates and content.

5.1.4 READ TO DEBATE CLUB

Running in parallel to our Team Talks schedule, the Read to Debate Club will run twice per term. Materials will be available on our Freedom to Achieve BlackBoard community shell. For each session, we will read a book/journal article/report for discussion as a group. The club aims to encourage staff to engage critically with the literature surrounding issues of race and inclusive practice within Higher Education. Members of the club are welcome to share suggestions for future discussion and at each meeting the next reading will be chosen by the group.

Refreshments will be provided at each session. Please see the [Freedom to Achieve project blog](#) for specific dates and content.

5.1.5 COLOUR FULL READING CLUB

Kimberlin's Colour Full Reading Club focusses on encouraging our users, both students and staff, to engage with books written by authors of colour. The club aims to promote awareness of and engagement with the diverse collection of books for leisure, pleasure, self-development, wellbeing and study held at Kimberlin Library.

To participate simply select from [the reading list](#), locate it in Kimberlin, borrow it, read and enjoy. Readers will be asked to contribute brief reviews detailing the readers thoughts and feelings about the book. Reviews will be posted on Kimberlin's Colour Full Reading Club Facebook page and displayed in the library, with the reviewer's permission.

Additionally, each month in the library café there will be an opportunity to meet up with other users to see what they thought of these books and suggest new ones to try.

5.2 EVALUATION WORK

The evaluation strand of the research will continue to respond flexibly to the outcomes of ongoing project work. Having captured an initial snapshot of staff and student experience and awareness, the evaluation work will now begin to focus on gathering more in-depth perspectives.

5.2.1 EVALUATION SUPPORT GROUP

Key to the success of the evaluation work is validating the methodological approach through discussion with a wide range of voices from across our campus. Therefore, the Freedom to Achieve Evaluation Support Group (ESG) will have representation from Library and Learning Services, Dare to Be Mentoring, People and Organisational Development, the Students' Union and each Faculty, including a mix of staff and students. The aim of the ESG will be to provide:

- ▼ Engagement and involvement in the determination of the Project's overall evaluation strategy.
- ▼ Provide a forum for debate about the Project's overall evaluation strategy.
- ▼ Advice to the project evaluation team on specific evaluation plans prior to implementation.
- ▼ Feedback to the project evaluation team on the impact of the evaluation outcomes on relevant DMU communities.

The group will meet once per term and will report to the Freedom to Achieve project board. An inaugural meeting will be held in September 2018. If you are interested in participating in this group, please contact Lucy Atkins.

5.2.2 STUDENT FOCUS GROUPS

Running between February and March 2019, student focus groups will be held to bring student voice to the fore of the Freedom to Achieve project. These will be held in conjunction with the work that our SCAs implement around collating student voice and, where appropriate, will be led by them. Student focus groups will concentrate primarily on the topics of student engagement with the project and the impact this has on student experience alongside exploring the notion of *belonging* on DMU campus.

5.2.3 PROGRAMME TEAM INTERVIEWS

Running between January and February 2019, programme team interviews will help to add greater depth to our understanding of how staff develop a culturally inclusive curriculum. The interviews will focus on: staff perception of the impact of FOC role, programme team engagement with the project, experiences of best practice sharing, perceptions of student engagement with the project and the broader impact that the project has had on programme team practice.

The evaluation aims to develop a number of case studies from across the institution to share not only how students are impacted, but also how staff are impacted by the project work.

5.2.4 FAIR OUTCOMES CHAMPION INTERVIEWS

Running in parallel to the programme team interviews in January and February 2019, Fair Outcomes Champions will be interviewed to utilise their unique perspective on the project. They will be asked to consider their perception of programme team engagement with the project, how best practice has been shared and the impact this has had on programme teams and finally, the impact they feel their own role has had on the success of the project. These reflections will be used as part of the case studies, to include multiple perspectives on the project.

6. APPENDIX

FREEDOM TO ACHIEVE: EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

The Freedom to Achieve project aims to extend the Value Added (VA) metric and Inclusive Curriculum Framework (ICF) currently used to address the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) attainment gap at Kingston University, and share good practice amongst partner institutions. The ICF is the institutional approach to building inclusivity from 'concept to review'. The Framework applies a set of principles to the dimensions of learning and teaching to ensure success for all students through a curriculum that is accessible, reflects students' background and prepares them to positively contribute to a global and diverse workplace. This has been synthesised into existing practice at DMU, as part of Universal Design for Learning. The VA metric highlights differences in attainment which cannot be explained by student entry qualifications or subject of study. This moves discussions beyond the student deficit model leading to effective action and cultural change.

RESEARCH AIMS

The evaluative strand of the project seeks to identify how Kingston University's VA metric and ICF have been integrated into existing work at DMU, and what impact this has had on the BAME attainment gap. To this end, the following overarching research question was devised:

How has the implementation of the Value-added metric (VA) and Inclusive Curriculum Framework (ICF) impacted the BAME attainment gap at De Montfort University (DMU)?

This is supported by a set of sub-questions that aim to delve deeper into the Freedom to Achieve project work.

- ▼ How have the VA and ICF been implemented at DMU?
 - ▼ How have the roles of Fair Outcomes Champions (FOCs) supported the project?
 - ▼ How have the roles of Student Curriculum Advisors (SCAs) supported the project?
- ▼ How have the VA and ICF been integrated with existing work at DMU?
- ▼ How have programme teams (PT) engaged with the project?
 - ▼ How has best practice been shared across DMU?
- ▼ How have students engaged with the project?
- ▼ Has the BAME gap changed?
 - ▼ How has the project impacted student retention?
 - ▼ How has the project impacted student progression?
- ▼ Are staff more aware of the BAME gap?
- ▼ Are students more aware of the BAME gap?
- ▼ How has the project impacted programme teams?
 - ▼ Do staff feel confident in their delivery of an inclusive curriculum? (in relation to learning resources, assessment styles, feedback methods, etc.)
- ▼ How has the project impacted student experience?
 - ▼ Do students feel a greater sense of belonging at DMU?
 - ▼ Do students feel better represented in the curriculum? (through learning resources, assessment styles, feedback methods, etc.)

The work of the project evaluation is two-fold. Firstly, to meet the requirements of DMU's collaboration with Kingston University and the wider OfS-funded project needs. Secondly, to address DMU's own interests which extend further into student experience and awareness.

STUDY DESIGN

A mixed methodology will be utilised, with a multiple-case study design to provide a richer account of student and staff experience at DMU. The research will be influenced by critical race theory, with a focus on utilising non-dominant voices. A multiple-case design has been chosen to ensure that students and staff from each faculty are represented in the research. In this way, the research will aid the sharing of best practice not only within faculties, but also across the wider institution.

SAMPLE DETAILS

The Freedom to Achieve project is already working with staff and students on 40 pilot programmes across the institution, ten per faculty. These individuals, alongside the Fair Outcomes Champions who support them, will be the primary focus of the research. Given the multiple-case study approach taken, sampling logic is not appropriate here, but rather a replication logic must be taken. Since generalisability is not the goal of this research, but rather the generation of context-specific lessons learnt, the decision regarding number of cases to conduct is not one of representativeness but of greatest potential value.

For each faculty, the researcher will aim to conduct research with the Faculty Outcomes Champion, 3 staff members and a minimum of 5 students. Effort will be made to engage with a diverse group of students and staff, in order to adequately reflect the staff and student body. A mixture of purposive and convenience sampling will be utilised, since the population are predefined through their engagement with the Freedom to Achieve project and it will be necessary to work with those who volunteer to engage.

RECRUITMENT METHOD

Staff will initially be approached via email and the Freedom to Achieve Blackboard shell. Where necessary, Fair Outcomes Champions can be utilised to increase contact with staff. Students will be contacted via email and staff will be asked to advertise the research through their programme Blackboard shells. Student Curriculum Advisors may also provide a channel through which to recruit student participants.

DATA COLLECTION METHOD

A range of methods will be used in the multiple-case studies to create a rich picture of the Freedom to Achieve project's implementation and impact. The primary methods of data collection will be surveys, interviews and the VA metric data. Surveys will be used to collect data across all 40 programmes in the study as a baseline of current practice and experiences. This will be iteratively administered over the course of the project to measure change for both students and staff. Additionally, interviews will be conducted with Fair Outcomes Champions, staff and students to gain further insight into the experience of implementing the VA metric and ICF. The metric data itself can also be used as a measure of the project's impact, as changes in attainment can be monitored.

Documents related to the project, such as Fair Outcomes Champion meeting logs, resources from the project Blackboard shell, event feedback and attendance logs will also be utilised. Each data collection method links to specific areas of questioning in the project, as demonstrated below:

<p>PROJECT DOCUMENTATION</p> <p>Implementation of VA and ICF</p> <p>Integration of VA and ICF</p>	<p>FOC INTERVIEWS</p> <p>Impact of FOC role</p> <p>Impact of SCA role</p> <p>PT engagement</p> <p>Best practice sharing</p> <p>Impact on PTs</p>	<p>PROGRAMME TEAM INTERVIEWS</p> <p>Impact of FOC role</p> <p>Impact of SCA role</p> <p>PT engagement</p> <p>Best practice sharing</p> <p>Student engagement</p> <p>Impact on PTs</p>	<p>FOC DOCUMENTATION</p> <p>Impact of FOC role</p> <p>PT engagement</p>
<p>PROJECT STAFF INTERVIEWS/SURVEY</p> <p>Integration of VA and ICF</p>	<p>EVENT FEEDBACK</p> <p>PT engagement</p> <p>Best practice sharing</p> <p>Student engagement</p>	<p>VA METRIC</p> <p>Gap change</p>	<p>DMU DATA</p> <p>Retention change</p> <p>Progression change</p>
<p>PROGRAMME TEAM SURVEY</p> <p>Awareness</p> <p>Impact on PTs</p>	<p>STUDENT SURVEY</p> <p>Awareness</p> <p>Impact on student experience</p> <p>Student engagement</p>	<p>STUDENT INTERVIEWS/FGS</p> <p>Student engagement</p> <p>Impact on student experience</p>	<p>STUDENT CURRICULUM ADVISORS</p> <p>Experience of role</p> <p>Expectations of role</p> <p>Training and support</p>

DATA COLLECTION TOOL

Surveys and Interview schedules will be developed iteratively throughout the project in collaboration with key project stakeholders where available. In this way, the evaluation can ensure that the needs of all stakeholders are met through the research. The specific questions asked in the surveys and interviews will be flexible so as to adjust to the needs of the project as it develops. An Evaluation Support Group will be established, with responsibility for the following:

- Engagement and involvement in the determination of the Project's overall evaluation strategy.
- Providing a forum for debate about the Project's overall evaluation strategy.
- Advising to the project evaluation team on specific evaluation plans prior to implementation.
- Feeding back to the project evaluation team on the impact of the evaluation outcomes on relevant DMU communities.

This group will represent a range of groups across the University, including library and learning services, people and organisational development, the student union and students and staff from each faculty.

ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics will be used to explore event feedback, attendance over time and the VA metric data. Additional comparative analysis, using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, will be carried out on the VA metric data to compare changes year on year.

Qualitative data collected via surveys and interviews will be analysed using grounded theory analysis. These will be transcribed and the transcriptions will be checked back against the recordings to ensure accuracy. Coding and analysis of the data will then take place, influenced by Charmaz's²² coding methods and Alan Bryman's²³ four stage approach. These systems have been combined in order to create a process which best fits a grounded theory approach, and which incorporates all three types of grounded theory coding; open, axial and selective (Cohen et al 2011).

▼ *Get to know the data*

Transcript is read and summarised, with initial ideas noted.

▼ *Initial coding*

Transcript is read again the text is broken up into units, compared and systematically coded. New codes and categories may be generated at this stage. In keeping with Charmaz's notion of initial coding, analysis is open-ended during this stage. In vivo coding, words directly from the participant's own language, and process coding, gerunds used to signify observable actions, are used widely at this stage²⁴. As each new unit of data is coded, it is reviewed in comparison to the previous codes chosen to ensure that it is the most appropriate option.

▼ *Focused coding*

Codes and categories are reviewed in order to create links between them and to ensure best fit for the data. Codes and categories may be condensed at this stage.

²² See 16.

²³ See 17.

²⁴ Saldaña, J. (2009) *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Second edition. London: Sage.

▼ *Reviewing themes*

Themes are checked back against the dataset and a core code is identified. The generation of a core code is the main purpose of coding and analysis as it provides 'some new understanding of the data and constitute[s] the foundations for any theory or general conclusions to emerge from the research'²⁵.

This process adopts the method of constant comparison, whereby new data is compared with existing data and categories to ensure the best possible fit. This form of comparison takes place across all coding stages until theoretical saturation is reached, which 'occurs when in coding and analysing both no new properties emerge and the same properties continually emerge as one goes through the full extent of the data'²⁶. Given the range of data compared, this is often seen as consistent with the methodological notion of triangulation²⁷.

One of the key elements of grounded theory, memoing, is essential during the coding and analysis phase. Memoing is the note taking process carried out by the researcher throughout the study in order to capture new thoughts and ideas around the emerging theory. Denscombe²⁸ notes that they can also be seen a documented record of the analysis carried out by the researcher; an audit trail of the decisions made.

TIMELINE

Included below is the draft timeline for the evaluation work, with a focus on DMU's evaluation activity.

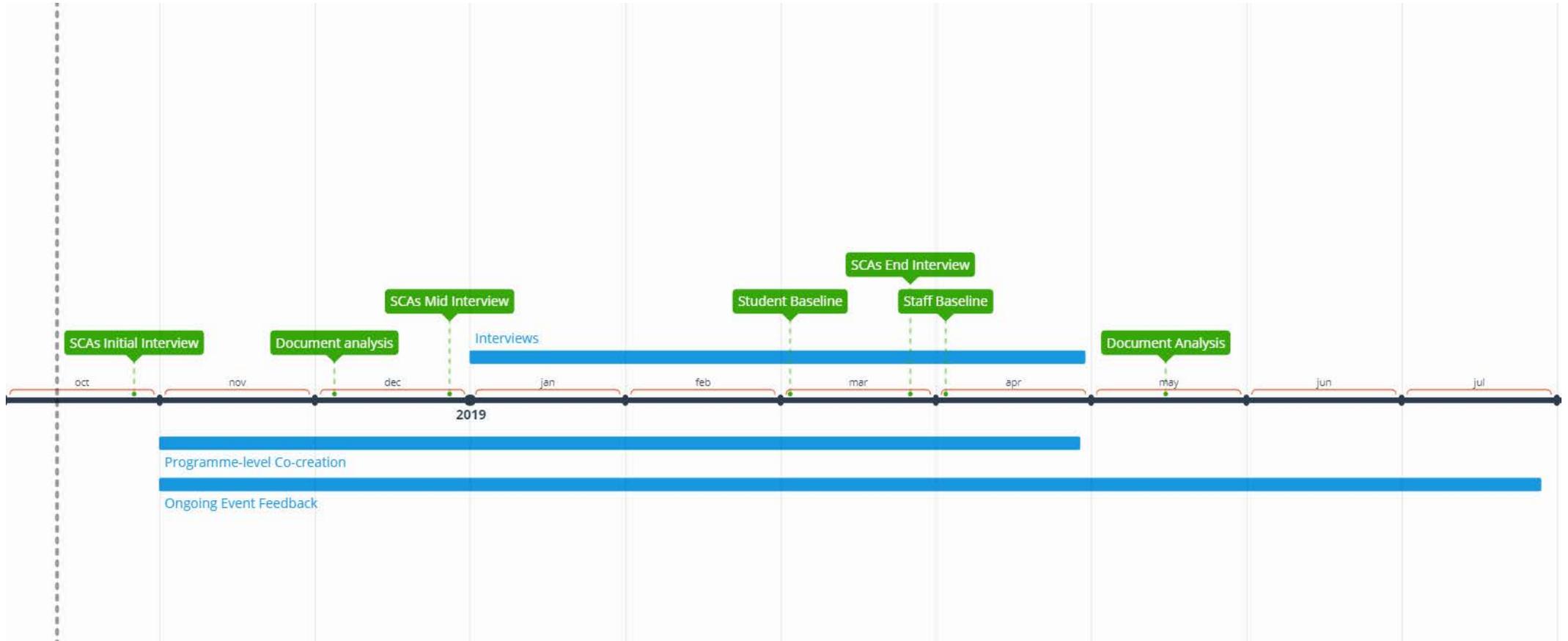
²⁵ See 19, p.288.

²⁶ See 21, p.53.

²⁷ See 18.

²⁸ See 19.

PROJECT EVALUATION TIMELINE





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