

BME Attainment Gap Report



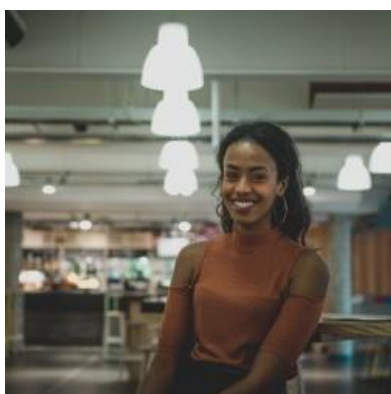
BRISTOL SU
the best student life

Contents

Introduction.....	3
Executive summary.....	4
Background.....	6
Methodology.....	7
Respondents.....	8
Themes.....	10
Feelings of Isolation.....	11
“I Can't be Completely Myself”	15
Racism and Microaggressions.....	16
Mental Health and Support.....	21
A White Curriculum.....	22
Representation of BME Staff.....	25
Awareness of Policies and Reporting.....	26
Recommendations.....	28
Appendix 1.....	31
Appendix 2.....	36

This report was authored by Alice Phillips, Aisha Rana-Deshmukh and Chante Joseph (2017).

Introduction



A student's identity within Higher Education plays a critical role in their degree outcome, wellbeing, sense of self, and employability. These all contribute to students' ability to excel. Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students have been vastly underrepresented in HE and an increasing focus on the participation of BME students has been positive. However, a vast body of research has revealed a highly concerning outcome for BME students in Higher Education institutions, known as the BME attainment gap.

The University of Bristol is one of the Russell Group Universities with the fewest number of BME students (particularly home Black students). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that quantitative data has revealed that the University of Bristol has a BME attainment gap, and thus an institutional responsibility to dismantle it. The cause for the attainment gap is complex with numerous factors playing a role e.g. structural, organisational, attitudinal, and financial. However, these factors cannot be unravelled unless the experiences of BME students are explored. The qualitative data in this report, which provides rich evidence of the feelings, thoughts and experiences of BME students' lives at the University of Bristol, helps us to understand the barriers in place for BME students, and how to dismantle them.

As a Black student, I was astonished by the lack of BME students at the university and this was an integral reason why I ran to become a full-time elected officer. I recall sitting in my lecture and being the only black student in a room of 100 students. Navigating campus was a difficult reminder that I was an outsider, a "lucky one", different, and shouldn't be here. This isolating experience was further compounded by being a woman, from Liverpool (most students are from the South of England), and coming from a working-class family. I became involved with the Students Union to begin to tackle the isolating experience many black women like myself faced, working on initiatives like 'Why is My Curriculum White?' to address the dominance of a Euro-centric curriculum and the systematic erasure of the work, history and achievements of people of colour.

This report is a historic piece of research as the first to be carried out by the Union and University. I'm proud of the hard work of BME students over the years; highlighting the negative experiences they have had, challenging the content of curriculum and the intersectional difficulties of being non-white at Bristol. The experiences of BME students are investigated in this report and should be central to changes going forward. The recommendations presented represent a framework of cultural and institutional changes to help create an inclusive, representative and fair University. The University should continue using qualitative research to investigate the experiences of students and place increasing value on the subjective experiences of marginalised identities.

Hannah Dualeh
Equality, Liberation and Access Officer (2016-2017)

Executive Summary

This report outlines the findings of a research project conducted by staff and student researchers at Bristol SU into the BME attainment gap, funded by the University of Bristol's Widening Participation team. The project took the form of a survey, sent out to all home BME students, two focus groups, and a visual diary, kept by eleven students. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations of this report will help decision makers at the University of Bristol make real changes to the experiences of BME students at the University.

Key Themes

- Students across the research project reported that they often felt isolated due to being the only, or one of a few, BME students in a room.
- Many students reported feeling that they couldn't be 'completely themselves' – though students on courses with more diverse cohorts were less likely to report such feelings.
- Students reported experiencing direct racism and racist microaggressions from both fellow students and staff, which often had a negative impact on their mental health.
- BME students appeared to experience mental health difficulties specifically related to their ethnicity. This was often linked to feelings of isolation, and a sense that they had no one to speak to.
- Students in both STEM subjects and Arts and Social Sciences subjects highlighted the whiteness of their curriculum, though students in some Science subjects such as Maths or Physics felt that diverse perspectives were less relevant to their subject than others. The lack of diverse and representative perspectives on many courses appears to have affected some BME students' engagement with their courses.
- The majority of students felt that their identity was poorly represented in the academic body, but female students were more concerned by this lack of representation than male students.
- Awareness of equality and diversity policies and the complaints procedure amongst the BME student population appears to be very low.

Key Recommendations

- Diverse and representative content should be embedded into curricula through curriculum reviews, quality assurance processes and the Bristol Futures project.
- Student campaigns such as 'Why Is My Curriculum White' and the BME Students' Campaign should be supported to transform curricula and combat feelings of isolation.
- The complaints procedure and Unacceptable Behaviour policy should be actively promoted to students from Welcome Week, and the complaints procedure should be reformed to ensure that students know they can use it.

- Staff in student facing roles and students in support roles should be provided with equality and diversity training to support BME students and prevent discrimination and microaggressions.
- To combat feelings of isolation the University should support the initiatives of the BME Students' Network, consider ethnicity in halls allocation, and explore the possibility of BME school or faculty reps.
- Active steps should be taken to increase the proportion of home BME students and BME academic and professional staff at the institution.
- The University should ensure that BME students can access support from people who understand their experiences – including within the new Wellbeing Advisor posts, the counselling service and peer support posts.
- An institutional commitment to improving the BME student experience should be taken by signing up to the ECU Race Equality Charter and ensuring that BME recruitment, attainment and experience are embedded into University committees and the Widening Participation team.

Background

In the UK, there is a BME attainment gap in Higher Education. In 2015 ECU reported that BME graduates were 15.2% less likely to receive a first or 2:1 in comparison to their white classmates.¹ This attainment gap varied between ethnicities, with the proportion of black students receiving a first/2:1 lower than for all other ethnic groups.² This attainment gap is also present at the University of Bristol. In 2015/16 31% of white students graduating achieved a first-class degree, compared to 20% of BME students. Likewise, proportionately more BME students (14%) who graduated achieved a 2:2 classification than white students (7%).

Given this national and local attainment gap, this research project aimed to understand the experiences of BME students affected by the attainment gap at the University of Bristol, and to identify potential factors about the student experience which might be detrimental to these students and their academic and personal development. In doing so this project aims to enrich existing quantitative data about the BME attainment gap, offering a valuable qualitative insight into the experiences of BME students at UoB. It also sits alongside and complements work being done this year in the Graduate School of Education investigating successful practices for raising the attainment of white working class and BME undergraduate students at UoB.

Previous research into this area has suggested several potential causes for the BME attainment gap. SOAS SU's report, *Degrees of Racism*, highlighted the centring of white perspectives in the curriculum, barriers to asking for help at the institution, and barriers to accountability.³ Among the report's recommendations was a call for mandatory unconscious bias workshops for recruitment and promotion panels and a full-scale audit of every course reading.⁴

Other research, such as Cotton, George and Joyner's report into the gender and ethnicity gap at the University of Plymouth, has suggested that differences in motivations for attending university between white and BME students may be a factor in the BME attainment gap.⁵

This research project builds on past research by seeking to understand the reasons behind the BME attainment gap at the University of Bristol, and what can be done to address it.

The project is the result of partnership between the University of Bristol and Bristol Students' Union, and the project has been funded by the University of Bristol's

¹ Equality Challenge Unit, *Equality in Higher Education: Statistical Report 2015. Part 2: Students* (London: Equality Challenge Unit, 2015), 138.

² Equality Challenge Unit, *Equality in Higher Education*, 138.

³ SOAS SU, *Degrees of Racism: A Qualitative Investigation into Ethnicity Attainment Gaps at SOAS* (London: SOAS SU, 2016).

⁴ SOAS SU, *Degrees of Racism: A Qualitative Investigation into Ethnicity Attainment Gaps at SOAS* (London: SOAS SU, 2016), 41-43.

⁵ Debby Cotton, Rosemary George and Mel Joyner, *The Gender and Ethnicity Attainment Gap Research Project* (Plymouth: Pedagogic Research Institute and Observatory, 2013), 2.

Widening Participation team.

Methodology

The project followed a mixed methodology with three core methods;

- An online survey with a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions exploring students' experiences at the institution.
- Two focus groups conducted with 14 students recruited through the survey.
- A Facebook photo diary with 11 students recruited through the survey, conducted over an 8-week period.

Each of these elements added another layer of depth to the project. The online survey, filled out by 240 students, provided a large amount of data from a wide range of students, and asked students a variety of questions on issues such as BME representation in the staff body, levels of support and awareness of disciplinary procedures (see appendix 1 for questions). The survey included both closed quantitative and optional open qualitative questions.

A first touch analysis of the survey's responses and themes helped shape the questions for the focus groups (see appendix 2), which expanded on the survey by asking more in-depth questions about belonging, feeling valued and diversity in the curriculum. The focus groups were conducted on a semi-structured basis, which allowed researchers to ask pertinent follow up questions. The focus groups were conducted by a student researcher and a member of permanent Bristol SU staff, both of whom identified as BME. This allowed students to speak freely in a safe environment of their peers.

11 students kept a Facebook photo diary over a period of 8 weeks, from Monday 20th March to Sunday 14th May. Students were asked to take two or three images per week on their smartphone, adding a small amount of text through the Facebook messenger app and sending these to a Facebook account set up for the purposes of the project. At the end of each week students were asked to provide written reflections on these images. Participants were briefed that the project sought to capture their experiences as a BME student at the University of Bristol, but that not all images would necessarily relate to their ethnicity directly.

A common challenge of diary method studies is retention of participants throughout the project and, as might be expected, not all students recruited for the diary completed the full 8-week period. To account for this, some additional participants were recruited to replace those who chose not to continue the study. Due to time constraints, these students were not able to complete a full 8-week diary. In total, five students completed the entire 8-week diary, one student completed a 7-week diary, two students completed a 6-week diary and one student completed a 5-week diary. Two students stopped conducting the diary after completing 3 weeks and 2 weeks respectively, but did not withdraw from the project, meaning that their data could still be used.

The aim of the diary was to capture experiences over time, in a way that completing a survey or taking part in a focus group does not allow for. The format also allowed everyday experiences to be captured, highlighting issues and themes which students might not recall when they came to fill in the survey or participate in focus groups. Despite the variable completion rates, the diaries enabled the research to explore in richer detail the lives of BME students at the University of Bristol.

Respondents

Survey

240 students responded to the survey, which opened on the 27th February 2017 and closed on the 22nd March 2017. The BME home student population for 2016/17 at the University of Bristol is 2568 students, giving the survey a 9% response rate.

Characteristics		Survey Respondents
Gender	Man	34%
	Woman	65%
	Other/prefer not to say	1%
Ethnicity	Black British: African	16%
	Black British: Caribbean	4%
	Asian British: Chinese	1%
	Asian British: Indian	19%
	Asian British: Pakistani	5%
	Asian British: Bangladeshi	1%
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean	13%
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African	4%
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian	18%
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: Asian	2%
Other	18%	
Level of Study	UG	89%
	PGT	7%
	PGR	5%
Year of Study	1	37%
	2	30%
	3	22%
	4+	10%
Faculty	Arts	18%
	Biomedical	5%
	Engineering	11%
	Health Sciences	16%
	Science	23%
	SSL	28%

Notable aspects of the response profile included:

Gender: A disproportionately high number of women filled in the survey relative to men. This is a trend recognised across Bristol SU's research work, and efforts were made to ensure that the focus group and diary aspects of the project were more gender balanced.

Level of study: The majority of responses came from undergraduates, but this was not a significant concern for this project as the main focus of enquiry was the BME attainment gap at undergraduate level.

Year of study: Two thirds of responses came from 1st year and 2nd year students.

Focus Groups

Two focus groups with 14 BME students at the University of Bristol were conducted in the last two weeks of March. Effort was made to balance the focus groups by gender, ethnicity, year of study and faculty. While more men turned up to the focus groups than women, meaning that 64% of participants were men, this was not a significant concern given that men were underrepresented in the survey.

Characteristics		Focus group participants
Gender	Man	64%
	Woman	36%
Ethnicity	Black British: African	14%
	Asian British: Chinese	7%
	Asian British: Indian	29%
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean	21%
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian	21%
	Other: White and Arabic	7%
Level of Study	UG	93%
	PGT	7%
Year of Study	1	21%
	2	50%
	3	21%
	4+	7%
Faculty	Arts	21%
	Biomedical	7%
	Health Sciences	21%
	Science	21%
	Social Sciences and Law	29%

Diary

11 students took part in the diary exercise overall, and students were recruited from those who expressed interest in keeping a diary as part of the survey. Effort was

again made to balance participants by gender, ethnicity, year of study and faculty. As there was less interest in the diary than in the focus groups, it was more difficult to balance by gender, resulting in 64% of participants being women.

Characteristics		Diary participants
Gender	Man	37%
	Woman	64%
Ethnicity	Black British: Caribbean	18%
	Asian British: Indian	36%
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian	27%
	Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean	9%
	Other: Arab	9%
Level of Study	UG	91%
	PGR	9%
Year of Study	1	18%
	2	18%
	3	36%
	4+	27%
Faculty	Arts	27%
	Health Sciences	27%
	Science	27%
	SSL	18%

Themes

Motivations for University: A Factor in the BME Attainment Gap?

Qualitative research conducted by Cotton, George and Joyner found that when it came to motivations for attending university, BME students appeared less motivated by their own personal development and interest in their subject than white students, and more motivated by factors such as their future career.⁶ BME students also reported being more strongly influenced by family when choosing a degree programme, which 'might result in their choosing courses in which they have little interest'.⁷

When students register on Bristol SU's website they are asked a series of questions, including 'what were your main motivators to come to university?'. 8886 home white students filled out this question and 1248 home BME students filled out this question, allowing differences in motivations to be identified with a high level of confidence.

Overall, white and BME students' motivations were quite similar. BME students were only slightly less likely to tell us they had been motivated to go to University to learn about their subject, with 71% of BME students citing this factor compared to 75% of

⁶ Cotton, George and Joyner, *The Gender and Ethnicity Attainment Gap*, 2.

⁷ Cotton, George and Joyner, *The Gender and Ethnicity Attainment Gap*, 2-3.

white students. BME students did appear slightly more motivated by employability and earning potential, with 71% of BME students citing this as a factor compared to 67% of white students.

There were two significant differences between the motivations of BME and white students. The first appears to suggest that BME students **could be more motivated by personal development than white students**. 57% of BME students reported that they were motivated to attend University to build the skills to change the world around them, compared to 48% of white students. In Bristol SU's annual survey 2016 just 37% of students felt that they had regularly connected their learning to societal problems or issues in the last year, and 34% felt they had never done so in the last year. The absence of these 'skills to change the world' from the curriculum could be one reason for the BME attainment gap, given that BME students are more likely to be motivated to attend University to build these skills. Bristol Futures offers a unique opportunity to embed these skills into the University's curriculum.

The second difference, supporting Cotton, George and Joyner's findings,⁸ suggests that BME students are more likely to go to university to meet the expectations of their family or community. 26% of BME students reported that this was a motivating factor, compared to just 16% of white students. When asked directly what they thought caused the BME attainment gap, many students who responded to our survey mentioned background as a contributing factor. There was a sense that BME students were more likely than white students to be the first to go to university, so had less support from immediate family when it came to tackling university life. Students also mentioned that not speaking English at home could lead to a big culture shock when arriving at university. Some students felt they faced more pressure to succeed and get certain jobs after their degree from their family, with one student explaining 'other cultures (Asian especially) place more emphasis on studies'. Such pressures could lead to stress and mental health difficulties.

These findings suggest that BME students are not significantly more motivated by factors like employability and future career and rather than interest in their subject. BME students could also be more motivated by personal development than white students, given that they are more motivated to change the world around them. However, family and community obligations do appear to be a more influential factor for BME students than white students. This influence could be one small factor in the BME attainment gap, as could the lack of a curriculum that enables students to change the world around them.

Feelings of Isolation

Across the research project, BME students reported feeling isolated at the University, explaining that they were often either the only BME person in a room, or one of very few. 55% of survey respondents felt that BME representation within the student body was extremely or relatively bad, with just 21% reporting that it was extremely or relatively good. This was a feeling that began when students first arrived, including in halls, and continued throughout their time at Bristol. Students spoke of Stoke Bishop

⁸ Cotton, George and Joyner, *The Gender and Ethnicity Attainment Gap*.

as being 'the whitest of all halls' and reported that their experience in halls was 'very white'. When students arrived at the University for teaching, many were shocked by the lack of diversity amongst the student body. One student told us 'it was a shock on my first day walking into my first medical school lecture hall and seeing less than 10 BAME students in a cohort of greater than 250'. Another reported that 'my course is majority white, blonde females, which can definitely make you feel very different sometimes'. This environment seems to have made making friends difficult for some students, as 'people tend to be friends with others who are like them and if you're a BME student then you won't be like them'.

'Yeah it's not a shock anymore. I think it's quite isolating, in a sense, I got so used to being the only black person that when I did see another black person I'd feel really uncomfortable about it kind of thing, like this is not the norm. And to get to that stage isn't healthy, isn't normal'

- Focus Group participant



Left: Diary Participant G, Week 7 (1st - 7th May)

Right: Diary Participant J, Week 2 (27th March - 2nd April)

Diary entries from BME students highlighted the way in which students move about the spaces of the University rarely seeing other people of colour. As the diary period covered the Easter holiday, such images stood in stark contrast with images of students at home with their families, where students felt more comfortable, and able to express their cultural heritage. Diary participant E explained that living with non-BME students this year has meant that 'returning to a family environment (and to my mum's food in particular) this Easter has meant that much more'. Images and

descriptions of BME students' home lives also stood in stark contrast to students' descriptions of their experience in halls. In the final reflection of his diary, diary participant G explained that in Stoke Bishop 'my brown skin works alongside my home-city to make me appear distant, different and 'Other' to the majority of people'.



Left: Diary Participant G, Week 3 (3rd - 9th April)

Right: Diary Participant I, Week 3 (3rd - 9th April)

Feelings of isolation related to students' ethnicity appeared to be exacerbated by a private school/state school divide, with students reporting that the 'gap between states school background like me and private school was very clear' and that Bristol was 'dominated by rich white students'. Private school students at the University 'all know each other and hang out together which makes mixing difficult'. When students were asked directly what they believed caused the BME attainment gap, many felt that class was a factor, with one student arguing that 'white, middle class people are more likely to have financial privilege to fall back on and not to have to work in term time'. Students also felt that many BME students came from state schools which contributed to them feeling unprepared academically and socially isolated because of both their ethnicity and educational background.

Several students told us of their surprise at the lack of diversity at the University, given the city's reputation as being highly diverse. One student in our focus group, who had grown up in Bristol, explained that 'when I came here, got a place, it felt weird to feel out of place in my own city'. Another student in our survey described how they had spent much of their first year exploring the wider city trying to meet local

BME people, because they could not see themselves represented in any events at the University. Such feelings of isolation made it difficult for students to feel that they belonged at the University, and were cited by students as a reason why satisfaction amongst BME students was lower than amongst white students. A significant minority (29%) survey respondents found feeling like they belonged to the University difficult, suggesting that this is a common issue for home BME students at the University.

The feeling of being 'the only BME person' appeared to have a significant impact on students' teaching and learning experiences. While 37% of survey respondents said that the teaching and learning environment at Bristol was friendly and supportive and 14% said it was respectful, 18% felt it was cliquy and isolating. Only 5% of students described their teaching and learning environment as diverse. This lack of diversity had a significant impact on students' lives and made students feel hyper-aware of their identity whilst at the University. Diary participant K, a medical student, described feeling that staff always seemed surprised, or didn't believe them, when they showed their badge at the hospital. Many students felt uncomfortable contributing their perspective as a home BME student during lectures and tutorials, and the overwhelming reason for this was because of being the only person of colour in the room. One student explained 'as far as I can tell I am the only person of a non-white British background in my tutorial group and it makes me feel a bit odd'.

'I have only seen one black lecturer and there are only 5 black people in my course. Sometimes, I feel a bit lost because I do not see people that look like me on very often....but if I do see a fellow black student I feel happy for some reason'
- Survey respondent



Diary participant G, week 8 (8th May - 14th May)

Feelings of otherness appear to have constrained some BME students' freedom of expression at the University. One student reported that 'recently Rhodes Must Fall came up in a seminar and as the only BME student I didn't feel comfortable offering an opinion'. Another described how they had 'a discussion about Muslim students and sex segregation which was interesting. I don't want to seem like I am condoning this viewpoint so I don't say very much in case it sounds like I am (which I don't)'. Given that students learn best when they can participate in learning environments, these feelings could help to partly explain the BME attainment gap.

Other students held off contributing for fear of becoming 'the sole representative of all black people'. Diary participant J described her sense that women of colour at UoB were 'expected to be experts on race. It's sometimes as if that's all we know... in classroom settings we're expected to contribute on issues of race/victimhood'. Some students who had expressed their views on issues related to ethnicity felt that white students did not appear to be 'aware of their privilege'. There was a sense that white students were sick of hearing BME perspectives even though they were rarely exposed to them. One student reported that 'others insist that things are not as big a deal as I may feel'. The 'eye roll' and a sense of 'here we go again' whenever a BME student brought up racism appears to be a common occurrence. While some students did feel that their contributions were valued, one student commented that even when others valued their contributions 'people cannot empathise with you'.

"I Can't be Completely Myself"

An issue which was highlighted during focus groups was a sense that BME students could not be completely themselves at the University. One focus group participant told us 'I kind of feel not as able to be open about my ethnic side to other people, maybe just not knowing how they'd react'. Another described how living in a house with three white male students had meant that there were certain things he couldn't express to them. Another focus group participant reported that she always felt she was being herself but then 'with my friends from home, I feel more comfortable'. In the survey, a Law student said that 'Law especially is dominated by an upper middle-class background... you feel you have to change the way you speak or behave'. For some students, the pressure of not being themselves had an impact on their wellbeing. One student explained 'I've had to police myself – not be too loud or passionate (for fear of scaring off my peers or being seen as irrational). Which is very tiring'.

'While my white friends' jokey petty complaints are met with confirmation and gales of laughter, this week, when I (in jest) said 'I can't decide what to wear tomorrow cos I have no clue what the weather's going to be like', I was met with an awkward stony silence followed by, 'it doesn't take much to get YOU riled up does it?...' Instances such as this have made me police my expression to no end. I have assumed a submissive demeanour, always apologising for no reason, giving thanks for anything, thinking three times before I say a word, and being generally reserved... I am so so sick of this. I can understand why strangers may find me intimidating, but it hurts when my close friends and family put me in the suffocating

box of 'domineering/angry black woman.'
- Diary Participant A, reflection week 7 (1st - 7th May)

Building on these feelings, several students in focus group discussions spoke of 'performing whiteness' and 'playing the game'. One student felt that 'my perspective is valued only because I mirror whiteness, in my mannerisms, my spoken voice and my choice of words. That's why people value my perspective. Because of my performance'. A second spoke of 'playing the game' as a strategic survival mechanism, saying 'you've got to play the game to get where you want to go... my theory is, I only have to pretend for so long... once I'm, like get somewhere, I can be a bit more myself'. A third student had changed their name to a more English sounding name, which they felt had helped them a lot in terms of avoiding questions about their background when they first met people.

Still, it is worth noting that many students did feel they could be themselves, particularly in areas where BME representation amongst students was better. One Dentistry student reported that their classes were about 'half and half with white and a mix, everyone's pretty cool, everyone can feel pretty valued, pretty appreciated, I don't feel I've had to change at all'. Several students also mentioned the importance of cultural societies in giving them a place to belong. This feeling was also reflected in student diaries, particularly amongst students who lived with other BME students. Diary participant H explained 'this year I've lived with 3 other BME students... it's very comforting being able to discuss our experiences together and has made me feel more mentally healthy'. Meanwhile diary participant E described how living with 3 other girls of similar backgrounds in second year meant that they 'soon became like family. We understood each other's needs'. While such spaces gave students more of a feeling of belonging and the ability to celebrate their culture, there was a feeling that the University could do more to be accommodating of different cultures - for example by being careful not to timetable exams around non-Christian religious events.

'Having all these different societies it's definitely made me more comfortable in my own skin and now I'm just like, I'll do what I want, I'll wear what I want'
- Focus Group Participant

Racism and Microaggressions

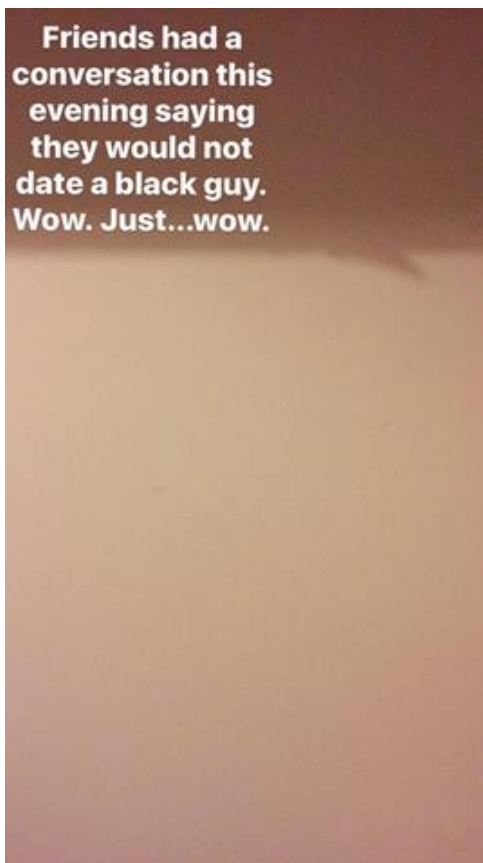
Students across the research project reported experiencing racism and microaggressions themselves, as well as witnessing racism and microaggressions against others. Microaggressions are defined as 'subtle, stunning, often automatic, and non-verbal' exchanges which are 'put downs' of blacks by offenders'.⁹ BME students at the University of Bristol particularly experienced microaggressions through being silenced for discussing certain issues, for example one student was asked 'slavery ended ages ago, why are we still talking about that?' and another, when mentioning the Wills Memorial building, was told 'why do we have to bring it up

⁹ Chester M. Pierce, Jean V. Carew, Diane Pierce-Gonzalez Pierce and Deborah Wills, 'An Experiment in Racism: TV commercials', in *Television and Education*, ed. Chester M. Pierce (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1978), 66.

again'. Other students faced direct racist comments from their peers. Diary participant E told us that on her first night as a fresher she introduced herself to two second year boys as a veterinary science student and was told by one 'that's not true you're not white'. Diary participant K experienced racism whilst undertaking her diary, which had an impact on her mental health;

'I ended up writing to the student advisors because I couldn't cope with being in a group who found it funny to mock south Asian names and use ableist [language] when describing people with psychiatric problems (on a psychiatric placement) ... It made me think about how my problems at this uni is so linked to my identity as a first generation immigrant black woman and the utter lack of respect people have for this group as well as other groups... I had an incredibly dark and frustrating last week'

- Diary participant K, week 2 (27th March - 2nd April)



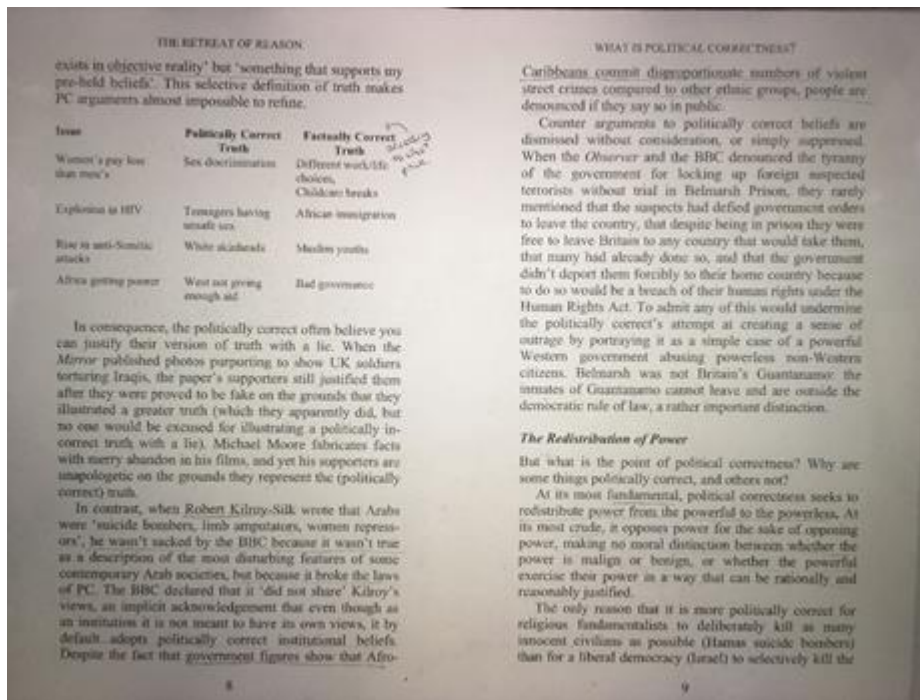
Diary Participant C, Week 2 (27th March - 2nd April)

Ignorant comments and questions were widely reported, including questions such as 'do you speak Indian' and 'where are you *really* from' and comments like 'you're the first black friend I've ever had'. Students found such comments tiring, and this in turn made navigating social spaces a chore. When asked why they thought the BME attainment gap was an issue students in our survey cited experiences of racism, and students also felt that a lack of a cohesive support network could have an impact. One student argued that BME students 'may be less integrated within their course... less likely to have an available network (students and staff) to fall back on when

studies become challenging'. Many students did not feel that they had someone to turn to when things got tough. As one student explained; 'BME students are obviously smart enough to get into university. Therefore, it must be something about the time spent at uni that causes the attainment gap. Specifically, it is the micro-aggressions, the isolation, and the lack of representation that harms the collective mental and emotional well-being of BME students'.

There was a sense from both diary participants and focus group participants that students had to spend a lot of time and energy either calling out or educating their peers. Diary participant A had arranged a workshop for students on race, only to have almost no one turn up. Meanwhile diary Participant F told us that as the only non-white member of her society's committee she felt 'even more committed to outreach and encouraging diversity in the performing arts'. This sense of responsibility weighed heavy on some students. Some students worried about calling things out for fear of being labelled 'the angry BME person'. Others felt that they had to pick and choose when they called things out, because it could be awkward when you were trying to make friends. One student in a focus group told us that 'if I addressed every single thing, I wouldn't get my freaking degree done'.

Students had also witnessed students being racist and hostile towards BME staff. One student recalled sitting in a lecture by a Pakistani academic and hearing students whisper 'I don't understand what he's saying' and 'why is he repeating everything so much'. At the time the student tried to laugh it off but inside they felt that this was 'so rude and so disrespectful'. Another student recalled that they had witnessed BME lecturers being made fun of as part of a student comedy show. Students also recalled inappropriate comments from white staff members, with one student noting that 'older white staff have poor racial views' and another reporting that 'lecturers will take advantage of the ability to pause or stop a recording in order to say something inappropriate, either a coarse word or a racially-targeted phrase'. Several students mentioned that lecturers had adopted a negative tone when discussing blackness and Africa 'as if it was a menace'.



Diary participant A, week 1 (20th - 26th March)

'One of the readings for my 'Race, Culture & Ethnicity' unit was absolutely full of racist, sexist, xenophobic, Islamophobic (I could go on...) vitriol. Felt genuinely uncomfortable reading it, and was silenced by the seminar tutor when I voiced my outrage at the offensive nature of the reading. It was a thoroughly frustrating week'



Diary participant A, week 2 (27th March - 2nd April)

*'Genuinely had to sit through a class in which I was made to watch Chris Rock's 'Black People vs. N*ggaz,' as well as Richard Pryor's more choice/racially offensive moments, clips of Jay Leno's anti-immigrant 'comedy,' and clips of every racial epithet uttered in 'Love Thy Neighbour.' As the only PoC in the class (including the tutor), I don't think I've ever felt more outraged or uncomfortable in a class. I genuinely felt sick to my stomach, and had to hide my tears of rage... Another frustrating week at Bristol Uni'*

While issues were raised about staff's behaviour, in general, BME students did not feel that staff were biased against them, and 81% of survey respondents agreed that their work was marked fairly. In focus group discussions, this trust was largely attributed by students to the anonymous marking system but one student suggested that 'the fact that work has to be marked anonymously shows there is a bias present at some level'. Several students did talk about how they felt that some students received more help and support from staff than others, with a Law student reporting that 'many law students are aware that some students are more favoured and receive extra help'.

'Whenever I ask for feedback, nothing is pointed in a way that will help me improve. Instead, my tutors tell me that "most people would be happy with those grades" or "just keep doing what you're doing". My white colleagues with similar grades receive feedback which is much clearer and directed at what particular steps they need to improve'

- Focus group participant

Mental Health and Support

In the survey students were asked to rate the different support systems at the University based on their experience. When it came to academic support the majority of students said support was relatively or extremely good (59%), with 19% reporting that it was relatively/extremely bad and 20% responding neutrally. Pastoral support was deemed less effective, with 42% replying that it was relatively/extremely good, 31% replying neutrally and 21% saying it was relatively/extremely bad. 39% of students rated Student Health and Counselling as relatively/extremely good, 15% reported that these services were relatively/extremely bad and 28% were neutral. When asked to expand on their feedback students raised a number of known issues, such as oversubscription of the counselling service and mixed experiences with personal tutors, who students did not see as someone they could open up to about their mental health.

What was unique to BME students was the way that the isolation they experienced as the 'only BME student' impacted on their mental health. One student described being the only BME person on her course as 'a weight on my shoulder kinda thing, watch what I say, watch how I act'. Another student felt that discussions about issues such as colonialism in a room of 100 students with a white lecturer and perhaps 5 other non-white students 'can affect wellbeing negatively'. One focus group participant who had to suspend her studies felt that 'not having people to relate to... was a major contribution to why I had to take a year out'. In this way, a lack of BME representation in the student body can have a significant impact on students' attainment. Many students reported that they struggled to speak up about their mental health because of a lack of BME specific support. There was a sense from several students that if they had done something differently their experience might have been different. One diary participant told us after reflecting on their difficult experience that 'I acknowledge that a lot of this may be my fault, how I acted and decisions I have made'. This feeling of self-blame could contribute to mental health difficulties and anxiety.

*'I have found it very difficult to express race-related discomforts to the senior tutors as I feel that they would lack understanding of the nuances of the experience'.
- Survey respondent*

Students spoke of the need for spaces to talk to others about being BME at university, and a feeling that white staff members could not understand the problems affecting them. The idea of a BME counsellor was raised in focus group discussions, and peer support groups or mentors specifically for BME students were suggested by several students as one way to tackle feelings of isolation brought on by a lack of representation in the student body. This could be beneficial as a significant minority of students (25%) currently find peer support extremely or relatively difficult to access.

*'As a BME student I feel like I can't always talk about what upsets me because your average white faculty member/counsellor/tutor probably would not understand'
- Survey respondent*

While some students arrived at the University of Bristol with mental health difficulties, and found that they struggled to get support for these, others felt that their mental health difficulties had been caused or exacerbated by the university itself. Just 36% of survey respondents found maintaining their wellbeing extremely or relatively easy and 38% found this extremely or relatively difficult, suggesting that the University could do more to help students maintain their own wellbeing. When students were asked in the survey about the impact (positive or negative) that Bristol had had on their wellbeing students talked about the ways in which Bristol had allowed them to grow academically and helped them to build confidence. However, students again raised the issue of isolation and not feeling part of a 'group', and the anxiety caused by everyday microaggressions.

'Throughout my time at Uni, I have constantly fought for myself and have often felt as though I am on a lone-struggle. This has been hampered by the lack of PoC at my halls, and then my difficulties with social anxiety in second year when wanting to make new friends. My social anxiety only extends to Bristol, when I leave, I am fine. This says a lot about my experience of the University and how my difficulties are very centralised within the University, and city, grounds'

- Diary participant G, week 8 (8th - 14th May)

Survey respondents were about as likely to find making friends in their societies (55%), in halls (61%), and on their course (60%), extremely or relatively easy. Students found making friends outside of the university more difficult, with just 31% finding this extremely or relatively easy, suggesting that more could be done to integrate the University and the community. 53% of students found making cross-cultural contacts extremely or relatively easy, and men found this easier than women (66% to 46%).

A White Curriculum

In the survey, students were asked how well certain aspects of teaching and learning included diverse perspectives, including political, religious, racial/ethnic and gender perspectives. Students were asked about their experience of the curriculum, course discussions and assignments. For these questions responses were quite evenly split, but there were some interesting differences between faculties.

When asked about their current curriculum 33% said that inclusion of diverse perspectives was extremely/relatively bad, and 28% said it was extremely/relatively good. However, in Arts and Social Sciences 39% rated the diversity of the curriculum as extremely or relatively good, compared to 19% of respondents in the STEM faculties. When asked about course discussions, responses were very similar, with 31% reporting that inclusion of diverse perspectives was extremely or relatively bad, and 27% reporting that it was extremely or relatively good. Yet in Arts and Social Sciences 41% described the inclusion of diverse perspectives as good, and just 15% in STEM said the same. This is likely partly because Arts and Social Sciences subjects tend to allow for more discussion, and 27% of STEM students replied that this question was not applicable, compared to 6% of Arts and Social Sciences students. However, clearly some students did feel that such perspectives were relevant, as 41% chose to say inclusion was bad, rather than respond that it was not applicable. Finally, when asked about assignments many students were neutral (32%) with students split

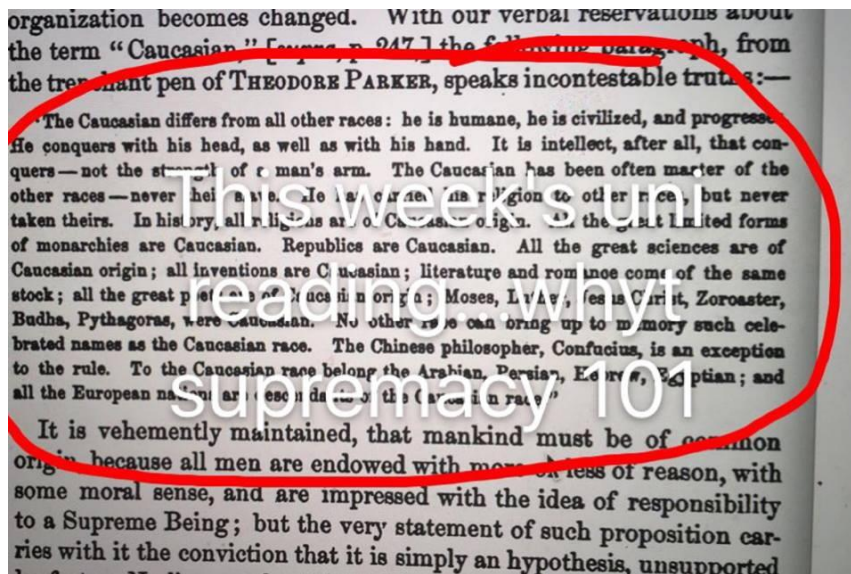
between extremely/relatively bad (26%) and extremely/relatively good (23%). Again, more Arts and Social Sciences students deemed diversity within assignments to be extremely/relatively good (36%) compared to STEM students (13%). While students overall were relatively split on how well diverse perspectives were included in their curriculum, course discussion and assignments, that around a third of students felt that diversity within the curriculum and course discussions was either relatively or extremely bad is notable when considering reasons for the BME attainment gap.

In open text comments and in focus group discussions, students expanded on the diversity of the curriculum at UoB. Experiences varied considerably by Faculty, with many students in STEM subjects reporting that they didn't feel that diverse perspectives were relevant to their subject. Focus group participants told us 'I'm studying Physics so it's just numbers really' and 'Maths is either you're right or you're wrong'. However, this view was not universal. Medicine students in particular highlighted ways that diverse perspectives could be, and needed to be, included in their curriculum. For example, one student highlighted that her course did not include skin conditions experienced by BME people and assumed that everyone was white in course discussions. Another focus group participant explained that she had only been able to explore diverse perspectives outside of her course. Her Medicine society had organised a talk from Integrate on FGM and 'loads of people have never heard of it, were so oblivious... it's crazy that they didn't teach us, if I hadn't gone to that talk, I would have never learned about it'. Furthermore, a geography student in a focus group highlighted how 'as a geographer, I had to find it out if I could study race, you almost have to choose a path and go down that... I feel like the people who don't choose that path are almost the people who need to go down it and learn about race'.

A common view in the Arts and Social Sciences faculties was that the curriculum was extremely 'euro-centric', and there was a sense from students that diversifying the curriculum was not a priority for the University. One Politics student reported that 'it was only in second and third year, when I was able to pick my own units that I began to experience more diversity'. Diversity in the curriculum often appeared to be segregated in certain units, rather than integrated into the whole curriculum. One student commented that 'histories on blacks, ethnic minorities, or women I feel are "token" units', with another stating that 'the fact that Black British writing is segregated to a single unit is pretty shocking'. Other units had almost no diversity at all, with one English student explaining 'with modern lit we generally have one week on race, one on gender, but with historical lit it's 100% white and 90% male'. Some students highlighted how other universities were better at incorporating diverse perspectives, with one Ancient History student reporting that 'different universities, I think UCL and stuff, have like ancient history and classics that look at Persian empires, African empires, they don't just focus on Greece and Italy'. Another student told us that they were teaching themselves Hindi because the University didn't offer it 'which is sad because I know there are other unis in the UK that teach it'. There was also a sense from some students that gender received more attention than race in the curriculum, and that there was a lack of intersectionality when it came to discussions of gender.

'We have one particular subject on our course- critical race studies- which is just glanced over and barely touched upon. Yet feminism is given more precedence - black women should be a key part of the feminist jurisprudence that we study but it is not'.

- Law student, survey



Diary participant A, week 7 (1st - 7th May)

Many students felt that a lack of diversity in the curriculum had an impact on students' engagement with their courses. When survey participants were asked why they thought BME students were less positive about their course than white students, a lack of diverse perspectives was one of the main ideas put forward. As one student noted 'I feel like minority ethnic groups are less likely to engage with their course when they are taught about things that do not relate to their history or consider their individual knowledges'. Lack of diversity in the curriculum could also have an impact on students' mental health, with one student reporting that having to read things that were contrary to their own experience has 'continued to affect my self-worth as an academic and a human. It's quite frustrating seeing and learning from a curriculum which doesn't accommodate you'.

Students who had been able to study from their own perspective found the experience transformational, with one Law student in a focus group describing how their dissertation on Black Lives Matter had been 'the thing I've been most passionate about at uni, it was refreshing to have that'. Several diary participants who were in their final year had chosen to write their dissertations on issues related to ethnicity, highlighting both the interest in these issues and the added onus on BME students to share these perspectives.

'Handed in my dissertation today... a very under researched topic! I'm excited to get it marked and hopefully add to a real, academic narrative'

Diary participant G, Week 6 (24th - 30th April)



Diary participant J, week 3 (3rd - 9th April)

'I've spent most of the week in the library... I'm doing my dissertation on the experiences of black female students in the university, so I've been exposing myself a lot of alternative materials in the ASS library'

Representation of BME Staff

When asked how well students felt that their identity was represented in the academic staff body, 67% of students felt that representation was extremely or relatively bad, with just 15% reporting that it was extremely or relatively good. Female students were more likely to feel that representation was bad, with 78% feeling this compared to 45% of male students. This may be because women as well as people of colour are underrepresented in the staff body, meaning that BME women feel doubly unrepresented. Students also felt that the representation of their identity was poor amongst admin staff, with 63% describing this representation as extremely or relatively bad. Women were again more likely to feel that representation was bad, with 73% feeling this, compared to 44% of men.

Students had a range of views on how this underrepresentation in the staff body impacted upon them. Some students felt that it was 'terrible not feeling represented' and explained that 'it makes me feel as though it would not be worth pursuing a career in academia because I would face a glass ceiling'. One student told us that the lack of BME staff at the University made them feel that the University didn't belong to them, and another described the experience of not identifying with any staff as 'quite upsetting'. In focus groups the majority of students did not feel that a lack of BME staff affected them negatively, but many students spoke about how it would be 'nice' to be taught by a BME academic. Given that male students were

overrepresented in the focus groups, this is in keeping with our finding that female students were more likely to be concerned about a lack of representation in the staff body.

'I don't think I've had a black tutor since I've been here... it's not something that I have noticed or has affected me negatively, but like, there was a Nigerian tutor who my friend has and who does my course as well, and when I heard her name, it did come to me, like I thought 'oh I wish I had her'... it would just be nice to have someone there teaching you who's kind of from your background'

- Focus group participant

Many survey respondents actively asked for greater representation of BME people at the University, particularly within the academic staff body. There was a sense that an increase in BME staff would give students more of a sense of belonging to the institution, and reduce isolation. Many students also believed that an increase in BME academics would lead to a more diverse curriculum. One English Literature student explained 'naturally if you have a lot more diverse lecturers then you're going to have a lot more of those [topics]... I imagine someone from a BME background who's teaching lit 1 or 2 or 3 or 4 which is like the standard literature, you're naturally gonna probably have a bit more diversity in your reading list'.

Awareness of Policies and Reporting

Worryingly, given that many students who participated in this research project had experienced racism or microaggressions, there was low awareness amongst survey respondents of University of Bristol's policies and complaints procedures. 44% of survey respondents said that they were not aware and had not been made aware of the existence of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy. Meanwhile 50% of respondents were not familiar with the Unacceptable Behaviour policy and had not been made aware of its existence.

When asked whether they knew how to submit a formal complaint to the University or knew who to contact for information 79% said they did not know or were unsure and just 21% knew how to complain formally. When asked whether they trusted the integrity of the University of Bristol's structures/systems to deal with their complaints fairly and impartially students were reasonably evenly split, with many feeling they had no reason to distrust the University. Others had faith in the Student's Union to help because 'the SU is a separate organisation from the University, so if I had any issues I know that they would be taken seriously'. Students who did not trust the integrity of the University's systems felt that there was a lack of urgency around complaints as well as a lack of response and support when it came to incidents of racism. Several students mentioned recent incidents of racism as evidence that the University was not equipped to deal with complaints. Others felt they would not be taken seriously by the University and would be seen as 'pulling the race card'. There was a sense from some survey respondents that it would be better to report incidents to the media, rather than the University, as this would mean more publicity and more action on the issue.

'Based on a statement released by the university in relation to racist incidences, the university seem reluctant to support BME students on issues they do not deem as a

"campus issue" until wider news and media outlets take interest in our issues, suggesting that the university are less inclined to respect and deal with such issues appropriately'

- Survey participant

'Due to the recent news about the racism, I feel like the uni is lacking slightly in how seriously it supports BME students which is upsetting'.

- Survey participant

Issues with the complaining process itself were also raised, and at times this process appeared to have been uncomfortable for students. One student reported that they were 'worried because I had to complain about one white man's inappropriate comments to another white man which is very anxiety inducing'. BME students argued that failures in the system lay in the lack of suitable and effective processes, with one student explaining 'it's something specific to being BME student, there is no one in the team who deal with complaints who is likely to understand. How many people can understand the unique perspective of being a black woman studying a male dominated subject with very few black students?'. This suggests that to feel that they will be taken seriously, some BME students need a member of BME staff to speak to. Students also felt unsupported by their peers, with one student saying that 'I have experienced some things that I thought were racist, but when I explained them to my peers they were all like 'oh maybe you're just overthinking it, maybe this and that''. There was also a sense that students would not report an issue unless it was 'extreme', and that most of the time they would just 'shrug it off'.

Recommendations

The University of Bristol is already taking some positive steps to improve the experiences of BME students at the institution. These include the development of an online reporting tool, and the rolling out of bystander intervention training. However, there is still much to be done to improve the experiences of BME students and reduce the BME attainment gap.

Design Curricula to Engage and Inspire the Diverse Student Body at Bristol

The University should aspire to have diverse, representative content as an integral part of all curricula. To achieve this the University should:

- Embed more diverse content into curricula by ensuring that the diversity and representativeness of curricula is considered as part of curriculum reviews and by promoting diverse course content through Bristol Futures.
- Ensure that course content addresses 'societal problems or issues' to meet BME students' desire to change the world around them - particularly in STEM subjects such as Maths or Physics where diverse perspectives can be less relevant to course content.
- Collaborate with the student campaign 'Why Is My Curriculum White?' to identify diversification opportunities within curricula and to promote co-curricular activities that engage students with more diverse and representative content.
- Consider the possibility of local award and recognition schemes in schools, to formally recognise schools that have worked with students to make their curriculum more representative.
- Review curriculum diversity as part of the University's quality assurance processes.

Tackle Instances of Harassment and Discrimination Where These Occur

Currently there is a culture at the institution where harassment and discrimination goes unreported and unaddressed. BME students should have simple ways to report this behaviour when it occurs and should have confidence in University processes. To achieve this the University should:

- Promote the Unacceptable Behaviour policy and the complaints procedure to students in Welcome Week and throughout students' time at University.
- Reform the complaints procedure in partnership with BME students and SU officers to ensure that students understand that this process allows them to report incidents of racism and discrimination to the University.
- As a minimum, provide all staff in student facing roles and all students in support roles with equality and diversity training to help them support BME students at the institution and prevent discrimination and microaggressions. Training should be developed with the Equality, Liberation and Access Officer and the BME Students' Network. There should also be an aspiration to provide all students and staff with such training.

Combat Feelings of Isolation in the BME Student Population

No BME student should be made to feel that they do not belong in the University community because of their identity. To achieve this the University should:

- Support the BME Students' Network by promoting its events and initiatives and engaging the network in decision-making processes at the University.
- Explore the feasibility of implementing BME student representatives or champions in Faculties or Schools, to facilitate BME community-building activities within existing academic communities. One model worthy of consideration is [University of Birmingham's Student Ambassador scheme](#).
- Consider ethnicity in halls allocation, to ensure that students are not the only BME student in their block of flats, and to diversify Stoke Bishop in general.
- Implement strategies to increase the number of BME staff in the institution, in both academic and professional services roles. While Bristol is ahead of the sector in terms of BME academic staff, students feel that Bristol is not diverse in terms of its staff body.
- If desired by BME staff, support the formation of a BME Staff Network which could collaborate with the BME Students' Network on activities of mutual interest.
- Celebrate the work of BME people in the institution and across the city, and explore ways to provide BME students with student, staff or community mentors.

Increase the Proportion of Home BME Students Studying at Bristol

The University must aspire to have diverse cohorts for every course which are reflective of the national population. Without change in this area, BME students will continue to feel isolated and cultural change will be more difficult. To achieve this the University should:

- Commission research to increase institutional understanding of BME applicants' decision-making processes, and their perceptions of Bristol.
- Create a new member of staff with designated responsibility for increasing recruitment of home BME students and supporting BME students at the University within the Widening Participation Team, and strongly encourage BME applicants to apply for this role.
- Set challenging institutional targets for the admission of home BME students at the institution.
- Identify Schools or courses with particularly low proportions of home BME students, and develop targeted strategies to improve these levels.

Ensure BME Students Can Access Support from People Who Understand Their Experiences

All levels of support within the institution should provide BME students with the opportunity to speak to someone who is also BME, so that students can feel more comfortable discussing issues related to their identity. To achieve this the University should:

- Ensure that new Wellbeing Advisor posts include BME advisors, and provide BME students across Faculties with a route to access these advisors if they wish to.
- Seek to expand the counselling provision that can be offered by BME counsellors within the Counselling Service, and allow BME students to request to speak to a BME counsellor.
- Recruit a greater number of BME PASS mentors and ensure that there is at least one BME Senior Resident in each University residence.

Make an Institutional Commitment to Improving the BME Student Experience

Addressing an issue as complex and systemic as the BME attainment gap will require significant changes to institutional culture, policy and practice. To achieve this the University should:

- Ensure that activities relating to BME recruitment, attainment and experience are integrated into the work plans of key University committees.
- Join the ECU Race Equality Charter.
- Ensure that progress on BME attainment and satisfaction, as well as the recommendations of this report, are monitored by both the EDI steering group and the Widening Participation team.
- Follow the recommendations of the Graduate School of Education's research into successful practice within schools for raising the attainment of home BME undergraduate students.

Appendix 1: Survey Questions

1. Do you understand and agree with the participant information presented to you on this page as well as the previous page?

2. What is your gender?

Female

Male

Other

Prefer not to say

2.a. If you selected Other, please specify:

3. What is your level of study?

Undergraduate

Postgraduate Taught

Postgraduate Research

4. What is your ethnic group?

Black British: African

Black British: Caribbean

Asian British: Chinese

Asian British: Indian

Asian British: Pakistani

Asian British: Bangladeshi

Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean

Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black African

Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Asian

Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: Asian

White British: English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish

White Irish

Other

4.a. If you selected Other, please specify:

5. What year group are you in?

1st year

2nd year

3rd year

4th year+

6. In which School or Department do you study?

7. What factors influenced your decision to study with the University of Bristol?

The university's location (the city)
The university's academic excellence and reputation
The content of your chosen course
The availability of bursaries
Cost of living
Parents
Peers
Other (please specify)

7.a. If you selected Other, please specify:

7.b. What factors influenced your decision to study your course?

Learning more about my chosen subject
Meeting the expectations of my family or community
Improving my employability and earning potential
Building the skills to change the world around me
Other

7.b.i. If you selected Other, please specify:

8. On reflection, how prepared did you feel for university life and study when you arrived at the University of Bristol?

9. Please rate the following aspects based on their impact on your experience at the University of Bristol (Extremely bad, Relatively bad, Neutral, Relatively good, Extremely good, N/A)

9.1 Academic support (from personal tutors)

9.2 Pastoral support (from personal tutors, Senior Residents, Wardens etc.)

9.3 Students' Union (Union officers, JustAsk, etc.)

9.4 Student Health/Counselling services

9.a. If you would like, please elaborate on why these experiences were good or bad, and how you think the University could improve on any of these aspects.

10. How well do you feel that your identity is represented within the following groups at the University of Bristol? i.e. do you think that there are a good number of people who share your identity in these groups. (Extremely bad, Relatively bad, Neutral, Relatively good, Extremely good, N/A)

10.1 Academic staff

10.2 Admin staff

10.3 Course representatives

10.4 Students' Union officers

10.5 Students

10.a. If you would like, please elaborate on how these levels of representation make you feel, and how you think the University could improve the representation of your

identity in these groups.

11. How well do you feel that your perspectives and views are represented by the following groups at the University of Bristol? i.e. do you feel that these groups take into account and put forward your views and perspectives. (Extremely bad, Relatively bad, Neutral, Relatively good, Extremely good, N/A)

11.1 Academic staff

11.2 Admin staff

11.3 Course Representatives

11.4 Students' Union Officers

11.a. If you would like, please elaborate on how these levels of representation make you feel, and how you think the University could improve the representation of your identity in these groups.

12. Based on your own experience at the University of Bristol, please rate how difficult each of these aspects has been for you (Extremely bad, Relatively bad, Neutral, Relatively good, Extremely good, N/A)

12.1 Making friends in your course/school

12.2 Making friends in your societies

12.3 Making friends in University accommodation/halls

12.4 Making friends outside of the university

12.5 Feeling like you belong at the University of Bristol

12.6 Making cross-cultural contacts

12.7 Seeking peer support

12.8 Maintaining your wellbeing

13. If relevant, please let us know how your experience at the University of Bristol has positively or negatively impacted your wellbeing, and what the university could do to improve it.

14. How would you describe your experience of the teaching and learning environment at the University of Bristol? Please tick ALL that apply.

a. Friendly

b. Supportive

c. Tolerant

d. Cliquey

e. Respectful

f. Hostile

g. Racist

h. Isolating

i. Diverse

j. Welcoming

Other

14.a. If you selected Other, please specify:

14.b. If you would like, please let us know about your experience at the University of Bristol in relation to the word(s) you have ticked above (e.g. what impact does it have on your wellbeing, either positive or negative, and how could the university improve it?)

15. Please rate how well these aspects of teaching and learning have included diverse perspectives (e.g. political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc) (Extremely bad, Relatively bad, Neutral, Relatively good, Extremely good, N/A)

15.1 Your current curriculum

15.2 Course discussions

15.3 Assignments

15.a. If relevant, please elaborate further on how your teaching and learning experiences could have better included diverse perspectives.

16. If relevant, how comfortable do you feel about contributing your perspective as a BME home student during lectures and tutorials? Do you feel that your perspective is valued?

17. To what extent do you agree that you are able to trust academic staff at the University of Bristol to mark your work fairly?

17.a. If relevant, please elaborate on why you do or do not trust academic staff at the University of Bristol to mark your work fairly.

18. If you need to submit a formal complaint about any aspects of your experience at the University of Bristol, would you know how to do so, or who to contact for more information?

19. Have you submitted a formal complaint during your study at the University of Bristol?

20. Do you trust the integrity of the University of Bristol's structures/system to deal fairly and impartially with your complaint, and why?

21. Are you aware of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy at the University of Bristol?

21.a. Has this policy had an impact on your experience?

22. Are you aware of the Dealing with Unacceptable Behaviour policy at the University of Bristol?

22.a. Has the policy had an impact on your experience?

23. Do you feel that there is a culture at the University of Bristol where you can speak out about incidents of bullying, harassment or discrimination?

24. In every National Student Survey since it began in 2005, students from minority ethnic groups tend to feel less positive about their course than other students, this includes areas such as teaching quality, assessment, feedback, and personal development. Why do you think this is the case?

25. Research has shown that there is a significant attainment gap between students from Black and Minority Ethnic communities and their White peers. This is indicated by the difference between the proportion of white qualifiers who obtained a 1st class or 2:1 (good honours) and the proportion of BME qualifiers who achieved at the same level. Why do you think this is the case?

26. In which phase(s) are you interested in participating?

Focus group interview

Diary keeping

27. Please let us know your name if you would like to be contacted

28. Please let us know your email address if you would like to be contacted

Appendix 2: Focus Group Questions

Icebreaker

Talk to the person next to you about your favourite thing about Bristol for 30 seconds.

Quick Activity

2 minutes: On a post-it, write the best and worst thing about being a BME student at Bristol. Focus group runners to stick up these post-its and these can be looked at if conversation is slowing or used as prompts. Keep the post-it's at the end as these can be used as additional data.

Questions

1. Overall, how has your experience been as a Black and Minority Ethnic student at the University of Bristol?
2. Do you feel that you have found a social group at the University that you belong to?
Follow up if required: For those who said no or weren't sure – what impact has this had on your studies?
3. Do you feel like you can be yourself at UoB?
Follow up if required: Do you ever feel like being completely yourself makes others feel uncomfortable?
4. Do you feel that your contributions are valued in your classes?
Follow up if required: If no how does this make you feel? Do you think this has had an impact on your studies?
5. Do you feel that you have a responsibility to represent people of colour in your classes?
Follow up if required: If yes do you feel this places an extra burden on you?
6. What impact would being taught by more BME academics have on you and your work?
7. What impact would being taught about a range of different perspectives (e.g. political, religious, racial/ethnic, gender, etc) have on your studies and sense of belonging to the institution?
8. As a BME student, what has your experience been like of working with other students, for example in group work or in seminar discussions?
9. How have your feelings towards your studies changed since beginning your degree?

10. How comfortable would you be raising an issue related to your ethnicity if you experienced one?

Follow up if required: Are you aware of the complaints procedure at the University?

11. Do you feel that you can trust academic staff to mark your work fairly?

Follow up if required: Are you comfortable following up on feedback if you need more detail on how you can improve?

12. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experiences that you haven't yet shared?