TASO
Transforming Access
and Student Outcomes
in Higher Education

Report:

The impact of curriculum reform on the ethnicity degree awarding gap

November 2022

CONTENTS

1.   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Among the inequalities in British higher education (HE), the degree awarding gap between Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students and their White peers is one of the most persistent and longstanding (HEA and ECA 2008; UUK 2022). Addressing it has become an increasing commitment within the sector, and the Office for Students (OfS), as the HE regulator, has a Key Performance Measure to address it (OfS, 2022). The gap varies by ethnic group, with Black students having the largest gap, and data shows that it cannot be explained by entry qualification, course of study, or age.

While there is a clear focus on and commitment to addressing this gap, there is still little evidence on what works in closing it. The pace of change is also very slow: according to one estimate, on current trends the White-Black degree awarding gap will not close until 2086 (Loke, 2020). To build this evidence, TASO partnered with two HE providers to analyse whether their existing interventions designed to address the degree awarding gap were effectively doing so.

1.1   Overview of report

This report summarises the evaluation of two curriculum reform interventions that aimed to narrow the degree awarding gap between BAME students and their White peers. It comprises summaries of the Impact Evaluation (the full analysis reports are published separately here), and the Implementation and Process Evaluation (IPE). The Impact Evaluation (IE) allows us to assess whether the intervention had an effect on module award and degree outcomes for BAME and White students respectively, while the IPE involved interviews, focus groups and other qualitative evidence (see Appendices 1-6) to further assess how the intervention was implemented and its impact.

Intervention 1 is the University of Kent's 'Diversity Mark' initiative and was focused on creating a more inclusive and 'culturally sensitive' curriculum, such as through detailing plans to diversify reading lists (see Appendix 1). Intervention 2 is the University of Leicester's 'Decolonising the Curriculum Toolkit' (DCT) and is a two-page resource (see Appendix 3) for staff that provides guidelines on how to make module content, assessment and practice more inclusive and relatable for all students.

For both interventions we set to test a key aim: whether they had an impact on the attainment of BAME and White students and addressed the ethnicity degree awarding gap. For the IE, a matched difference-in-differences approach was used, comparing attainment in modules that had been reformed with those that had not. The IPE then offered further evidence on the implementation of the reformed modules in both interventions. Both interventions had other aims – for example to provide students with greater knowledge of a subject – but this report did not assess those aims.

1.2   Key Findings

- Across the two interventions, we found limited evidence of an impact on the ethnicity degree awarding gap.

- The findings are somewhat complex and do not decisively indicate whether curriculum reform interventions address the degree awarding gap.

- The evaluation reveals some important findings on implementation, which are relevant for both curriculum interventions and for non-curriculum initiatives aimed at tackling the ethnicity degree awarding gap.

Impact Evaluation findings

The impact evaluation for the 'Diversity Mark' revealed:

- Attainment in BAME and White students was marginally higher in reformed compared to comparator modules indicating a positive effect of the intervention. However, the analysis revealed that the results are also consistent with null and negative effects – we can't conclude the intervention had a positive impact.

The impact evaluation for the 'DCT' revealed:

- Attainment was lower for BAME students in reformed modules and based on the analysis we can be confident in these results; the reform likely had a negative effect on BAME student attainment. Attainment was also lower for White students in reformed modules, but the analysis revealed that these results are also consistent with null and positive effects.

Implementation and Process Evaluation findings

For both interventions, the IPE revealed that neither initiative was implemented as expected in the reformed modules. As the intervention was not implemented consistently, we cannot reliably know whether changes were made throughout the reformed modules, and there is, therefore, insufficient evidence to understand whether this type of reform has a positive or negative impact on the ethnicity degree awarding gap.

Conclusion

The findings from both evaluations do not offer decisive conclusions. They suggest that curriculum reform interventions *as they were implemented* do not affect the ethnicity degree awarding gap. Caution in interpreting the findings is due to observed issues across both interventions in terms of how far they were implemented, as well as the analysis showing that results were also consistent with null and counter effects of the interventions. This raises questions about whether a more effective implementation of curriculum reform might have different results. HE providers considering curriculum reform or indeed any intervention to address the ethnicity degree awarding gap need to ensure that they monitor how effectively those interventions are being implemented, how well staff engage, the levels and quality of guidance and training provided, and the commitment of the institution as a whole to bring about change.
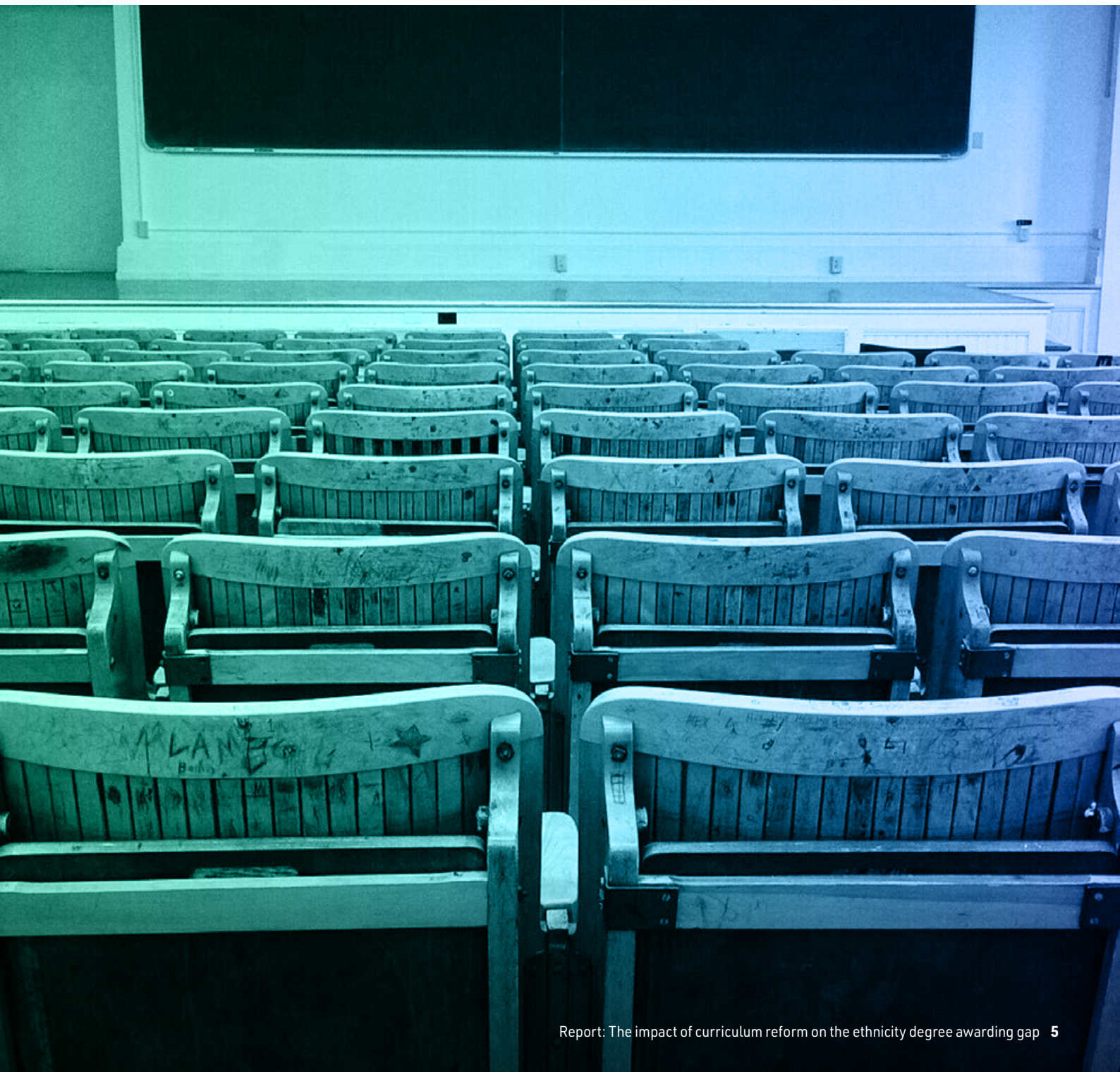
1.3   Recommendations

1. HE providers (HEPs) considering curriculum reform need to ensure that such interventions are implemented as planned in order to effectively evaluate them.

2. HEPs considering curriculum reform as a way to address the ethnicity degree awarding gap should develop a clear Theory of Change (ToC), outlining any intermediate outcomes and the rationale for how they address this gap.

3. In considering the implementation challenges we uncovered in this project, HEPs will need to consider different reasons why interventions are not implemented as planned – lack of resources or time, lack of support, lack of knowledge of or agreement with project aims, lack of monitoring or oversight – and design and implement appropriate interventions in response.

4. Effectively implementing interventions where lecturers and professors are the key community of practice requires greater investment in training and support.

5. Given the evidence suggests that purely 'top down' approaches can lack buy-in and so may not lead to better or more consistent implementation in other areas of curriculum design, there may be a need to combine a 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' approach, or to adopt a more shared and distributed approach to leadership.

6. Curriculum reform to address the ethnicity degree awarding gap should learn from the wider evidence on curriculum and strategic change in higher education and other institutions, which outlines the importance of leadership, as well as the need for effective communication, clear planning, motivating and inspiring those involved, and understanding specific institutional and socio-cultural contexts.

7. Other interventions, not just those focused on the curriculum, should be piloted and evaluated to assess their impact on the ethnicity degree awarding gap. To support this, TASO has commissioned further research to explore and collate current practice on what HEPs are currently doing to address the degree awarding gap.

8. Quasi-experimental designs are a useful tool for HEPs to evaluate their interventions to address inequalities, and should be deployed more widely, especially where institutions have long term data to establish trends over time.

9. While various factors can affect implementation, poor implementation could pose a reputational risk for HEPs (or any institution). Public commitments to address racial inequalities need to be matched by the implementation and evaluation of measures that effectively address those inequalities.

10. Across HE there is increasing commitment to 'whole institution' approaches to tackling race and other inequalities. Such commitments need to be properly scrutinised and evaluated, to determine whether they make an impact on the ethnicity degree awarding gap, or the other longstanding inequalities in HE.

11. Impact evaluation needs to better assess how far and in what ways the student experience – including satisfaction and belonging – impacts on student outcomes, including on degree awarding.

2. INTRODUCTION

The most recent data for UK-domiciled students shows that, of those who completed their undergraduate degree in 2020-21, 85.9% of White students were awarded a First or Upper Second class in their degree, compared with 77.1% of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students (HESA, 2022). Although this indicates that the ethnicity degree awarding gap has reduced to 8.8 percentage points, down from 13.2 in 2017–18, it remains substantial, and the gap is even more pronounced when focusing on different ethnic groups. The largest gap is between Black and White students, where an 18.4 percentage point gap is evident. The Office for Students (OfS, 2019) and the HE sector generally have committed to tackling this persistent ethnicity degree awarding gap. However, there is relatively little evidence on what is effective in doing so.

One hypothesis for the degree awarding gap is that BAME students may feel like they identify less with the curriculum, which may be connected to wider questions about belonging in HE more generally. There is evidence from behavioural research that when people question whether they belong, they can become less engaged and may not care enough to continue on their course of study (Dasgupta, 2022). 'Stereotype threat' or 'social identity threat' has been identified as another reason for the academic underperformance of minority groups (Steele, Spencer, Aronson, 2002). Where students feel less interest in and doubt their belonging, they are less likely to be engaged, and may lose confidence and interest.

Some researchers (Mountford-Zimdars et al., 2015; Richardson, 2015; Arday, 2021) have argued that the Eurocentricity (or 'Whiteness') of the curriculum contributes to the ethnicity awarding gap. They assert that HE curricula have historically favoured a Eurocentric lens, which has neglected key areas of knowledge and 'left BAME individuals on the periphery of academia' (Arday, 2021, p. 2). This suggests a link between the evidence on social identity threat described above, and the representativeness of the curriculum specifically. Miller (2016) similarly connects the awarding gap to the fact that students from BAME backgrounds were more likely to feel

unsupported at university, and be under-represented in curricula. The author found that the majority of HE providers surveyed had started to take action in response to race-based barriers, particularly in relation to those present within taught curricula, but were not collecting evidence to measure, monitor and evaluate the impact of their initiatives (Miller, 2016).

In research conducted with over 100 respondents from the HE sector, Universities UK (2019) identified several universities undertaking curriculum review activities in order to address the ethnicity degree awarding gap. The majority of these activities, including inclusive curriculum checks and 'decolonising' toolkits, are in their pilot phases and have not been rolled out across entire institutions. While case studies of practice are becoming more frequent in this area, and empirical studies are improving (e.g. Hall et al., 2022), there is still a lack of robust evaluation to show whether, or how, these interventions work.

To contribute to the evidence on this topic, TASO conducted an evaluation of two curriculum reform interventions at separate universities using a matched difference-in-differences approach. This approach exploited the fact that the interventions were implemented at the level of individual modules, meaning some modules underwent reform and others didn't. By comparing the outcomes of students in the reformed versus the unreformed modules, and taking into account historical data, we were able to make causal inferences about the impact of the interventions.

The project is a collaboration between:
- TASO – overall Project Lead
- The Behavioural Insights Team (BIT) – responsible for the impact evaluation
- Two universities that designed the interventions, and were responsible for the implementation and process evaluation:
  - The University of Kent
  - The University of Leicester

A research associate, funded by TASO, was recruited by each university to support evaluation responsibilities. Table 1 summarises the key project personnel:

Table 1: Core project team roles and responsibilities

Organisation	Name	Role and responsibilities
BIT	Dr Giulia Tagliaferri	Research Lead
BIT	Dr Yihan Xu	Research Analyst
BIT	Dr Alex Sutherland	Evaluation Quality Assurance
BIT	James Lawrence	Evaluation Supervisor and Quality Assurance (trial protocol stage)
BIT	Dr Patrick Taylor	Quality Assurance (analysis report stage)
TASO	Dr Omar Khan	Director of TASO, Overall Quality Assurance
TASO	Dr Helen Lawson	Overall Project Lead and IPE Lead.
TASO	Sarah Chappell	Impact Evaluation Lead
Kent	Professor Kathleen M Quinlan	Partner Lead
Kent	Dr Barbara Adewumi	Partner Co-investigator
Kent	Dr Ellen Dowie	Partner Co-investigator
Kent	Dr Miyoung Ahn	Research Associate
Leicester	Dr Paul Campbell	Partner Lead
Leicester	Dr Hannah Grosvenor	Partner Co-investigator
Leicester	John Hurst	Partner Data Curator
Leicester	Clare Amess	Partner Data Curator
Leicester	Dr Ashjan Ajour	Research Associate

This report provides:

- An outline of the methodology used in both the impact evaluation and implementation and process evaluation.

- Key findings from the impact evaluation and implementation and process evaluation.

- A discussion of findings, concluding remarks and recommendations

For more details on the methodology and analysis used in the impact evaluation, see the accompanying analysis reports.

2.1 Terminology

In this report we refer to the 'ethnicity degree awarding gap'. Where possible, we refer to specific ethnic groups, based on the '18+1' Office for National Statistics (ONS) categories, e.g., Black Caribbean, Pakistani and Mixed: White and Black African (ONS, 2016). However, this has not always been possible for two reasons. First, it is often not possible to analyse data due to small samples, requiring some level of aggregation instead, for example 'Asian' and 'Black'. Second, the interventions we describe below used their own categories and terminology, which we have retained in the below analysis.

We have used the umbrella term 'Black, Asian and minority ethnic' (BAME) where necessary. We appreciate this is rarely how individuals would self-identify, and that such terminology is increasingly contested, but it is again in line with ONS and academic usage and is preferable to alternatives such as 'non-White' or 'ethnic minorities' in the UK context.

3.   INTERVENTION DESCRIPTION AND AIMS

The two interventions evaluated in this report share many features, notably a common focus on curriculum reform. However, they vary somewhat in how they were delivered. The description below of these interventions are based on how each team described their project aims and implementation. Further details on the interventions can be found in the separate Appendices 1 and 3. The evaluation of these interventions focused on how far they addressed the degree-awarding gap; both interventions had other aims, but these were not assessed.

3.1   Intervention 1: 'Diversity Mark' (Kent)

University of Kent's 'Diversity Mark' initiative is a collaboration between the Student Success Team, students, and library services designed to include more BAME perspectives in the formal curriculum, making it more culturally sensitive. The intervention is based on the assumption that a diversified curriculum will affect students' interest and interactions with their teachers on academic matters relating to their programme of study.

The initiative involved training students to conduct a reading list audit, run student focus groups, work with the library to identify potential further resources, and present their findings back to module convenors. These activities culminated in an individual interview with module convenors conducted by the intervention lead. In the interview, module convenors were asked to reflect on the role of reading lists in relation to the rest of their teaching, to consider challenges of diversifying their curriculum, to outline how diversity currently features in their teaching, and to describe their plans for changing their curriculum to make it more culturally sensitive.

The intervention was piloted across first year modules in the School of Social Policy, Sociology, and Social Research (SSPSSR) in the academic year 2018-19. Modules were deemed reformed if module convenors demonstrated commitment to creating more culturally sensitive curricula in various ways. These included:

- Detailing plans for diversifying reading lists,

- Giving examples of how they would integrate diversity across the module rather than confining it to a single topic or week,

- Showing awareness of the impact of negative portrayals of racially or ethnically minoritised people,

- Evidencing critical awareness of race and ethnicity as it pertained to their curriculum.

If module convenors did not express commitment to substantial changes to promote cultural sensitivity, those modules were deemed comparators. The designation of 'reform' or 'comparator' was qualitative, based on the stated commitments and intentions of module convenors to create culturally sensitive curricula in the ways described above.

3.2   Intervention 2: 'DCT' (Leicester)

University of Leicester's 'Decolonising the Curriculum Toolkit' (DCT; see Appendix 3) is a two-page resource for staff that provides guidelines on how to make module content, assessment and practice more racially inclusive and relatable for all students. The toolkit was designed to improve the racial literacy of staff by providing a short and accessible resource which staff can work through in their own time and with little formal training. It deliberately does not provide an exhaustive and prescriptive set of instructions, but through a host of conversational questions, prompts more meaningful reflection and strategies on how to improve racial literacy and best incorporate it into practice. The toolkit also provides teaching staff with the tools for critical reflection with regard to race to help them better recognise, dismantle and guard against how course content, assessment and practice can marginalise or benefit students from certain backgrounds and contribute to barriers, lower satisfaction and the awarding gap.

The intervention was piloted across all modules in the Sociology BA course in the 2020–21 academic year. The resource was made available to all staff via the university intranet; however, it was not mandated and there were no formal requirements for engagement or accountability placed on staff to operationalise the toolkit. The assumption was that the guidance provided would ensure consistent levels of adaptation to content across all taught modules. This position was based on the DCT initial pilot in 2020, where the staff surveyed reported that they found the toolkit easy to follow.

Consequently, it was anticipated that consistent levels of change would be seen in content across all modules within the undergraduate degree in which the intervention was tested. Typically, it was envisaged that this would manifest in the following ways:

- Levels of diversity and pluralising of narratives/viewpoints in reading lists (minimum of 20% of weekly core readings),

- An audit and inclusion of racially inclusive imagery across all module content,

- A significant increase in the explicit opportunities offered to students to relate taught content

and assessments to their own lived context or biographies.

Modules were deemed reformed if module convenors gave a rank score of 4 or above out of 10 for their level of engagement with the toolkit when devising, planning and/or delivering content for their module during the 2020–21 academic year (0 = did not engage with the toolkit at all; 10 = engaged with the toolkit in its entirety). However, as with the 'Diversity Mark' there was more varied implementation in practice, and some suggestion that the toolkit needed further elaboration or support to deliver on its aims.

4. IMPACT EVALUATION

4.1 Methodology

Design

As outlined in the introduction, to evaluate the impact of the interventions included in this report, a matched difference-in-differences approach was used. This compares the outcomes of students in reformed versus matched unreformed modules, taking into account historical data, which allows us to make causal inferences about the impact of the interventions. The matching process is described below.

'Diversity Mark' (Kent)

Six SSPSSR modules were categorised as reformed based on the intervention description outlined above. Comparator modules were chosen from a pool of unreformed modules within the SSPSSR faculty. Modules were excluded in the case of poor availability of data (i.e. no or only one year of pre-intervention data) or if they were text-book driven, leaving little scope for diversifying curricula. The resulting 14 modules (four deemed reformed and ten possible comparators) were matched based on:

- Teaching campus

- Average number of enrolled students

- Average percentage of BAME students

- Average module attainment

The modules were assigned a propensity score, which indicates the fitted likelihood that the module could be reformed given its characteristics above.

This resulted in four reformed modules and four matched comparator modules (see accompanying Kent analysis report for more details).

'DCT' (Leicester)

Ten Sociology modules were categorised as reformed based on the intervention description outlined in the previous section. Comparator modules were chosen from a pool of unreformed modules within the Sociology, Criminology and Geography courses. These additional courses had characteristics most similar to the Sociology course. Modules were excluded in the case of poor availability of data (i.e. having no or only one year of pre-intervention data) or if they had fewer than ten students enrolled. The resulting 89 modules (ten deemed reformed and 79 possible comparators) were matched based on:

- Whether the module was compulsory or elective

- Whether module was entry level (Level 2 or below) or advanced level (Level 3 and 4)

- Average number of enrolled students

- Average percentage of BAME students

- Average module attainment

The modules were assigned a propensity score, which indicates the fitted likelihood that the module could be reformed given its characteristics above. This resulted in ten reformed Sociology modules and ten matched Sociology, Geography or Criminology comparator modules (see accompanying Leicester analysis report for more details).

Table 2: Total sample size for Intervention 1 (including both BAME and White students)

Academic year	Comparator modules	Reformed modules	Total
2014–15	476	-	476
2015–16	678	-	678
2016–17	1060	-	1060
2017–18	1306	-	1306
2018–19	730	388	1118
2019–20	773	400	1173
2020–21	511	532	1043
Total	**5534**	**1320**	**6854**

Table 3: Total sample size for Intervention 2 (including both BAME and White students)

Academic year	Comparator modules	Reformed modules	Total
2017–18	863	-	863
2018–19	919	-	919
2019–20	517	-	517
2020–21	468	370	838
Total	**2767**	**370**	**3137**

Sample

'Diversity Mark' (Kent)

The sample comprised BAME and White students who had final module marks in the four reformed and matched comparator modules at the University of Kent in the following academic years: 2014–15 to 2020–21. On average, 38.9% of all module mark records belonged to BAME students and 61.1% to White students. Table 2 shows the total sample size, split by module type and academic year.

'DCT' (Leicester)

The sample comprised BAME and White students who had final module marks in the ten reformed and matched comparator modules at the University of Leicester in the academic years 2017-18 to 2020-21. On average, 48.6% of all module mark records belonged to BAME students and 51.4% to White students. Table 3 shows the total sample size, split by module type and academic year.

Outcome measures

For both interventions, the primary outcome was the final module mark in percentile rank, obtained via the raw final module grades, for BAME and White students in the relevant reformed and comparator modules from each academic year.

Percentile rank indicates how well a student does relative to other students who have also completed the module. For instance, a percentile rank of 70 would mean a student performed as well as or better than 70% of the other students on the module. Percentile rank was chosen for the following reasons:

- It is less susceptible to trends, e.g. grade inflation.

- It is also less susceptible to module convenor variance (one convenor's 70 might be equivalent to another's 60); the highest value will be standardised to 100, and the lowest value will be standardised to zero, making the between-module difference more objective and comparable.

- It captures the difference in attainment between students rather than benchmarking against an external scale, which is better suited to the purpose of this research as it focuses on the gap between White and BAME students.

However, for ease of comparison with other reports in this research area, as an exploratory outcome we looked at the percentage of students awarded an upper second class (2:1) and above in the modules, and visualised the degree awarding gap using both outcomes.

4.2 Findings

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of the outcomes before and after Intervention 1

Ethnicity group	Outcome measures	Condition (reformed status)	Pre-intervention (average over 4 years) Mean (SD)	Post-intervention (average over 1~3 years) Mean (SD)	Descriptive difference-in-difference
BAME students	Module mark percentile rank	Comparator	38.9 (27.5)	39.4 (27.0)	(40.6-37.4) − (39.4-38.9) = **+ 2.7 percentiles**
		Reformed	37.4 (26.5)	40.6 (28.1)	
	% Achieving 2nd class and above	Comparator	38.8% (47.8%)	44.2% (49.7%)	(42.8-34.9) − (44.2-38.8) = **+ 2.5pp**
		Reformed	34.9% (47.7%)	42.8% (49.5%)	
White students	Module mark percentile rank	Comparator	53.5 (28.5)	53.7 (27.5)	(55.2-51.7) − (53.7-53.5) = **+ 3.3 percentiles**
		Reformed	51.7 (27.4)	55.2 (29.1)	
	% Achieving upper second class and above	Comparator	59.5% (49.1%)	65.3% (47.6%)	(62.7-57.3) − (65.3-59.5) = **− 0.4pp**
		Reformed	57.3% (49.5%)	62.7% (48.4%)	

'Diversity Mark': Descriptive statistics

Table 4 presents the mean attainment before and after the intervention was implemented. It is worth noting that these figures are purely descriptive. See the next section for results from the regression analyses, and the analysis report for more detailed analysis of the results.

Among reformed modules, BAME students scored on average 3.2 percentile rank higher post-intervention. Among the comparator modules, the increase was only 0.5 percentile rank. We therefore observed a small increase of 2.7 percentile rank in attainment among BAME students after the intervention was introduced.

Post-intervention, White students scored on average 3.5 percentile rank higher in reformed modules, compared to 0.2 percentile rank higher in comparator modules. We therefore observed a small increase of 3.3 percentile rank in attainment among White students after the intervention was introduced as well.

Looking at the proportion of students awarded an upper second class and above, among the reformed modules, only 34.9% of BAME students were awarded an upper second class and above pre-intervention, whereas 42.8% achieved so post-intervention, representing an increase of 7.9 percentage points (pp). Among the unreformed modules, the increase was smaller at 5.4pp within the same time horizon, giving an overall difference-in-difference of 2.5pp.

For White students on the reformed modules, 57.3% of students were awarded an upper second class and above pre-intervention, and 62.7% did so post-intervention, representing an increase of 5.4pp. For the unreformed modules, the increase was comparable at 5.8pp within the same time period, giving an overall difference-in-difference of -0.4pp.

Analysis of outcomes

Regression analysis was carried out to understand the effect of the intervention on attainment in both ethnicity groups, whilst controlling for relevant variables, including time (note, this is why the regression results are different to the descriptive statistics above). The analysis revealed that the reform had a small positive effect on attainment in BAME students. The average attainment of BAME students in reformed compared to comparator modules, post-intervention versus pre-intervention, was 2.0 percentile rank higher. However, it is important to look at the 95% confidence interval alongside these results. **This shows the range of values that we can be 95% confident contain the true difference in means between reformed and comparator modules.** The 95% confidence interval for BAME student attainment includes zero (-2.20, 6.21) which means the results could also be consistent with null (no effect) or negative effects of the reform.

We therefore cannot conclude definitively that there was a clear improvement in the performance of BAME students in the reformed modules.

Regression analysis also revealed a small positive effect of the reform on attainment in White students. The average attainment of White students in reformed compared to comparator modules, post-intervention versus pre-intervention, was 3.45 percentile rank higher.

Figure 1: Time trends for ethnicity module awarding gap (percentile rank)
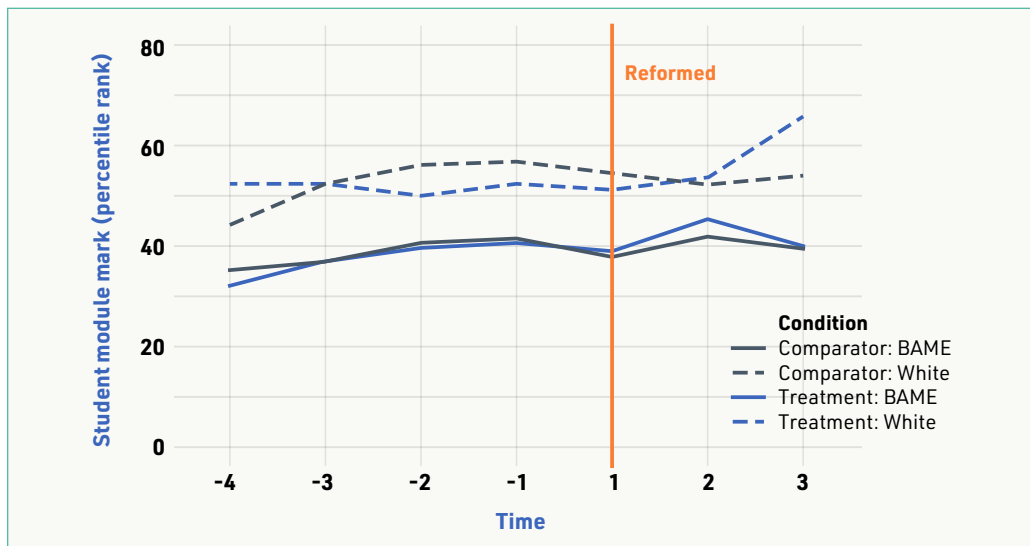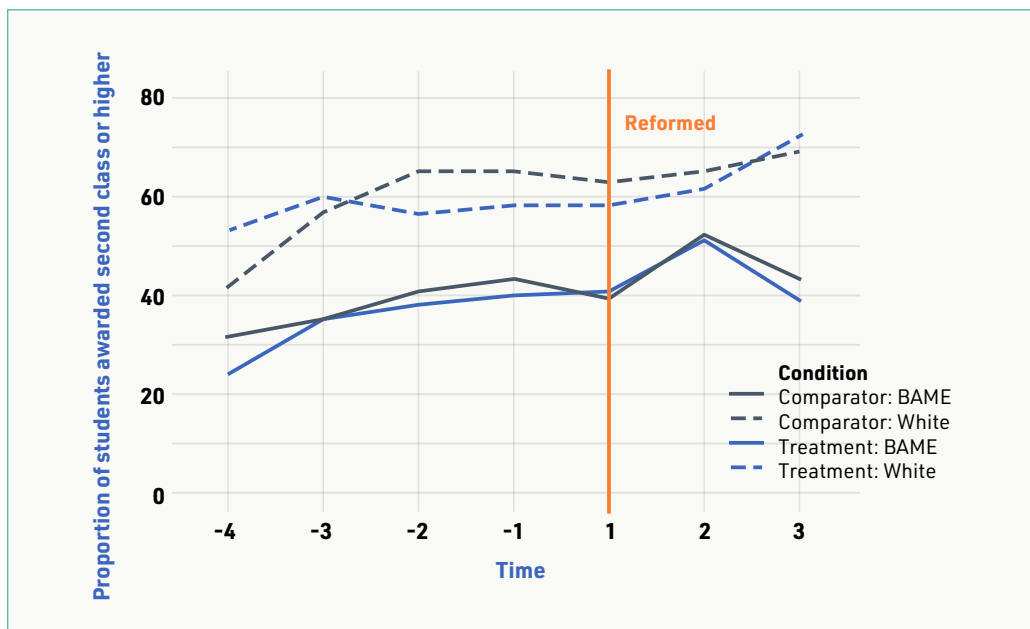

Figure 2: Time trends for degree awarding gap (% achieving 2:1 and above)

However, again, the 95% confidence interval includes zero (-0.13, 7.03), though it's worth noting that the interval only marginally enters the negative. We therefore cannot conclude that there was a clear improvement in the performance of White students in the reformed modules, but can be more confident of a positive result than for BAME students.

Figure 1 shows the time trends for the ethnicity attainment gap pre- and post-intervention using percentile rank. These graphs require care in interpretation, given the confidence intervals mentioned above, as well as what we know in regards to the actual changes made to the curriculum in the 'reformed' modules (see IPE findings for more details).

Post-intervention, the gap between BAME and White students increased more in reformed (treatment)

modules (blue lines) compared to comparator modules (black lines). This is mainly due to the average percentile rank of White students in the reformed (treatment) modules, which hovered between 45 and 55 up to the second year post-intervention (2019-20), before increasing to 65 in the third year post-intervention (2020-21). Meanwhile the average percentile rank of BAME students (solid lines) remained fairly consistent at ~40 pre- and post-intervention for both the reformed and comparator modules, though did increase to 45 in the second year post-intervention in the reformed modules.

To further understand the impact on the attainment gap between BAME and White students, we also visualised the gap in terms of the percentage of students awarded an upper second class and above, as shown in Figure 2.

Overall, the patterns are fairly consistent. Whilst the gap widens in the third year post-intervention (2021-21), it is worth noting that the gap was chiefly driven by higher attainment among White students rather than by lower attainment among BAME students. This effect is also observable only for a single year. Furthermore, given that we are now aware that the changes made in modules were very limited (see IPE findings), we do not have enough information to be able to understand the impact of reform on the ethnicity degree awarding gap.

'DCT': Descriptive statistics

Table 5 presents the mean attainment before and after the intervention was implemented. It is worth noting again that these figures are purely descriptive. See next section for results from the regression analyses.

Among reformed modules, BAME students on average scored 2.2 percentile rank lower post-intervention. Among the comparator modules, however, BAME students scored 3.7 percentile rank higher. We therefore observed a decrease of 5.9 percentile

rank in attainment among BAME students after the intervention was introduced.

Post-intervention, White students on average scored 0.9 percentile rank lower in reformed modules, compared to 3.9 percentile rank higher in comparator modules. We therefore observed a decrease in percentile rank (4.8) in attainment among White students after the intervention was introduced as well.

As for the proportion of students awarded an upper second class and above, among the reformed modules, 51.4% of BAME students were awarded an upper second class and above pre-intervention, whereas 51% achieved so post-intervention, representing a small decrease of 0.4pp. Among the unreformed modules, however, there was a large increase of 14.3pp within the same time horizon, giving an overall difference-in-difference of -14.7pp.

For White students on the reformed modules, 70.5% of students were awarded an upper second class and above pre-intervention, and 69.6% did so post-intervention, representing a small decrease of 0.9pp. For the unreformed modules, however, there was a large increase of 15pp within the same time horizon, giving an overall difference-in-difference of -15.9pp.

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of the outcomes before and after Intervention 2

Ethnicity group	Outcome measures	Condition (reformed status)	Pre-intervention (average up to 3 years) Mean (SD)	Post-intervention Mean (SD)	Descriptive difference-in-difference
BAME students	Module mark percentile rank	Comparator	40.7 (27.2)	44.4 (30.7)	(41.8-44.0) – (44.4-40.7) = **-5.9 percentiles**
		Reformed	44.0 (29.5)	41.8 (27.9)	
	% Achieving 2nd class and above	Comparator	42.2% (49.4%)	56.5% (49.7%)	(51.0-51.4) – (56.5-42.2) = **-14.7pp**
		Reformed	51.4% (50.0%)	51.0% (50.1%)	
White students	Module mark percentile rank	Comparator	54.1 (28.0)	58.0 (28.7)	(51.0-51.4) – (56.5-42.2) = **-4.8 percentiles**
		Reformed	56.1 (27.6)	55.2 (29.6)	
	% Achieving upper second class and above	Comparator	58.2% (49.4%)	73.2% (44.4%)	(69.6-70.5) – (73.2-58.2) = **-15.9pp**
		Reformed	70.5% (45.6%)	69.6% (46.1%)	

Analysis of outcomes

Regression analyses revealed a negative effect of the reform on the attainment of BAME students. The average attainment in reformed compared to comparator modules, post-intervention versus pre-intervention, was -6.63 percentile rank lower. Again, it is important to look at the 95% confidence intervals alongside these results. The 95% confidence interval for the difference in means in BAME student attainment is entirely below zero (-13.23, -0.03), meaning we can be confident in concluding that BAME students performed more poorly in the reformed modules post-intervention.

The effect of the intervention was also negative for White students. The average attainment in reformed compared to comparator modules, post-intervention versus pre-intervention, was -3.07 percentile rank lower. However, as the 95% confidence interval includes zero (-9.79, 3.64) the results are also consistent with null and positive effects, therefore we cannot conclude that there was a decrease in the performance of White students on the reformed modules.

Figure 3 shows the time trends for the ethnicity attainment gap pre- and post-intervention using percentile rank.

When looking at the solid lines representing BAME student' attainment, there is an upward trajectory that continues for comparator modules post-intervention (2020-21), but declines in the reformed modules. With White students, the attainment trends were similar to those of BAME students, but the changes over time were smaller. Among comparator modules, there is an upward trajectory both before and after the curriculum reform. Among the reformed modules, there was an upward trajectory in the years prior to the intervention and a small downward trajectory after the intervention was introduced. The attainment gap between White and BAME students remains stable across both reformed and comparator modules, though increases marginally in reformed modules in the academic year 2020-21 due to a slightly larger negative effect of the intervention on BAME students.

To further understand the impact on the attainment gap between BAME and White students, we also visualised the gap in terms of the percentage of students awarded an upper second class and above, as shown in Figure 4.

The ethnicity degree awarding gap among students in the comparator modules (black lines) was gently increasing from 2018 to 2020, then narrowed between 2020 and 2021. The gap among students in the reformed modules (blue lines) narrowed from 2018 to 2019, but then widened from 2019 to 2020. However, post-intervention (2020-21), the gap narrowed, to a similar extent, among both reformed and comparator modules. The intervention therefore does not seem to have had an effect on the ethnicity degree awarding gap.

However, as the intervention was not implemented consistently across modules (see IPE findings section below), there is not enough evidence to understand the impact of the reform on the existing awarding gap between White and BAME students.

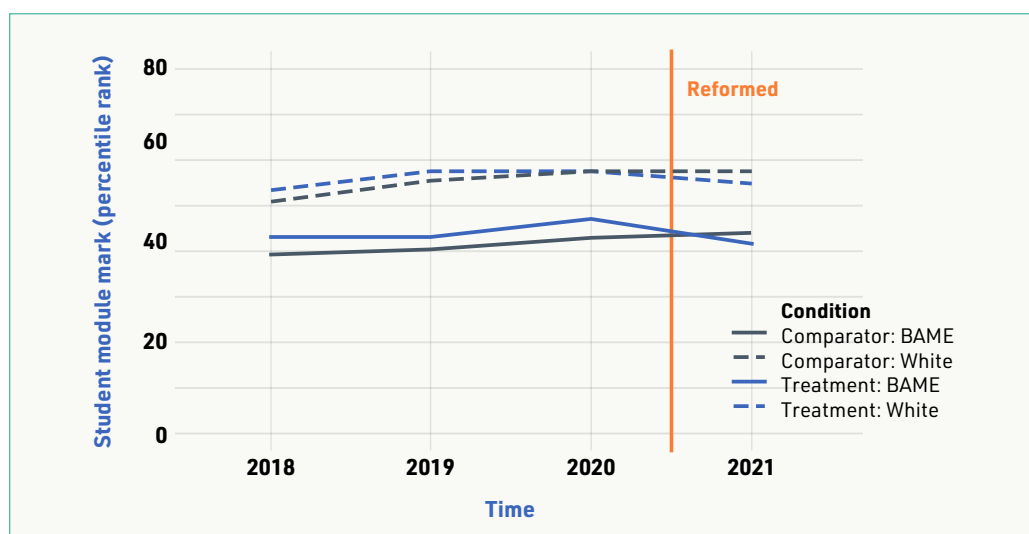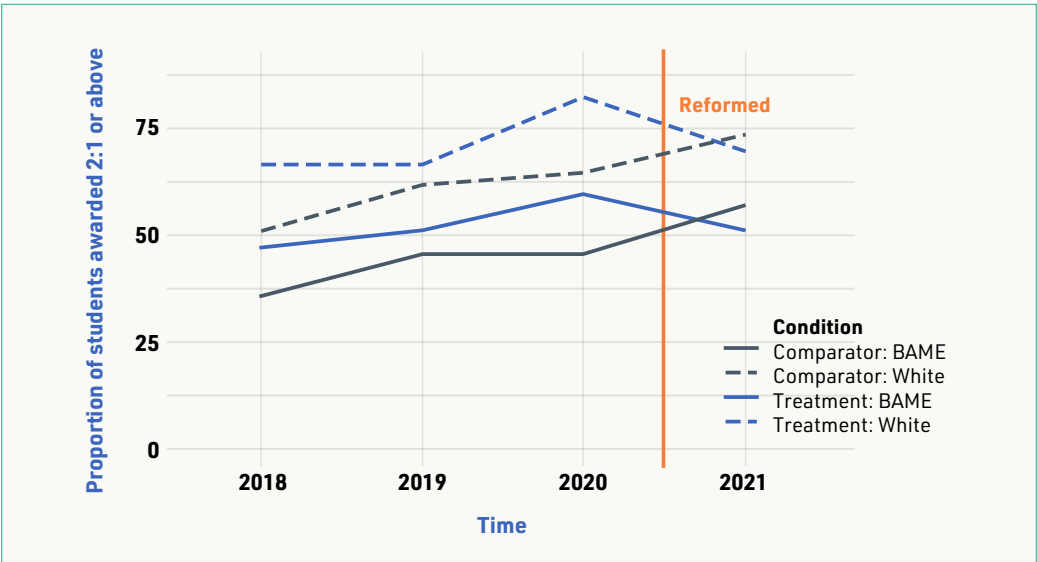**Figure 3: Time trends for ethnicity module awarding gap (percentile rank)**

Figure 4: Time trends for degree awarding gap (% achieving 2:1 and above)

5. IMPLEMENTATION AND PROCESS EVALUATION

5.1 Methodology

An IPE seeks to establish whether the intervention was implemented as planned, if not, why not; and helps to better understand the results of the impact evaluation. Appendices 5 and 6 outline the IPE data collection details for interventions 1 and 2 respectively.

The IPE also aims to find out whether the assumptions underpinning the Theory of Change (ToC) hold true; Appendices 1 and 2 outline the ToCs for interventions 1 and 2 respectively.

Data collection methods

Intervention 1: 'Diversity Mark' (Kent)

By conducting detailed analysis of three aspects of the curriculum: authorship of core readings ('BAME authorship'), lecture images ('inspiring images'), and assignments ('culturally sensitive assignments'), the project team was able to characterise whether and how diversified a sample of modules were. When analysing reading lists, all 21 SSPSSR modules were looked at. However, for analysis of lecture images and assignments, a sample of four modules was chosen – two deemed reformed and two comparators. Student perceptions were also captured via a survey and focus groups.

BAME authorship

The reading lists for all 21 first-year SSPSSR modules were analysed to present a summary of BAME authorship.[1] Module convenors typically provided both a core (required) set of readings for a module and further or recommended readings. The evaluation focused on readings described as 'core' or 'required' in the Moodle site for the module (the University's virtual learning environment that serves as the primary course site). Web searches were carried out, including biographies and a visual inspection of photographs of core reading list authors (N=277), to identify the race and gender of each author, and the locations of their primary academic affiliation. All authors were then categorised as BAME or White according to UK census definitions (ONS, 2016).

Inspiring images:

All module lecturers used PowerPoint slides as part of their course content and typically used multiple images of people in those slides. Photographs (N=250) of people in the lecture slides were extracted for four selected modules. These four modules were chosen based on two being categorised as 'reformed', and two being categorised as 'comparator'. One module in each of these categories was also used in the Impact Evaluation, however, the other two were not due to having insufficient pre-intervention data. Each individual in the photograph was identified as an 'actor' and was the key unit of analysis (N=340). Analysis was conducted on the slides in which the actors' faces were visible. The roles played by the actors in each image were coded and similar roles grouped into five thematic categories: 'Power', 'Social problem', 'Daily life', 'Jobs' and 'Immigrant'. Through a series of working sessions within the project team, codes, coding rules and themes were iteratively developed and tested based on exemplars and outliers and other published papers on content analysis of textbook images. Finally, considering the roles played by BAME actors in the images (e.g. whether they were represented in positions of power such as professionals), each image was coded as likely to be inspiring to BAME students or not. By 'inspiring', the project team meant that BAME people were depicted in positive, active roles to which students may wish to aspire, rather than as absent, under-represented, in stereotypical or marginalised roles or as social problems. The percentage of inspiring images was determined for each module.

Culturally sensitive assignments:

The same four modules were analysed to establish the presence of culturally sensitive assignments. All modules included two or three short take home essay assignments (1,000–2,500 words) that students completed individually. Each assignment had one or more questions or prompts which were examined to see whether: the brief *explicitly* invited students to write about diversity or equality or connect what they were learning to their own cultural backgrounds; the option to do so was *implicit* in the assignment; or there were no apparent opportunities to connect one of the

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[1] Note that 21 modules were analysed compared to 14 potential modules in the IE, as modules in the IPE were not excluded due to a lack of pre-intervention data.

essay topics with students' own cultural background or experiences, which was coded as *absent*. A single module code of explicit (2), implicit (1) or absent (0) was assigned. Any module with at least one explicitly culturally sensitive assignment was coded '2'.

Student perceptions:

A survey was administered to students on their perceptions of the cultural sensitivity of the curriculum, and relationships with teachers. Students completed Version 2 of the Culturally Sensitive Curricula Scales (an adaptation of Thomas and Quinlan (2021), which contains 24 Likert-scale items asking students to rate the extent to which the statement is true of the curriculum for that module.

In addition, focus groups were conducted with 18 students from a BAME background. An invitation was emailed to all 212 BAME students enrolled in the four selected modules (those outlined in the 'inspiring images' section above). Each session, lasting 60 minutes, was conducted online within six weeks of the end of the module. Fourteen questions were discussed related to students' first impression of the reading lists on Moodle, with a particular focus on the authors' ethnicity and how this related to their own ethnic identity, the participants' ability to identify respected BAME and White scholars in a series of 19 photos, and their engagement and experience as a student. The focus groups allowed the project team to hear the students' voices and understanding of issues related to curricular diversification. Focus groups also enabled the team to understand how students experienced and interpreted the diversification of the reading lists and the potential impacts of more diverse curricula on BAME students' engagement.

Focus group interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Each member of the research team read the transcripts. Project team members independently summarised key findings by theme, with each theme supported by illustrative student quotes. The two summaries identified similar themes, with a convergence of selected quotes.

Intervention 2: 'DCT' (Leicester)

A qualitative approach was employed for a number of methodological, analytical and theoretical reasons. The lived experiences and daily realities of minority ethnic groups in social – and in this case educative – environments and processes are often inadequately captured by quantitative data alone (Gunaratnam, 2003; Campbell, 2015, 2020; Wallace, 2017).

The consensus among sociologists and educationalists is that to obtain a critical comprehension of minority ethnic students' experiences in education, researchers should employ qualitative approaches, such as in-depth questioning *in addition* to quantitative data sets (Campbell, 2020). Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that students of colour are heterogenous, and to be wary of aggregating the educational experiences of students with different backgrounds (Campbell, 2020).

Mindful of these important theoretical, methodological and sampling considerations, data was drawn from a total of 13 focus group interviews with 55 current undergraduate students.

The students in the sample self-defined as belonging to one of three different ethnic backgrounds – 1: African and African-Caribbean heritage, 2: British South Asian heritage or 3: White British – and were drawn from four different degree courses: Sociology (30 students), Geography, Criminology and Chemistry (a total of 25 students). Focus groups were organised according to ethnicity and course (e.g. Black Sociology student focus group, Black Geography student focus group). Data from student participants from the latter three courses were included for comparative data and selected because the size and demographic of their courses were similar to Sociology.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted on student availability during the recruitment phase of the study. This meant that it was not possible to include a representative focus group for all minority ethnic groups across all four of the degree programmes included in the study.

Staff were also interviewed. Interview data was drawn primarily from semi-structured interviews with 10 Sociology staff and consisted of staff who self-defined as early-, mid- and senior-career academics. This data set also included data from semi-structured interviews with 14 early-, mid-, and senior-career academics from Geography, Criminology and Chemistry for comparative data, giving a total sample of 24 staff.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim. All qualitative data were coded, with key words extrapolated and collated. Emergent themes were identified through a process of 'pattern coding', where coded data are reconfigured into more compact and meaningful groupings. All data are anonymised, and pseudonyms were used in place of students' and faculty members' real names and other signposts in accordance with the ethical guidelines set out by the institution's ethics committee.

5.2 Findings

This section of the report presents the findings from the IPE. The exposition first describes the results from Intervention 1 before turning to an analysis of Intervention 2. The write-up for each intervention is based on the analysis of the respective project teams. However, across both interventions there were a number of shared themes, both among the staff and among the students.

Intervention 1: 'Diversity Mark'

BAME authorship:

Table 6 below shows the frequency of BAME authors on the core reading lists for all 21 first year SSPSSR

modules in the academic year 2020-21. The table also shows which modules were deemed 'reformed' and included in the impact evaluation (IE). Of those included, only one of the reformed modules had any BAME authorship (Module 4, 16.7%), with the remaining four having 0%. Furthermore, two of those selected as comparators in the IE did have BAME authorship on their reading lists. These findings therefore limit the conclusions we can draw from the difference-in-differences analysis outlined earlier on in this report; the intervention was not implemented as planned in five of the eight modules included in the impact evaluation.

Table 6: Frequency of authors by ethnicity for all 21 first year SSPSSR modules

Module	Reformed status	IE	IPE	BAME		White	
				N	%	N	%
1	**Reformed**		✓	**6**	21.4	**22**	78.6
2	**Reformed**			**0**	0	**8**	100
3	**Reformed**	✓		**0**	0	**28**	100
4	**Reformed**	✓	✓	**2**	16.7	**10**	83.3
5	**Reformed**	✓		**0**	0	**11**	100
6	Comparator			**0**	0	**15**	100
7	Comparator			**0**	0	**1**	100
8	Comparator			**0**	0	**2**	100
9	Comparator		✓	**1**	5.0	**19**	95.0
10	Comparator			**1**	7.1	**13**	92.9
11	Comparator			**2**	10.0	**18**	90.0
13	Comparator	✓		**3**	15.8	**16**	84.2
16	Comparator			**0**	0	**4**	100
17	Comparator	✓		**0**	0	**10**	100
18	Comparator	✓	✓	**1**	5.0	**19**	95.0
19	Comparator			**1**	8.3	**11**	91.7
20	**Reformed**	✓		**0**	0	**7**	100
21	Comparator	✓		**0**	0	**5**	100
22	Comparator			**0**	0	**12**	100
23	Comparator			**0**	0	**26**	100
24	Comparator			**0**	0	**3**	100

Table 7: Frequency of authors by ethnicity[2], location and modules based on Moodle core reading lists for four selected IPE modules

Authors by ethnicity	M1 (Reformed)		M4 (Reformed)		M9 (Comparator)		M18 (Comparator)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
BAME British	5	17.9	2	16.7	1	5.0	1	5.0
BAME American	1	3.6	0	0	0	0	0	0
BAME Others	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total BAME	**6**	**21.5**	**2**	**16.7**	**1**	**5.0**	**1**	**5.0**
White British	21	75.0	7	58.3	12	60.0	17	85.0
White American	1	3.6	3	25.0	5	25.0	1	5.0
White Others	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	5.0
White European	0	0	0	0	2	10.0	0	0
Total White	**22**	**78.6**	**10**	**83.3**	**19**	**95.0**	**19**	**95.0**
Total	**28**		**12**		**20**		**20**	

A selected sample of four modules, two reformed and two comparators, were used in further IPE analysis. Two of these modules overlapped with those included in the IE (see Table 6), however, two were not included in the IE due to a lack of pre-intervention data needed for the analysis. Table 7 provides a breakdown based on an analysis of 80 authors on core reading lists, showing the two reformed modules to have a substantially higher percentage of BAME authors than comparator modules.

These findings demonstrate that, at least in these four modules, one key aspect of the intervention was implemented as expected in those categorised as reformed. However, even in module 1 which had the highest percentage of BAME authors, BAME people were still underrepresented on the reading lists (21.5%) relative to the proportion in the student cohort.

Inspiring images:

From the 250 photographs analysed across lecture slides in the four modules, one-third of the images included people of colour. BAME people were less likely to be presented exclusively in an image (13%) than White people (67%). Only 24% of the Black or Asian actors pictured were in roles related to 'Power', which included 'Jobs with state-sanctioned authority' (e.g. politician, police, teacher, healthcare worker) and 'Business or thought leaders' (e.g. executive board, scholar, journalist), compared to almost half of the total White actors (46%). White actors were more likely to be depicted as political, economic, and academic leaders than were actors from racially minoritised groups, whereas the latter were more likely to be portrayed as sports players, protestors, manual workers, or immigrants.

Images of BAME people as protestors were common, often demonstrating Black power and pride. While it could be argued that individuals may find such actions inspiring, the context of social inequalities that prompted such demonstrations is not. After much discussion among the research team, these images were coded as 'Protesting'.

Table 8 shows the percentage of images likely to be inspiring to BAME students for each of the four modules. Reformed modules had lower percentages of inspiring images than comparator modules, which may negate the benefits of diversified reading lists.

[2] Total BAME is the sum of British BAME, American BAME and BAME others. As our students are primarily British, it was important to distinguish between BAME British and BAME American authors. The history of BAME people in Britain and the US are different, which is likely to influence the sociological and socio-political literatures. Separating these two groups within the tradition of Anglo-American academic dominance allowed us to further stimulate academics' reflection about these issues of representation. It might be problematic if all the BAME authors were American, as it could send the wrong message that there are no BAME British scholars in the field. On the other hand, considering that the US is a larger country, it can be worth looking to the US for additional resources.

Table 8: Percentage of images likely to be inspiring to BAME students by module

Inspiring images	M1 (Reformed)		M4 (Reformed)		M9 (Comparator)		M18 (Comparator)	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Yes	1	1.5	0	0.0	1	4.8	29	23.8
No	57	86.4	37	90.2	20	95.2	90	73.8
Protesting	8	12.1	4	9.8	0	0.0	3	2.5
Total	**66**		**41**		**21**		**122**	

Table 9: Diversification indicators by comparator and treatment modules

	M1 (Reformed)	M4 (Reformed)	M9 (Comparator)	M18 (Comparator)
BAME authors	21.5%	16.7%	5%	5%
Inspiring images	1.5%	0.0%	4.8%	23.8%
Assignment Cultural Sensitivity scores	2	2	1	2

Culturally sensitive assignments:

Three of the modules included assignments that were judged to explicitly invite students to address equality or diversity issues, or connect their learning to their own cultural backgrounds. A breakdown by module is presented in Table 9 (2=explicit; 1=implicit).

In sum, diversification was not consistent within each module when seen across the three indicators (Table 9).

Student perceptions:

Student survey

Aggregated across modules, BAME students' ratings of the cultural sensitivity of their curriculum were lower than those of their White peers on all five of the culturally sensitive curricula scales. The 95% confidence intervals for these results (which shows the range of values that we can be 95% confident contain the true difference in means between White and BAME students) were all below zero. This means that, based on the survey responses, we can conclude that BAME students did indeed view the curriculum as less culturally sensitive than their White peers.

When controlling for race, there were no differences between ratings of the reformed modules versus the comparator modules on any of the five dimensions of the culturally sensitive curricula scales. These findings are less surprising given the inconsistency across indicators of diversification (reading lists, inspiring images, culturally sensitive assessments) seen in the analyses of the curricular materials above.

BAME students also rated their interest in the modules as lower than White students. When running analysis to determine which aspects of curricular diversification (BAME authorship, inspiring images or culturally sensitive assignments) were associated with differences in interest of BAME students, the presence of culturally sensitive assignments was the only diversification measure that predicted BAME students' interest.

The survey results showed that BAME students reported less frequent academic interactions with teachers outside of class and rated the quality of their interactions with teaching staff (e.g. approachable, encouraging) lower than their White peers. It was rare for either group to report academic interactions outside of class. These kinds of interactions were likely curtailed due to the pandemic, which restricted opportunities to meet in person or have brief, informal interactions before or after class. It is also notable that perceptions of teachers were likely to have been based primarily on seminar leaders, rather than the module convenors whose lectures would have been available asynchronously online.

Focus groups

The purpose of the focus groups was to ascertain student perceptions of the intervention. BAME students in the focus groups noticed few differences between the reading lists of the reformed and comparator modules. Their comments suggested that few of them did all the readings. When deciding what

to read, they did not attend to the race, ethnicity, or nationality of the authors. They seemed to assume that the authors were White unless otherwise indicated. They were initially sceptical of an initiative to diversify authors on the reading list, raising concerns about tokenism and exceptionalism. Only after further discussion did they comment on the value of BAME authors to their engagement.

The focus group findings are detailed below and presented under four overarching themes and three sub-themes:

- Perception of reading lists
  - Limited interaction with/interrogation of reading lists
  - Predominance of White authors
  - Tokenism
- Diverse authorship
- Negative vs positive portrayals in teaching materials (e.g. slides, essay topics)
- Broader student engagement/student experience on campus

Student perceptions of reading lists

Limited interaction with/interrogation of reading lists

Participants did not report any difference in the diversification of reading lists between reformed and comparator modules. Thirteen participants took both reformed and comparator modules, while five took one reformed module. Most participants across four interview sessions had given no thought to representation on reading lists or explored such representation before the interview. Many admitted they had not read a great deal:

I've never read as much as I was supposed, I've never been able to, like read that much ever since I've come to university...I was a bit confused in the beginning when they told us that we had to do that much reading, and especially in terms of buying them I was a bit reluctant....

(Female, Nigerian student)

I think that when I looked at the reading list, I mean, I didn't necessarily look at the authors. It looked very, very long.

(Female, Nigerian student)

I didn't really look at the authors like that, right? I just looked at the titles and 'Oh am I gonna buy this or not?'

(Female, Nigerian student)

White authors predominant

When students had the opportunity to think about reading lists during the interview session, they noticed that White authors tended to predominate reading lists. They interpreted this in three main ways. First, they were studying at a UK institution and focusing on UK social policy, so they expected a focus on UK authors, among whom White academics predominate. They did not appear to have considered the value of perspectives from outside the UK as a source of critique and alternative perspectives on Sociology and social policy. Students with experience in the UK education system were accustomed to a culture where a predominance of White authors was 'the norm', though they were not necessarily content with this situation.

My reading list wasn't really that diverse. But I wasn't really surprised because it was more kind of UK-based, because obviously, most of what I was doing was social policy.

(Male mixed heritage student)

I would like to see a bit more of like, a variety of different people, not just, you know, mainly from a White person's perspective, but from, I don't know, a Black person's perspective or Asian as well.

(Female international student)

...'cause obviously, when you come to this country, you're learning about Britain, and the laws and so you don't expect other countries in the course as much. So, it's not really, I'm not fussed about it because I think because since I've been schooling here, for some time, it's just normal. That expectation is just there...I don't really mind if there's no representation because for me, I've, that's just how things have been, so I'm just used to it now.

(Female Nigerian student)

I'm so used to White scholars, and they all, it doesn't like, it's just kind of a way of like school now... when I get a Black scholar, I don't expect it...it's not something that I'm actively, every day wake up and I'm like angry about. But it's not something that I particularly love either.

(Female mixed heritage student)

I think – as sad as it seems – it's the norm to be honest with you. Like, it's expected that... there's not going to be many...minority writers.

(Female Nigerian student)

Secondly, the students assumed that items on the reading lists would be important for and relevant to the module. There are two different ways to interpret this finding. One is that students' framing of 'relevance' may be conditioned by their expectations that White authors would predominate, as the above quotes indicate. This expectation has been subject to much scholarly discussion, sometimes described in terms of 'methodological Whiteness': a framework that denies the role played by race and ethnicity in the structuring of the world and the way in which knowledge is constructed and legitimised within it.

An alternative interpretation is that students reject the idea that merely because an author is a scholar of colour that they will have something relevant to contribute to a topic, even the topic of racism; conversely, it is possible that White authors, or authors of any ethnicity, contribute meaningfully to knowledge, in a way that resonates with ethnic minority students too.

The ethnicity doesn't bother me, the fact is, like, the work, what they've done to... help improve our society, that's what matters.

(Female international student)

I don't think that the curriculum is that purposely, like, dismissing any scholars of colour. I just think where the text is relevant, they're looking at the text as opposed to the authors' [characteristics].

(Female, British Nigerian student)

The people they showed us that are mainly White: they're relating to what we're talking about, like, our studies and what they're teaching. But then...the ethnic minority authors don't talk about what we're studying.

(Male Nigerian student)

Finally, they trusted the judgement of academic staff:

I don't look at an author and think 'I need to know the background before I read you'. You entrust your tutors and your conveners give you this belief that they think is right...I don't think any of our tutors actively think. 'You know what, I'm not going to use any books that are written by Black people'. You know, I think, I think they'd be the best quality that they think we should read.

(Female British Indian student)

Tokenism

When asked about the importance of including BAME authors, most participants were concerned about tokenism. Some participants found it unfair or offensive to add BAME authors to reading lists simply for the sake of inclusion.

As everyone said, like...if the writing is relevant, then it should be included. I don't think they should pick an author just based on their ethnicity.... I mean obviously it's interesting to read books from people from different backgrounds, but they shouldn't just include them just because they're from a different background.

(Female, British Nigerian student)

'Oh, yeah, by the way, we've added a Black individual. We wrote something about Britain as well.'...I don't think highlighting is necessary. It's a bit more offensive to highlight it.

(Female Nigerian student)

They are represented, but not in a typical way. It's just like, 'Oh, you know, here we have a Black scholar, and this Black scholar is here and he's from Africa, you know, he's got his emphasis on him.' And ... it makes it seem...they put him there, like, 'Oh, we have that scholar in the curriculum', not that this is a scholar, you know, and he happens to be Black. It's a bit hard to explain but it's just like – I think it's just because of the way they represent these scholars, like, number one, like 'Oh, you know, this is so rare.' And number two, like it's a shock...It doesn't make it seem natural to me.

(Female Nigerian student)

A diverse authorship

As they reflected on their academic reading lists, many students seemed to realise that more could be done to include a wider range of perspectives; they felt a need for authors from more ethnically diverse backgrounds, who would feel more relatable. This would help students feel interested, motivated, and encouraged.

I feel like, yeah, when you read an article that's written by somebody who's the same ethnic group as you, you seem to get motivated, you get excited you know, you want to read it.

(Female international student)

If we see a lot more Black scholars...more ethnic minority scholars, it might give off the impression that we can actually make it.

(Female Nigerian student)

I don't feel like I see enough, enough, people from like different, diverse backgrounds...I see more of White people that are the ones that write the books... it would be really nice to see different ethnicities writing these books for us and being able to see from their perspective on you know criminology and sociology instead of...just the same people, like, all the time.

(Female Nigerian student)

Negative vs positive portrayals in teaching materials

Participants in Criminology and Law modules seemed to regard it as a fact that BAME populations were often represented negatively (e.g. stop and search statistics, Black people as criminals). Conversely, they could relate to positive portrayals of racially minoritised people. When they saw someone like them in an academically, politically or socially powerful position, it seemed to have a positive impact on them and helped them feel included.

It's sort of inspirational not just for, you know, grown people but even for little kids and I think if we have more people of colour represented it shows that you know, sure there might be some cases where people screw up and end up in prison or something or get into trouble with the law...But there are, you know success stories where you can, I don't know, one day be prime minister of the UK or something.

(Female international student)

I feel like...you can relate to, like in terms of ethnicity and stuff I feel like it's a good thing for me. Like, it motivates me to read it because...that actually relates to me. That makes sense. It's things I can relate to and there's topics that actually make sense in a way so that kind of encourages me more to like want to do it so yeah I think the content is important.

(Female British Ghanaian student)

When they were introduced to me and my course, I took a particular interest in it, obviously, because it relates to me and my family background.

(Female mixed heritage student)

This feeling of relatedness could be triggered anywhere in the overall curriculum, not just reading lists, which led us to further sub-studies into teaching materials such as lecture slides and assignment topics.

I had to write a paper and basically...I found this like one article from somebody who was from Pakistan. I got really excited... I was like 'Yay, they're from Pakistan!' you know, I'm happy but...I asked myself but, more, you know, is the author more important or is the knowledge or information that is being passed forward important or not? So, I feel like they do try to make the course diverse and everything and you know try and include us.

(Female international student)

It was easy for them to talk about it because like it's something that they've experienced and I think one of the essays you had to do was, it was based on your culture and they gave you free like rein to do whatever you wanted and it wasn't just okay you have to do White British culture...

(Female Nigerian student)

Because I remember when I'd done the first essay, that's the week I chose to talk about the Windrush.

(Female Nigerian student)

Broader student engagement/student experience on campus

The participants' experience at university overall seemed to be positive insofar as none of them reported experiencing direct racial discrimination on campus. Most participants had a positive experience in seminar discussions, with seminar leaders encouraging students to speak freely. However, the importance of a sense of belonging should not be underestimated. Some tended to feel more comfortable in an ethnically diverse environment and would not bring up racial issues when everyone else present was White.

My classical mythology module, um, it wasn't – obviously not – going to talk about race. But I just felt out of it because I was the only Black person in this module so I was just sitting on my computer just staring at all of these White faces and it was of course, you know, it's education, we have to do it. But I just felt like less connected because I didn't see other people like me.

(Female Nigerian student)

I just thought like, 'No, I need to feel comfortable as well'. Um, as much as I am not looking for people who are just like me, I need to have a sense of community there as well and somebody I can relate with. And I think that's also why people tend to go for people that look like them. So like it was very, very much important for me to have like a sense of diversity in the university because if not, I would not feel comfortable.

(Female Nigerian student)

I do agree with the looking at unis though, um like when you hear stories about you know like [University A and University B], how people have been like racist on group chats since you know the beginning of the school year. You just think, I don't want to put myself in that situation where I could get potentially ganged up on or you know discriminated against and there's no one, there's no community support at that university to help me.

(Female mixed heritage student)

A final important finding, that obviously has wider implications, is that online teaching and learning environments during the pandemic made it harder to feel engaged and connected due to a lack of interaction with other students.

There's not really much like you don't really interact with the actual, like, lecturers and anything. So, there's not really any opportunity for us to actually like, experience anything, like, out of the ordinary.

(Female British Pakistani student)

I don't know if it's the same in classrooms but online like no one really wants to speak up.

(Female British Ghanaian student)

Intervention 2: 'DCT' (Leicester)

The second evaluation conducted focus groups with staff and students. The focus group findings were organised under four overarching themes and various subthemes:

- Staff perceptions of the intervention
  - Workload, space and time
  - Implementation challenges
  - Toolkit title and terminology
  - Reading lists
  - Racial literacy and reflection among staff
  - A tool for quantitative methods
  - Effect on race specialists

- Student perceptions of the intervention
  - Positive
  - Negative
  - Course content
  - Course relatability
  - Course enjoyment

Staff perceptions of the intervention

Participants noted several issues that impacted positively or negatively on the efficacy of the DCT, or on staff ability to fully and evenly embed it into their practice.

Workload, space and time

Participants highlighted an overly congested workload and related pressures as core factors that limited their ability to engage fully with the toolkit. Staff had not formally been given any additional time within existing workloads by the HEP to engage with the DCT or embed its guidance into their module content.

Participants explained that the everyday activities that 'came with the job', such as administrative responsibilities, marking, research, and grant capture were all clustered in the summer months. This is also the period in the calendar when staff are expected to reflect on their teaching practice and modify the following year's content, as well as take annual leave.

The biggest issue is related to workload. Some of us have these really quite significant workloads, and I think this is a problem in the school that's not been addressed, for all sorts of reasons. And so, the biggest thing is time, it's actually having the opportunity to sit down and reflect

(Mid-career Sociology Academic)

Some were keen to highlight that to meaningfully reflect upon, engage and modify their practice in accordance with the guidance presented in the toolkit, and to decolonise their practice more broadly, they required time and space to learn, reflect and make changes. They argued that failure to provide this space at the institutional level would result in partial, uneven and superficial engagement with attempts to improve racial inclusion (and related activities) in module content or limited improvement in the levels of racial literacy among peers.

Participants commented that to enable teaching to move from face-to-face to online modes of delivery during the Covid-19 lockdown, universities across the sector provided staff with formal training, support and guidance to support the transition to blended delivery. HEPs had also provided space by relaxing expectations for research outputs and grant capture within promotion and annual targets. They argued that similar levels of commitment would be required if interventions focused on racial inclusion, the degree awarding gap and anti-racism, such as the DCT, are to be fully effective.

Implementation challenges

For Intervention 2, the first assumption was that the toolkit provided teaching staff with a level of detail that would enable them to make the required changes to their curriculum. However, some participants felt that an introductory resource did not provide sufficient information for them to implement the toolkit adequately. For them, the toolkit was useful but too brief and thus did not go far enough as a resource for developing their racial literacy.

I have to say it was shorter than when I'd heard about it being announced. It wasn't as large a document as I imagined, but I guess it's still in its early stages.

(Senior-career Sociology Academic)

This participant considered that the toolkit could be useful for people at the beginning of their careers, who have less experience in writing and rewriting curricula. In most instances, changes to module content and the extent of the changes remained uneven across taught modules, despite one of the core DCT objectives to better standardise basic levels of racial inclusion across all taught modules. This was perhaps to be expected in light of the uneven levels of staff engagement with the toolkit reported in the quantitative findings.

A second assumption, comparable to intervention 1, was that the module convenors would actually use the toolkit provided to make changes to their module curriculum. The roll-out of the toolkit – although encouraged by senior leadership, middle managers and teaching and learning leads – was largely a voluntary exercise. The expectation was that staff would or could do this work within existing workload models and in a standardised way. The exercise was not institutionally mandated and no formal expectations of engagement or formal accountability were placed on staff regarding the use of the toolkit.

Without such formal mandate or accountability, individual staff were left to decide for themselves the extent to which they complied with the DCT and, ultimately, what racial inclusion instructions to include or overlook. Typically, those convenors who engaged more fully with the intervention either had the capacity to implement these changes in their modules, prioritised inclusive teaching over other university priorities for research, or were especially passionate about, directly engaged in, or possessed a prior commitment to race inclusion and decolonising work.

Toolkit title and terminology

Participants familiar with decolonising and or anti-racism work were sometimes irritated and frustrated by the conceptual and pedagogical inaccuracy of the toolkit's title. They noted that decolonising is a complex and multifaceted process, which requires significant levels of systemic change across the university, including faculty, curricular assessment, pastoral systems, staff recruitment and progression, student mental health and wellbeing services. They observed, for example, that it is impossible to decolonise a curriculum with a two-page document, and some found such claims offensive (compare Tuck and Yang, 2012). As one lecturer summed up: *'[Decolonising] is a more complicated issue than the toolkit implies'.* To them, the toolkit could be more accurately viewed as a useful tool for making module content and practice *racially inclusive*.

I think the toolkit is useful and helpful. But I think it's about managing the expectation of the toolkit. I think the toolkit works in terms of standardising the baseline practice, of making practice much more inclusive across all the modules.

(Mid-career Sociology Academic)

As a tool for making our practice more inclusive, more pluralised, centring rates and reflecting I think it's really, really useful. But I don't think it should be confused with something that achieves decolonising on its own. You're not going to achieve decolonising the curriculum just solely by using this toolkit.

(Mid-career Sociology Academic)

Participants also expressed concern that the current political debate – framed in terms of controversy or misinformation – around decolonising education was likely to leave staff who were not well-versed with anti-racism and decolonising debates wary of, and less inclined to engage with, activities that were branded as 'decolonising'.

At the same time, the DCT aided participants' ability to identify and problematise the manifestations of assumed knowledge in their course content. For example, some module convenors commented on how the DCT had prompted them to reflect on the colonial foundations within which classical sociological theories and accepted epistemologies were constructed. The DCT provided a framework for staff to revisit and rework lecture material. Some responded by involving students as co-creators in the construction of knowledge and even within the formation of assignment questions.

Reading lists

Reading lists have been an area of much critical attention and debate within the decolonising higher education conversation. Given this situation, it was perhaps unsurprising that reading lists were a source of considerable anxiety for participants.

This was especially the case in relation to issues such as: What constitutes a decolonised reading list? The DCT's two-pronged approach (which was to provide a) a numerical target and b) a critical narrative and clear guidance of what (might) constitute(s) a racially inclusive reading list in addition to an arbitrary numerical target) was especially well received. For participants, the DCT doubled as a reference point and a check and balance for evaluating the levels of diversity within their module reading lists. Additionally, they claimed that it also helped them more confidently engage students as co-producers within the construction of new reading lists and other related course materials.

Racial literacy and reflection among staff

Participants were cognisant of a general lack of academic and pedagogical consensus around decolonising curricula and a lack of institutional direction on what this looked like in practice at the University and across the sector. In this context, participants felt that the DCT was particularly helpful for providing them with what they described as a 'beginner's guide', which offered 'useful first steps' for 'reflecting on their practice and thinking about how to decolonise their work'. Staff argued that the DCT was particularly useful for educators at all levels who were committed to the principle of inclusion but may not be race specialists, and thus not familiar with how inclusion translated into best practice at the module or course level.

Others reported that the DCT helped them to operationalise, or turn into practice, some of the more abstract and broader philosophical instructions of decolonising work. For them, it struck the right balance between offering practical recommendations for change and conceptual exposition (the pedagogical and theoretical rationale behind the instruction).

What I liked about it was that it... operationalised some of those more abstract principles. When you talk about Epistemologies of the South or disrupting colonial epistemologies, what does that actually mean? And it's...more than just putting non-White authors onto your reading list. What I liked was it nicely kept between that level of it's just about these specific things, you're going to have 20% of non-White authors on your reading list on the one hand, and on the other, it still had another depth to say that there is a broader philosophical point that's underpinning this.

(Senior-career Sociology Academic)

The DCT was perceived to provide a framework and strategies for participants to enhance their own race inclusion best practice beyond the original scope and recommendations offered in the resource. For example, the DCT enabled module convenors to synthesise new ways of making their teaching practice inclusive to students from other marginalised groups or protected characteristics who were not directly accounted for in the original aims of the DCT, such as international students.

In terms of impact on fostering inclusive best-practice, the DCT was viewed as effective in helping teaching-staff reflect on the kinds of racial inequities that might exist within their own pedagogical practice or module content. In doing so, it appeared to improve individual's confidence to meaningfully reflect on, and take ownership of, the decolonising process as it pertains to their own module content. The reflection was not solely an abstract or cerebral activity but an meaningful exercise which resulted in direct action and/or change in the following areas of pedagogical practice or module content.

I found it really, really helpful. It's given me lots of concrete ideas on things that I can do in my modules to question the power relations ... I really like the definition from toolkit about what decolonising actually means. So, it's about questioning what counts as knowledge... So, I've really taken that to heart. And, actually, I've gone more than that... And I've explicitly tried to introduce that into my assessments as well ... I've asked the students to relate to concepts in the module from their own experiences.

(Mid-career Sociology Academic)

A tool for making Quantitative Sociology more racially inclusive

The toolkit was also helpful for participants who were specialists in quantitative-based methodologies and approaches. Historically academics in quantitative-based areas of social enquiry have often found difficulty in specifying how decolonising and racial inclusion work applies to what is often considered to be an area of social and natural science that is neutral. How (and where to begin) to make this particular area of study more racially inclusive has long been a source of contention if not controversy.

In this case, the DCT proved helpful by providing strategies for making quantitative-based module content more relatable and applicable to racially diverse cohorts of students, via directing staff to focus on disrupting and pluralising the narratives and case-studies through which quantitative analyses are explained, explored and applied. For some participants, the DCT helped provide a framework for outlining how quantitative methods might be differently contextualised:

...[O]ne way that I hadn't thought of, probably, as much about in my teaching, because it's methods teaching, is the use of examples. And this wasn't something that I'd explored, and the toolkit alerted me to that...But I think that the breakthrough, and this is where the toolkit really helped, was you don't have to necessarily rethink from the ground up straightaway.

(Mid-career Sociology Academic)

[In] terms of assessment...I thought, how can I do that? But of course, again, the examples came to my rescue because I can say well I'm getting students to interpret graphs and charts. Well, what's in that graph and chart? I've got control about that. If I want to have something on race and ethnicity, I can find graphs and charts really simply...[M]y initial fear was that I wouldn't be able to do it, I didn't have the expertise. [But] I think once you get the ball rolling [with the DCT] then it [making content more relatable to all student experiences] actually comes quite easily.

(Mid-career Sociology Academic)

Effect on race specialists

The DCT was also a useful tool for reflection for staff who were already engaged in anti-racism and race-inclusion work. In this case, it helped participants to question the ways in which their content was often overly centred on the experiences of particular communities or was informed by particular epistemological viewpoints.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the perspectives prioritised within module content often reflect academics' own research interests and biographies. For example, one lecturer explained that their interest in racial inequities in European nation states translated into an epistemological over-focus on the racial history in this part of the world. In a globally diverse classroom, this inadvertently placed UK-domiciled students, who were more likely to be familiar with the socio-political history of racial inequality in Europe, at an advantage over their peers from non-western states or the global south (who were less likely to be familiar with these narratives). This prompted them to revisit and review the module content, and to open it up to include, apply or relate content to a broader range of global experiences (and of inequalities), and offer more

opportunities to explore race through the students' own geo-political contexts:

I did a module on race, and all of my students were international students, but all the questions were about exploring the experience of race in the UK...So, just thinking about the fact that all the questions were centred in the UK context meant that I was marginalising anybody who wasn't from the UK...So...thinking about integrating it, I think it's been quite helpful in forcing even me, who's a race expert to reflect on the ways in which my practices prioritise certain groups.

(Mid-career Sociology Academic)

Student perceptions of the intervention

Positive

For the most part, Black Sociology focus group participants reported increased opportunities to learn about race in their Sociology modules, leading to higher levels of satisfaction. Sociology students were not formally briefed about the introduction of the DCT in their modules. Consequently, participants often linked race-inclusion developments in their module content to wider political movements such as the Black Lives Matter protests in 2020, rather than the university's commitment to anti-racism and racial inclusion work.

I think things may have shifted a bit because, for example, in Sociology in Transformation, you can't pick what essay you want to do, but you can pick what reading you want to do. So I can choose within this list which is more appropriate for me... So I think it is, in that sense, quite cool, yes.

(Black student, Level 3)

I think they are making it better. I think since the spark of last year's Black Lives Matter and the George Floyd incident ... staff are beginning to realise the changes they need to make within each module.

(Black student, Level 3)

Like their Black peers, South Asian Sociology participants had also noticed and welcomed increased opportunities to learn about race in content and assessment. They observed that while opportunities to study race were still comparatively limited when compared to the other topics explored on their course, these moments appeared to boost their interest and sense of satisfaction and belonging in the module.

I have been able to talk about my own interests in pretty much all of my chosen modules, yes.

(South Asian student, Level 3)

I was surprised to see that most of my final assessments had included South Asians ... but it was a good surprise.

(South Asian student, Level 3)

White students expressed the highest levels of satisfaction in relation to opportunities to explore race in module content. Paradoxically, however, they were also the group who were most sceptical: discussions of race appeared briefly and sporadically across their taught modules. For some, this prompted concerns about racial tokenism, a concern also noted in Intervention 1 above.

In my module ... we actually had a section dedicated to African writers and African filmmakers, and I think that was very nice, but at the same time, it felt like it was ticking a box. I don't understand why does it have to be a specific lecture just about African academics. Why do we have to just make it look like it's something set aside from the rest of the module instead of incorporating it fully?

(White students, Level 3)

Negative

The Sociology students' evaluative accounts also provided important insights into wider issues that had a negative impact on the efficacy of the DCT intervention.

The DCT supports curriculum development by providing teaching staff with strategies to include race more effectively *as one of* multiple lenses through which students explore module content. However, students across all the Sociology focus groups expressed some frustration at what they perceived to be a piecemeal approach to studying race and a superficial study of race across modules and the course more widely.

A typical module format comprises 10 to 12 weekly lectures and seminars that explore a thematic area of Sociology, such as drugs, youth, health or wellbeing. Each week, the central theme is often explored from a different viewpoint. For example, a module on health might spend one or two weeks exploring health through the lens of race (with further weeks on class, gender, and so on).

One consequence of this format is that it leaves module convenors with little scope to explore a broad(er) range of experiences of race as related to the various minority ethnic groups in the UK and across the global north and south.

Last year, we did a module, and... and it was two-sided. It was White or Black... There was no Korean, Asian...It was just frustrating... We [got] to cover Black people ... and LGBTQ+ people... That was it. Done. Move on, and it just seems a bit mad.

(White student, Level 3)

Even for us there's not been that many options to pick a race module...I don't think there's been any really. I think xxx briefly talks about it in Global Sex Trade and then for my dissertation, just purely because we can pick anything we want to. By chance, I'm doing something about race, but I don't think I've ever been taught anything about race whilst being at university

(Black student, Level 3).

Racially diversifying content and a racially diverse faculty

While the student testimonies indicated the DCT's potential for improving levels of racial inclusion and satisfaction in module content, they also demonstrated that a racially inclusive curriculum required a diverse and representative faculty that was racially literate. The accounts of the participants of colour clearly indicated that they appreciated the increased opportunities to explore race and related topics in the content offered by the DCT. However, students also emphasised the importance of *who* taught them as well as *what* they were taught.

I think [a racially diverse faculty] it's 100% important, so, for example, how [student X] was saying how [Lecturer Y] uses her own examples and talks about how identity as well, which is what we need, their own personal experiences. Or their personal culture, or identity, or ethnicity, or race and bringing it towards the lecture and the literature is what makes it so beautiful, your experience and who you are, and then relating it back to literature. And just the way you convey it is just so much better. And I feel like, and this is not anything got to do with White people and hating on them. It's literally just being able to have different types of lecturers. And I think I had one Asian lecturer that I can remember in my whole three years. That's ridiculous, and one Black woman, which was [Lecturer Y]. Other than that, all of them were White, I think.

(South Asian student, Level 3)

The above quotations show that the importance of a racially diverse faculty was not solely an abstract or ethical value. It provided a key educational and pastoral function for *all* students. Pedagogically, student participants from all focus groups and from all ethnic backgrounds asserted that diversity among the faculty added a more authentic voice and authority which enhanced the learning experience, making it more meaningful.

Similarly, the accounts suggested that a racially representative staff body improved motivation, retention and interest among minority ethnic students, as well as filling the current void of role models from minority ethnic backgrounds within academia, especially for women of colour.

I feel like if a lecturer has actually been through it themselves and they're talking about this, it will just be a bit more natural. And we know that they're actually speaking because they understand...It's so easy to talk about stuff when it hasn't affected you... So, for example, if a White person tries to talk about being dark-skinned. I'd be like, 'Do you even understand how it's like to be even bullied by your own family for being dark?' You wouldn't understand! So, for them to even educate, I'd get a bit annoyed because they don't understand. But if this was actually a dark person talking about this, I would be like, oh my God, thank God! You actually understand what I'm trying to say.

(South Asian student, Level 2)

Course content

For students, topics such as social theory were often perceived to be 'off limits' for issues of race and racism, as student perceptions of 'objective' was contrasted with the apparently 'subjective' lens of race. This view was expressed by students and staff across the three other sample courses and affirmed by White, South Asian and Black student participants.

Despite the introduction of the DCT across all modules, in most cases 'Whiteness' remained the de-facto way of perceiving, comprehending, explaining and delivering theory. For some participants of colour, this prompted a counter-reaction – a resultant disinterest in theory.

Participant accounts illustrate some of the ways in which a structural change to the sociology degree at Level 1 also contributed to a difference within the taught experiences of Level 1 sociology students when compared to their Level 2 and 3 peers. All sociology modules trialled the toolkit and were provided with introductory instructions/guidelines for how to disrupt and pluralise the Eurocentric epistemologies that characterise content, assessment and practice. Additionally, Level 1 students also had a new module explicitly focused on exploring race and ethnicity. When Level 2 and 3 Black student participants heard about these new learning opportunities for their Level 1 peers, they remarked that they would also have preferred this approach.

Race, Racism and Ethnicity kind of hit the nail on the head with anyone that was a minority. I remember I was talking to the other Black students on my course, they were, like, woah, they're talking about us. You never really, especially in other subjects, you never really see, like, you being talked about, especially if you're a minority, and especially with history. In the UK, Black history is not really talked about in the depth that we would want it to be, but Race, Racism and Ethnicity, especially it being taught by a black man, we were, woah, this is great. Yes, we definitely see ourselves being represented, and you see a bit of you in what is being taught. I'm now really looking forward to second year and third year. Hearing about the hair stuff, I'm like, yes, it's me. So, I'm really, yes, you definitely see yourself.

(Black student, Level 1)

Course relatability

Black Sociology students were keen to highlight increased opportunities to discuss and relate module content and assessment to their own lived experiences and biographies as people of colour, especially in optional modules. They further noted the increased opportunity to use these aspects of their identities as legitimate lenses for sociological enquiry.

[We] definitely see ourselves being represented, and you see a bit of you in what is being taught. I'm now really looking forward to second year and third year.

(Black student, Level 1)

I think [some of our modules] echo voices of [diverse] people, like, everyone. It goes from men and women, it covers most classes, all classes, most ethnicities. I think the only difficult thing is because Sociology is grounded in theory, there's only so much diversity you can get from a theory...

(Black student, Level 3)

Greater relatability increased Black student participants' interest in course content, satisfaction with modules, sense of belonging and even retention on degree. These positive impacts highlight how for many, the converse – that lack of inclusion could lead to negative impacts – was also true. As one student pointedly remarked, 'If they're not going to teach about Black people, [then] I don't care [about the subject].'

Increased opportunities to explore race in a general course was corroborated by the feedback from the participants of South Asian heritage. However, for the majority these new opportunities did not directly apply to the(ir) South Asian experience.

There's not much focus on South Asians... I think there's [some] focus on Black people, which I'm not complaining about, but it does make the course a little... less relatable for me, as a South Asian. Because I'd like to write about my type [too].

(South Asian student, Level 2)

I think, for me, I find it interesting, and it has taught me a lot generally. But...I haven't learned about something where I'm like:

'Oh my God, that's me! Oh my God, this directly impacts me!

(South Asian student, Level 3)

I don't think I've been able to discuss my own lived experiences, only in one essay...

(South Asian student, Level 3)

South Asian students who were practising Muslims, in particular, remarked on the rarity of opportunities to explore the intersection of religion and race in late modern Britain as it related to their lived experiences as people who were British, South Asian and of the Islamic faith. Interestingly, South Asian participants were also keen to comment that, for the most part, their feelings of 'relatability' to the university were more likely to be tied to their experience of being a part of a racially diverse student body (and related societies) and/or connected to their proximity to a racially diverse city than by any influence from their module content. Moreover, when opportunities to explore the South Asian experience did arise in their course, they felt that these were generally due to the politics or research interests of individual lecturers who had a particular interest in including the viewpoints of people from multiple racial backgrounds and identities.

The reasons why we wanted to come to Leicester is because it's so diverse. But yet in our lectures, we're not actually taught anything about other communities or other cultures.

(South Asian student, Level 3)

I feel like hijabs should ... be brought up and how the West sees it as oppression, but it's not. I think that would be good to be brought up in a future module...It's actually really liberating, and just things that deconstruct stereotypes.

(South Asian student, Level 2)

Some of the modules I've chosen because I know that they are relatable to me. So for example, I did Sociology of fashion... So I think the modules that you can choose are quite relatable, yes.

(South Asian student, Level 2)

Generally, White sociology students appeared to be the most satisfied with opportunities to relate course content to their own lives and to study Sociology through the lenses of the other communities that constitute the UK.

Student accounts also indicated a contrast in the value of a racially pluralised and inclusive curriculum for students of colour when compared to White peers. For White students, opportunities to study content through the lenses of other racialised groups is more likely to be reported as interesting but often novel or not linked to their enjoyment of the course. For students of colour, seeing themselves within the fabric of the educational content and narratives that shape and construct our understandings of self and modern Britain was more likely to be personally rewarding if not transformative, even if that did not translate in higher degree classes or a more even distribution of award outcomes between students of colour and their White peers.

Course enjoyment

For participants, enjoyment was connected to the ability to relate module content to their own lives, explicitly or implicitly, and vice versa. This was especially the case for participants from minority ethnic backgrounds. Of course, we must avoid essentialising the education-based experiences of minority ethnic students. Levels of student enjoyment are not simply and directly correlated to curriculum content; the experiences of students of colour are much more complex. For example, one Black Sociology student remarked that she particularly liked modules on film and on autobiographies as she enjoyed films and kept a diary. Similarly, another Black student explained:

I'm interested in the topics rather than they're actually related to me. The drugs in society, I was interested in it, but I didn't relate to it. The same with the sex trade. I guess beauty I did in a way because it was more like we spoke about social media and how models have been shown on social media.

(Black student, Level 3)

In most cases, both Black and South Asian student participants remarked that they had most enjoyed modules centred on race, or elements of modules where they could engage with content or authors that related directly to their experiences and lives – and the toolkit made some impact here.

I really, really enjoyed that module,... It was really interesting to see the reality of how things are in Britain,... So it was really nice to figure out something showing you about your race as well. Like, I thought I knew what being black was, but clearly, I didn't. I remember there was one part in the module about colourism and the beauty industry, and being Black, and from being really interested in fashion and beauty, I was like woah, there's so much stuff here that is just not right. So, yes, I found that really, really good.

(Black student, Level 2)

So, I did a course last year, it was called the politics of beauty, and that was one of the first courses that actually spoke about Asian and Black people. And I got to do a piece of writing that was on minority ethnic groups, so I found that was really interesting compared to my other courses.

(South Asian student, Level 2)

[The] best one's Race...because...that's what I'm most interested in if I was to do a dissertation. That was probably the best one'.

(Black student, Level 2)

The last comment also illustrates how students' enjoyment of certain modules was contrasted with a lack of interest in modules and module content which did not appear to correspond directly with their own lives. Interestingly, most of the modules that the students of colour in our sample did not enjoy were those which were centred on theory or research methods. These were also generally perceived by students and staff as topics which did not have or were perceived to be less applicable to discussions of race.

The enjoyment of White student participants appeared to be dependent on a greater variety of factors than for their peers of colour. Several White student participants explained how they especially welcomed and enjoyed exploring Sociology through the views, experiences and racialised conceptual frames. However, their enjoyment did not appear to be as dependent on these opportunities as it was for participants of colour.

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of this report show that the interventions, as designed, did not have their intended impact on the ethnicity degree awarding gap. We suggest some caution in interpreting these findings, though the IE and IPE offer fruitful and promising conclusions and recommendations for improving both the implementation and the evaluation of interventions aimed at addressing the ethnicity degree awarding gap in future.

A key finding that informs our conclusions and recommendations is that the implementation of the intervention was not delivered as planned. The reasons for this vary: academic staff have multiple priorities and limited time and resources, while respondents often express an intention to do things without that intention being fully realised in terms of effective delivery. The interventions may also have been too complex or otherwise ineffective for reasons that we were unable to observe. Whatever the explanation, commitment to implement an intervention to reform curricula was not enough to lead to the module curriculum being changed as intended. This limits interpretation as there is not enough evidence to understand whether a more inclusive and culturally sensitive curriculum impacts on attainment, and so on the ethnicity degree awarding gap.

Importantly, this evaluation was designed to test the impact of the interventions on the ethnicity degree awarding gap only, and therefore cannot assess whether curriculum reform effectively achieves any other aims. It is also worth noting that both interventions have since adapted their practice in response to the evidence from the evaluation.

The IPE found that some of the assumptions underpinning the Theory of Change for each intervention did not hold true. This informs one of our recommendations: on ensuring that a Theory of Change is adequately specified, that the ToC's assumptions are adequately tested, and that approaches should be adapted and amended based on these findings. More specifically, Intervention 1 ('Diversity Mark') was based on the assumption that module convenors would diversify their curricula as outlined during interviews with the intervention lead.

However, these statements of intent and commitment to making changes did not translate to action. Three of the four 'reformed' modules in the impact evaluation analysis had 0% BAME authorship on their reading lists. A further assumption was that, as a result of raised awareness and links to relevant assistance, convenors would diversify their curriculum beyond increasing BAME authorship on their reading lists. The IPE demonstrated, however, that in those modules with a higher percentage of BAME authorship, further curriculum diversification was inconsistent. Those modules with a diverse reading list lacked inspiring images of people from BAME backgrounds in their lecture and seminar content, and did not consistently offer the option of culturally sensitive assignments.

The IPE for Intervention 2 had a similar set of findings. Here the first assumption was that the 'decolonising the curriculum toolkit' (DCT) provided teaching staff with sufficient detail to enable them to make the required changes to their curriculum. The second assumption was that staff would engage with the toolkit and therefore make appropriate changes. Although communication between the intervention lead and module convenors indicated engagement with the toolkit, this did not necessarily mean that the toolkit led to curriculum change.

These findings resonate with the existing literature addressing curriculum and pedagogy reform in terms of diversity and inclusion, and more widely. Research ranging from technology adoption (Abrahams, 2010), online professional development tools (Cho, 2013), assessment practice (Deneed, 2013; O'Neill, 2021), staff performance measures (Hoekstra and Crocker, 2015) and, most relevantly, on creating inclusive science curriculum (Mercer-Mapstone et al, 2021) have found that lack of time and resources are a major reason why these various interventions are less successfully implemented.

Our conclusions and recommendations build on these findings on implementation, informed by the evidence cited above. There are various and different reasons why interventions are not effectively implemented generally in addition to lack of resources and time; lack of support, lack of knowledge of or agreement with project aims, lack of monitoring or oversight. For the interventions assessed in this report, there was limited disagreement or resistance to project aims (though this was something raised as a concern in HE more broadly), but the other explanations were all present.

For example, staff feedback on the 'DCT' found that, while staff understood the rationale for it being an introductory resource, they nonetheless wanted an intervention that provided or prompted more substantial change. The ToC assumed that a short, easy to pick up toolkit would encourage and enable staff to make changes to their curriculum. The evaluation found that this wasn't the case, and suggests that curriculum reform may need to adopt a different approach. At the same time, interviews with staff referred to workload, space, and a lack of time to reflect on the existing curriculum, let alone make changes, so it is unclear whether a more comprehensive intervention would have more consistent implementation. The evaluation of both interventions took place against the back-drop of the huge disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have impacted on staff capacity and decisions regarding curriculum change.

Interventions that rely on voluntary engagement and self-motivation are known to risk inconsistent implementation, a key finding from both interventions. Where curriculum changes are not made compulsory, there is always the danger that module convenors will de-prioritise such changes due to other demands and commitments. This finding is not limited to curriculum changes: recent research conducted by Universities UK (UUK, 2022) showed that only one third of the 57 respondents reported that their institutions had made student equality issues, such as ethnicity degree awarding gaps, a formal part of relevant staff performance reviews or development conversations.

That both interventions found high levels of variation in adoption raises questions of if or how implementation might be more effective. Interview participants queried whether more explicit support or even mandated take-up might have led to more consistent implementation, with Covid-19 teaching and learning adaptations cited as a comparator or precedent.

Evidence on the mandatory or voluntary nature of an initiative is somewhat complex (Tilema, 2003). There is some suggestion that if a model or plan for change in HE is perceived as emerging from a mostly external impetus (e.g., 'the external board demands this of us'), resistance is inevitable (Bromage, 2006). Similarly Blackmore and Kandiko (2012) have suggested that 'centrally mandated, uniform approaches to curriculum change are not appropriate and ultimately fail to take root'. Consonant with our research findings, Annala et al (2021) suggested that university-wide reform limits agency and autonomy in teaching and pedagogy. Staff showed 'oppositional agency' which meant they resisted both departmental and university-wide curriculum initiatives. As with the findings from the interventions evaluated in our study, the reasons cited include having too many other duties, not enough time and resources, and a lack of belief in the initiative.

This evidence might be contrasted with the argument, highlighted in both Interventions 1 and 2, and more broadly across the HE sector, that an 'institution-wide' approach should be adopted to effectively tackle racial and other inequalities in HE. There are two (not necessarily competing) ways of interpreting this claim: the first is that institutional or socio-cultural context matters; the second is that individual or particular interventions are unlikely to be successful without a wider or systemic institutional approach. With respect to the first interpretation, evidence suggests that the contextual nature of university-wide curriculum change means that the same intervention can have differing, if not contradictory, impacts in different universities (Anakin et al, 2016). For example, shared ownership of initiatives enabled change in one university, but inhibited change in the other. One university had a bottom-up lecturer-driven approach and one had a top-down or institutionally imposed approach.

Turning to the second interpretation, a common finding is that without institutional and leadership backing, interventions are rendered ineffective. The findings from this project and more widely highlight that curriculum diversification needs to go beyond reading lists, but will need this wider institutional or leadership support. Put another way, without formal guidance, space and training to ensure standardised levels of engagement across the faculty, curriculum or any other

interventions intended to address the ethnicity degree awarding gap are unlikely to be successful.

This shows the need for but also the difficulty of implementing institutional-wide strategy – such an approach needs buy-in from a wide range of actors, who may not have previously had professional relationships or shared objectives and approaches. A report (Baker, Jackson and Longmore, 2014) suggested the following 12 factors that should be present to support university-wide curriculum change:

- Shared and distributed leadership,
- Strategic and inspirational vision,
- A strategy for planned and emergent change,
- Change agents that cross boundaries,
- Consideration of the sociocultural environment,
- Effective and flexible resource management,
- Effective, honest, and meaningful communication,
- Resolving contentions,
- Encouraging new relationships and collaborations,
- Offering emotional support and celebrating achievements,
- Valuing shared learning,
- Supporting risk-taking and creativity.

'Whole-institution' approaches further raise the question of how we should evaluate such expansive and multi-pronged interventions. How can or should we evaluate or understand the role of each individual intervention's impact, in this case on the ethnicity degree awarding gap? Should we aggregate or 'add up' the role of various interventions, or should we instead – in pursuit of more robust quantitative analysis – seek to 'control' for factors that are themselves non-randomly patterned, but that disproportionately affect some people, and not others?

Having outlined the evidence on implementing interventions to tackle the ethnicity degree awarding gaps from the perspective of academics and those charged with *tackling* it, it is worth reflecting more on those students actually *experiencing* it.

Where curriculum interventions are hypothesised to address the degree awarding gap, the presumption is clearly related to belonging, inclusion or student satisfaction. Across both interventions, students at both universities emphasised the importance of being taught by a diverse teaching staff. As UUK (2022) summarised in their recent report on the topic: 'There is more work to do on increasing students' access to diverse role models in the immediate term.'

Feedback from students provided interesting insights into the potential impact of curriculum interventions. For the Diversity Mark, among modules that had a higher percentage of BAME authors on their reading lists, students did not seem to have experienced the reading lists as more diversified than the comparator modules. Several students reported having completed little of the reading, looking only at the titles, and paying little attention to the ethnicity of authors. In further discussions, some students felt the change seemed 'tokenistic'. For the DCT, students reported increased opportunities to learn about race, which positively affected their enjoyment of the module. However, they felt the change was more likely due to external factors, such as the Black Lives Matter movement, than clear changes in the curriculum led by the institution. At the same time, across both interventions, ethnic minority students expressed a feeling that diversified curricula *did* positively impact on their course satisfaction, engagement and belonging in HE.

These findings accentuate the need for student involvement and engagement at the forefront of curriculum change. At the same time, the evidence raises questions about the link between student satisfaction on course and their corresponding attainment. This might be explained by the fact that BAME students perceived modules to be less culturally sensitive than did their White peers, and also reported lower interest in their modules and lower perceptions of the quality of their relationships with teachers than White students. This would seem to show that BAME and White students have different experiences within the same curriculum. However, IPE analysis showed there was no difference between students' perceptions of the cultural sensitivity of reformed modules versus comparator modules, and that diversification of course content and authors was not always a priority for BAME students.

BAME students nonetheless talked about the importance of diversity in the student and academic staff body. The presence of racially diverse teaching staff was a significant factor to those participating in interviews and focus groups; there was a general feeling that White male lecturers, who were relatively over-represented, could not fully understand or empathise with their perspective. These findings indicate that, even if module content and supporting reading is changed, and opportunities to write and reflect on race and culture increased, efforts to reform curricula could prove futile without diversity and representation in those delivering the content.

From an evaluation perspective, the results of the reading list analysis for Intervention 1 raise questions about the required 'dose' of diversification of BAME authorship on reading lists in order to have an impact on students. It is unclear if the 'dosage' or baseline comparator should be different depending on providers or course. Would a HEP where over 50% of the students are BAME require 50% of authors to be BAME, while a HEP or course with 10% of BAME students have only a 10% share of BAME authors on their reading lists? This might suggest that a Sociology student at one provider would or should read more BAME authors than a Sociology student at another, or that students studying on different courses at the same provider read a much different proportion of BAME authors. Given the difference in BAME student representation by course and institution, this is not an easy question to resolve.

For the DCT intervention, student participants reported greater wellbeing and engagement on course. These findings seem to affirm the hypothesis that more relatable courses will better engage all students, particularly ethnic minority students. Yet the evaluation of the interventions did *not* show that this greater engagement led to improved course outcomes, and indicates the need for better evidence on the link between student satisfaction and outcomes.

7.   CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this report raise a number of unanswered questions. Would better implemented courses deliver better outcomes for BAME students? Given the limitations, how should we interpret the finding that greater enjoyment or satisfaction on course does *not* seem to impact on degree outcomes? What other interventions – other than curriculum reform – might better address the degree awarding gap? Ultimately, the key question is how we better address the ethnicity degree awarding gap, and the various consequences that flow from it. Our report indicates reasons why existing interventions haven't effectively addressed the degree awarding gap, but we are still some way from understanding what might work in addressing this longstanding and persistent inequality. This will be a focus for future TASO work, and of HEPs across the UK who are committed to addressing the ethnicity degree awarding gap.

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9. APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Description of Intervention 1 ('Diversity Mark')

The Diversity Mark toolkit

The Diversity Mark is intended to stimulate discussion and prompt curricular change that ultimately benefits BAME students. It is based on the belief that reading lists are an important representation of the legitimised ideas, theories and perspectives that dominate within a discipline and subject area. The library is able to support academics to diversify their reading lists according to, for example, author and perspectives. The library also provides support by providing academics data on reading lists and offers support in selecting more diverse resources. Academics are able to reflect on the data and discuss with students through focus groups, seminar discussion or co-curating bibliographies. This then leads to curriculum change as more diverse content is included which improves the overall student experience, developing graduate attributes such as cultural awareness.

The Diversity Toolkit supports academics to consider diversity and find resources that can increase a sense of a belonging for students.

The toolkit includes:

- Alternative suppliers of content from diverse authors, curated using a tool called Padlet and which is open to contributions

- Tips on finding diverse authors and perspectives in existing collections

- The initiative also draws on best practice to include videos, sample reading lists and cases studies

Presentation of the pilot process and its key finding that reading lists authors were overwhelmingly Eurocentric and White has prompted further interest beyond the initial pilot group. The innovation has already been taken up more widely by SSPSSR on the Canterbury campus and in other Schools (e.g. School of European Culture and Languages). Dissemination is occurring, and Kent has recommended further uptake of the Diversity Mark process. Doing so is likely to capture early adopters in other parts of the institution.

More information is available here: https://blogs.kent.ac.uk/diversitymarktoolkit/
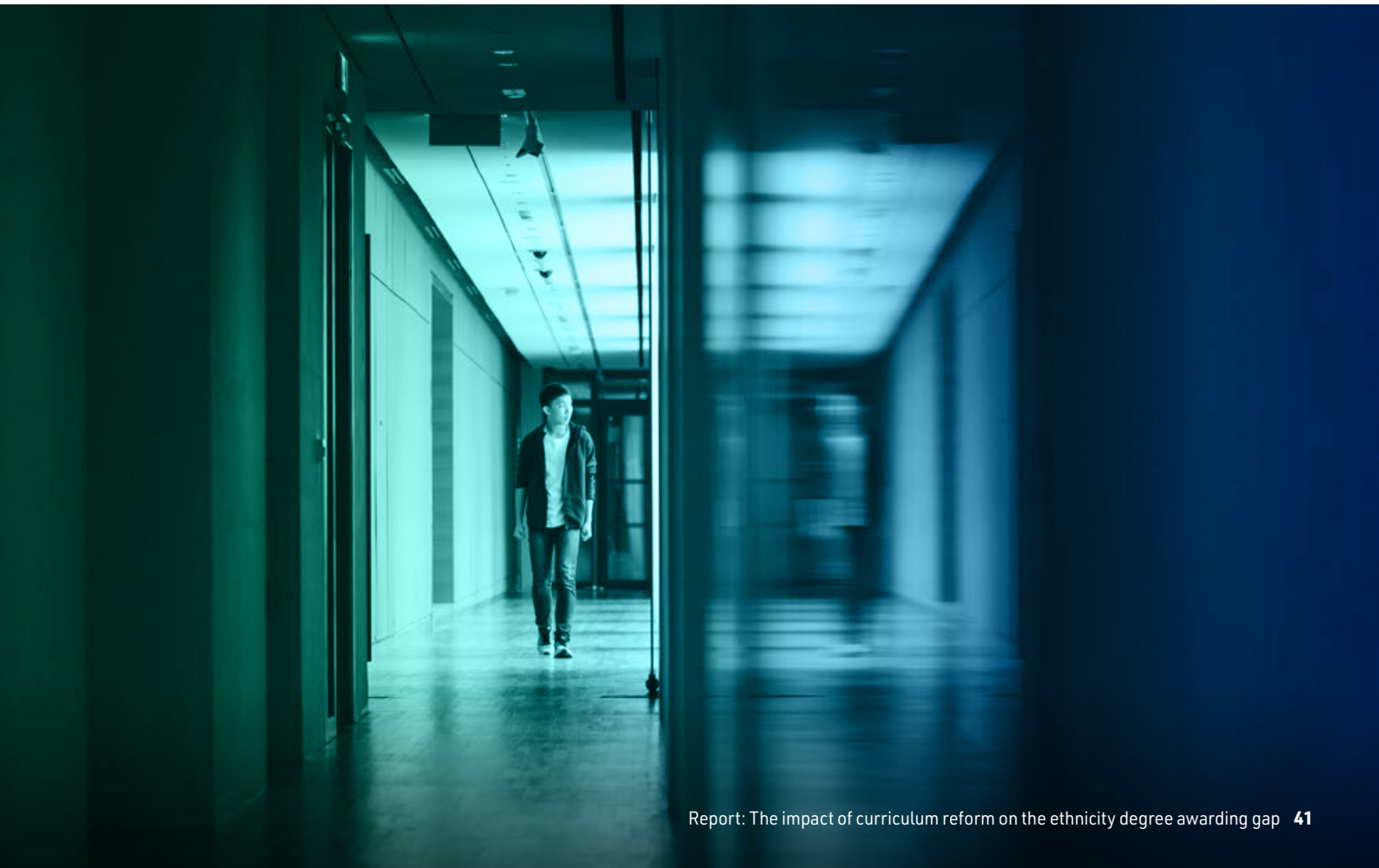
Appendix 2: Intervention 1 ('Diversity Mark') Theory of Change

Situation	There are persistent unequal educational attainment between BAME and White students in higher education (HE). The curriculum of most modules in HE is dominated by White, male, Eurocentric authors and perspectives.

Aims	We aim to diversify the HE curriculum to see whether it enhances the engagement and attainment of BAME students.

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
Process			**Impact**	
• Academic leadership • Module convenors willing to participate. • Student Diversity Mark Officers to audit the reading lists, conduct focus groups and share student perspectives. • Library resources to support diversification • Related workshops on diversifying curricula	• Reading list audit conducted and fed back to module convenors with an open-ended questionnaire to complete and links to relevant resources. Student perspectives also shared with module convenors. • Due to awareness-raising and links to relevant assistance, module convenors diversify their curricula (adding BAME authors, wider range of examples, openness to alternative resources)	• Diversified curricula (curricula that contain more BAME authors on their reading lists; wider range of examples; openness to students' use of variety of resources from Global South in their assignments) • Curricula perceived as more culturally sensitive by students (especially BAME students).	• Enhanced engagement of BAME students with the curriculum (specifically: a) enhanced BAME student interest in curriculum and b) enhanced relationships between BAME and teachers.)	• Reduced attainment gap between BAME and White students

Rationale & Assumptions	Module convenors may not be aware of just how White, male and Eurocentric their curricula is. A reading list audit and student perspectives raises awareness of this issue. A debrief questionnaire in which convenors respond to the audit results and are pointed toward relevant resources raises their commitment to diversify their curricula (making it more culturally sensitive for BAME students). Our pilot research shows that if students perceive their curricula as more culturally sensitive, they will also be more interested in it and have better relationships with teachers. Extant literature suggest that interest and better relationships with teachers predict attainment. Thus, a diversified curricula will support BAME students' engagement and attainment.

Appendix 3: Description of Intervention 2 ('DCT')

Introduction

Our student body is changing and more and more of our undergraduate students are coming from non-traditional, increasingly BAME, backgrounds. As sensitive educators we need to be responsive to this change by being reflexive about how we teach. The Keele 'Decolonizing the Curriculum Network' offers the following useful definition for what the aims, objectives and purpose of decolonising curricula should be:

Decolonization involves identifying colonial systems, structures and relationships, and working to challenge those systems. It is not 'integration' or simply the token inclusion of the intellectual achievements of non-white cultures. Rather, it involves a paradigm shift from a culture of exclusion and denial to the making of space for other political philosophies and knowledge systems. It's a culture shift to think more widely about why common knowledge is what it is, and in so doing adjusting cultural perceptions and power relations in real and significant ways.

Clearly, decolonizing a curriculum is a process and, as such, implementing the following recommendations alone will not achieve this objective in relation to our Sociology and Media programmes at Leicester. Instead, they should be viewed as a set of practical guidelines that will help make our teaching practice more inclusive and more responsive to our student body. This is, in effect, the beginning and not conclusion of a conversation and process where we, as academics and educators, begin to reflect on our programme of study, our modules and our cultural practices, with the aim of making our curriculum more engaging and better connected to all the students we serve, educate and seek to inspire.

Module content

- It may sound obvious, but imagery is important. So, we need to think carefully about the imagery that we use in all our teaching resources. Try to avoid racial stereotypes or images which repeat wider exclusionary discourses. Try to find images which challenge dominant perception of certain groups.

E.g. If you are sourcing an image of a scientist, try to avoid imagery of a white or East Asian male. Instead find an image of a woman of colour who is a scientist (of course this should apply to stereotypes associated to all social groups)

The key question here is: Does my module content typically prioritise/promote certain (white western or European) epistemologies, voices, viewpoints, literatures, narratives, styles of writing, types of assessment, demographics and histories? If it does, then we need to think of ways of disrupting this.

- The following are some ideas about how to begin this process: Work towards having at least 20% of your essential reading/theoretical arguments/case studies either written by and/or centred on people of colour; introduce more variety in the types of assessments you utilise (see below)

Assessment

- Try to include greater variety in your assessments in ways which prioritise the diverse range of student skills, voice and experiences we have at Leicester. E.g. critical reflections, presentations, vivas, etc.

- Think about including additional assessment points in your modules. E.g. a smaller assessment at week 7 and a larger assessment at the end of the module. This will allow for more effective feed forward and give students the opportunity to act and operationalise feed forward within the module and so, potentially, improve their grade

- Try to include greater transparency in the assessment and marking process. This can be achieved, for example, by modelling answers through a seminar exercise where students are invited to mark entire – or sections of – previous scripts. Thus, using and familiarising themselves with the assessment criteria and getting a clearer idea of what stronger and weaker assignments look like.

- Where possible, include an option in assignment tasks that enable the students to assess/discuss/articulate learned content in relation to their lived realities or areas of interest, especially – but not exclusively – for students at level 2 and 3.

- The example below is a Level 1 Individual presentation assignment on: 'Media representations of social groups and issues in contemporary society' (Please note how the final option provides students the space to relate the task to their own interests and realities):

  Deliver an individual presentation on media discourse, re-presentations and re-constructions of **one** of the topics covered by the module so far.

  So, you may choose from:
  - Gender: Femininity
  - Gender: Masculinity
  - Disability
  - Race and Ethnicity
  - Social Class (you can discuss in relation to one or numerous groups)

  Alternatively you may do your presentation on media representations of area of your choice (this topic must be negotiated and agreed with the Module Leader to ensure that it respond to the Learning Outcomes)

  Topics might include:
  - Sexuality
  - Immigration
  - Politics
  - Urban Spaces
  - Crime

Pedagogy

- Try to incorporate reflective pedagogical practice that informs effective and rapid change. This can be achieved through informal mid-module evaluations. These evaluations can be very simple; done on post-it notes, for example.

- Such evaluations could aim to generate anonymous responses to three questions: 1) What have you enjoyed on the module so far? 2) What could be improved on the module? 3) Any other constructive comments. This will enable you to respond to student concerns and it will make students feel more valued and empowered as part of the learning process.

- Try to disrupt the dominant narratives through which ideas/theories are explored. This can be done at a basic level via drawing on case studies that are situated and relate more directly to the worlds and backgrounds of *all* our students.

- For example, if you are studying Bourdieu, you may want to examine the original text, but, when applying it you could look for articles which explore the types and use of cultural capital by middle-class people of colour (e.g. Wallace 2017).

- Invite people of colour to give talks on your module.

- Remember the goal is not to prioritise or exoticise 'race' but to recognise, normalise and account for it.

Summary

We need to respond to changes in our student body, without reducing the intellectual rigour of our degree offer. Clearly, some of the recommendations outlined above are applicable not only to our black, Asian and minority ethnic students, but to all our students whose biographies and histories are different to those of more 'traditional' undergraduates, including mature students. But it is the former who increasingly make up the core of our student body. This is not about missing the point but simply recognising, as all sociologists do, that the biographies and experiences of people of colour are intersected by other important social cleavages such as gender, class and disability.

Appendix 4: Intervention 2 ('DCT') Theory of Change

Situation	There is persistent unequal educational attainment between BAME and White students in higher education (HE). The curriculum of most modules in HE is dominated by White, male, Eurocentric authors and perspectives.

Aims	We aim to racially diversify the content and related practices of our HE curriculum to see whether it a) equalises and enhances the attainment of students of colour. b) improves levels of satisfaction and relatedness of course content for students of colour and c) improves levels of racial literacy of teaching staff and module convenors and their ability to identify racial inequities that manifest in taught content and enact changes to address identified issues

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
Process			**Impact**	
• Staff time to produce DCT. • Staff intranet to host toolkit which can be accessed by module convenors. • Relevant materials (e.g. library resources).	• Sociology staff access DCT to embed within practice. • Module convenors diversify curriculum using DCT.	• Sociology modules are diversified • Students have the opportunity to explore race and to increase relatability of course content to lived experiences • Students are exposed to diversified curricula • Teaching-staff have the opportunity to reflect on the racial inequities that exist within their pedagogical practice or content and for providing clear strategies/actions for change	• Enhanced relatability of course content to students of colour • Students of colour have higher engagement and satisfaction with course content • Higher levels of racial literacy for staff • Improved understanding of the ways in which racial inequity manifests in taught content and practice and strategies for best practice.	• Reduced attainment gap between BAME and White students

Rationale & Assumptions	Social, structural and systemic inequalities manifest within the higher education sector and impact unevenly on all of our students of colour. The current academic consensus points to the existence of a direct and causal relationship between the race award gap and a White, Eurocentric curricula in UK HE. In turn, much race award gap work has thus far consisted of attempts to 'disrupt' and decolonize' HE curricula. However, research-informed direction on what these processes for change look like in relation to everyday practice, frameworks for inclusion and in relation to measurable interventions/policy or outcomes has, thus far, been less forthcoming. It is in response to the paucity of guidance on what works, how to decolonize curricula, and what this looks like in practice for module convenors, the pilot of the DCT across UoL Sociology BA was carried out. Assumptions are that the DCT is enough to allow module convenors to change their curricula, and that module convenors will access and engage with the toolkit.

Appendix 5: Intervention 1 ('Diversity Mark') IPE data collection tools

Image analysis

The coding scheme employed for the content analysis is based on Bell's (2001) content analysis of visual images[3]; Chisholm's (2018) representations of race; and relevant empirical research from Ferree and Hall (1990), Allen and Wallace (2010) and Woyshner and Schocker (2015). Unlike previous empirical research focusing primarily on social class and gender in the textbooks in secondary education or higher education in the USA, this study seeks to explore how BAME and white populations are portrayed in the images used in lecture slides in UK higher education and whether it overall is likely to be 'inspiring' to our BAME students.

The analysis methods were developed by searching and reviewing the extensive relevant literature; starting with qualitative analysis methodology – content analysis, visual sociology, semiotic analysis and visual culture studies; then extending to textbook studies and teaching and learning research. The coding scheme was newly developed and employed for this study based on visual content analysis and thematic analysis. Firstly, quantitative approaches such as frequency and salience were applied; the presence or absence of BAME people was marked. Then the exclusiveness of BAME people was examined. Content analysis is immediate, efficient and robust for analysing a large number of samples, focusing on the literal representation in a more simplified way (e.g. counting BAME vs white people in a frame).

The focus of the analysis then shifted to interpreting the roles (the race of primary actors in the image, and in what roles they were depicted), and whether overall it was likely to be inspiring. The concept of 'inspiring' refers to 'whether BAME people are depicted in positive, active roles to which students may wish to aspire, rather than absent, under-represented, or depicted in stereotypical or marginalised roles or as social problems' for this study.

Thematic analysis was performed including three stages of coding. All the individuals presented in the images were coded based on their role description (i.e. literal or In Vivo coding, Rapley 2011, Strauss 1987) and identified as 'actors'. The actor, therefore, is an analysis unit, created based on its role description in each image for the thematic analysis for this study. At the second stage of coding, actors were grouped to identify patterns and themes (clustering). As a result of the final coding stage which involves broader, structural, and conceptual interpretation, most actors were subsumed under five broad themes. In addition, the actors were categorised as 'primary' or 'sub' depending on the importance of their roles in the image (whether they are the centre of the attention). As a result, five themes emerged from the coding exercise.

Methods, codes, coding rules and themes were agreed in a series of working sessions among Ahn, Adewumi and Quinlan. The coders were from different racial groups: Asian, Black and White, bringing a variety of personal experiences of race. Through discussion, we agreed on codes for exemplars and outliers. Ahn did most of the coding, bringing to subsequent workshops examples for audit/verification by other team members and bringing unclear cases for discussion and refinement of methods, codes and themes. Race was determined by visual inspection as simply BAME or white. These assessments may not have matched how the individuals in the photographs identified themselves, but were intended to reflect how the intended audience – UK student viewers – would likely interpret the actors' race at a glance.

Focus Group Interview Schedule

Let's begin by going around the room and introducing ourselves – please tell us your first name and what defines a positive learning experience at university (in and outside the classroom) for you.

TURN ON RECORDING

Introduction

Reading lists

- When you first looked at your reading lists on Moodle what were your first impressions?

- What did you think about the authors (if at all)

- What books/resources have you read (or are currently reading) outside or in addition to your module reading lists?

- Which scholars have been most influential in your learning experience? How did they influence you (if at all)?

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[3]   'Visual content analysis is a systematic, observational method used for testing hypotheses about the ways in which [images] represent people, events, situations'. (Bell, 2001:14)

The curriculum

- Do you believe authors of colour (authors from the Global South) are equally represented in the curriculum? What could be done to increase that representation?

- Visual question on the knowledge of diverse scholars:

  - Look at these images, (give them each a copy of the images) can you name any of these famous Social Science writers/people?

Other aspects of culturally sensitive curricula

- Can you give examples of times during the module when your own race or culture was represented? (probe – e.g. in lectures, in other material on moodle, during seminars)

- How was it represented?

- What effect did that have on you?

- Can you give an example of when the class challenged prevailing power structures or hierarchies or norms?

- To what extent are you able to explore/ challenge ideas about race in your lectures, seminars or workshops?

- What effect did that have on you? (Why was that important to you?)

- Please tell me more about how inclusive the classroom interactions were – that is, how teachers treated students from diverse ethnicities?

- In your opinion how did students treat one another?

- Can you give examples of situations that promoted a sense of belonging? A sense of marginalisation?

- Tell me why you feel it is important to incorporate students' cultural identities into reading lists and the curriculum?

- What activities /content in seminars would make you more engaged in class discussions?

Thank you and this is the end of the focus group. Is there anything else anyone else would like to say before we go?

Version 2 of the Culturally Sensitive Curricula Scale

The following 24 questions were asked of students on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly agree to Strongly disagree.

1. The curriculum features people from diverse backgrounds.

2. The curriculum references different ethnic and cultural traditions, languages, religions and/or clothing.

3. Diverse ethnicities and nationalities are portrayed.

4. Diverse family structures (i.e. single parents, adopted or fostered children, same-sex parents, other relatives living with family, etc.) are portrayed.

5. Differently-abled people are represented.

6. People of diverse ethnicities are represented as researchers or professionals, not just as participants in research, clients, consumers, service users, etc.

7. The curriculum respects that different cultures may have different understandings, skills and/or philosophies.

8. The curriculum addresses problems that are of concern to marginalised people/communities.

9. When social problems (e.g., crime, violence) are presented, people of colour are usually considered the problem.

10. Social problems are presented as an issue for everyone, not just one race.

11. When interpersonal conflicts are presented, people of colour are usually considered the problem.

12. When interpersonal conflicts are presented, race is considered irrelevant.

13. When people of colour have problems, white people are usually presented as being able to solve those problems.

14. People of colour are presented as being able to solve their own problems.

15. People of diverse ethnicities are presented as having high income, education, or power.

16. People of diverse ethnicities are presented in terms of their strengths, talents or knowledge, rather than their perceived flaws.

17. The curriculum raises critical questions about power and/or privilege that are usually taken for granted.

18. The curriculum encourages students to challenge existing power structures in society.

19. The curriculum encourages students to critique unearned privilege.

20. The curriculum encourages students to connect learning to social, political or environmental concerns.

21. The curriculum encourages students to take actions that fight inequity or promote equity.

22. My instructors make an effort to pronounce everyone's name correctly.

23. My instructors encourage students to be mindful of other students' perspectives.

24. My instructors encourage students to respect other students' perspectives.

Appendix 6: Intervention 2 ('DCT') IPE data collection tools

Student Interview Schedule

Introduction

- Why did you choose to come to Leicester?

- Did the diversity of the city/uni play a part in your decision?

- How did you find transition to the university (Easy, difficult). Why?

- How did you find adjusting to write an essay?

- What modules have you enjoyed most?

- What modules have enjoyed least?

- Do you have a favourite lecturer. If yes, why?

Course

- What is your experience of the course? How accessible do you find the course? How relatable?

- What have you enjoyed on the module so far?

- What could be improved on the module? Any constructive comments?

- Does the course explore voices from other backgrounds? What difference do you fell that makes?

- Have you ever had a module that explicitly relates to non-European nations/Global South or to minority ethnic communities? If not, would you find this interesting, helpful, engaging? Why?

Diversity

- What does a diverse curriculum look like to you?

- Why is having a diverse curriculum is important? (Or do you think it is not important)

- How important is diversity to you in the course (whether in terms of faculties or content)? Is it important to have lecturers from diverse backgrounds? Why?

- Did the lecturer invite people of colour to give talks on your module?

- What do you think of the example of media representations of social groups (if used)?

- Does having a diverse course/lecturers have much/ any benefit (e.g. employability, engagement?)

Relatability

- Do they make the material relate directly to your world and backgrounds?

- Are there spaces to relate the task to your interests and realities?

- Are the things that you studied in your course relatable to your own experiences? Where? Which module?

Assessment

- Did the assignment tasks enable you to assess/ discuss/articulate learned content in relation to your lived realities or areas of interest?

- Do you have a preference of particular types of assessment over others? If so, what are they?

Covid-19

- How did you find teaching online during the Covid-19 period?

- Does it make things easy for you to study?

- Are there any challenges during the current Covid-19 period?

- How does teaching online impact you?

Institutional Support

- What kind of institutional support do you have?

- How is your relationship with your tutor? Support services?

- What are your concerns? Generally do you think teaching practice is inclusive and responsive to you? Do you feel valued and empowered in the learning process?

Staff interview schedule

What does decolonizing the curriculum mean to you and what does it address?

- Is there a difference between this and decolonizing the university?

- What does a decolonized curriculum look like in your department?

- What does it look like at modular level?

- What does it look like at course level?

- What do you think will work best for Leicester (modules or integrated across the programme)?

- How do you think inclusion initiatives are received by peers at Leicester?

- How can we convince staff who are resistant/place a low priority on this, to get on board? (soft (optional) or hard (mandatory) persuasion)

Decolonizing the curriculum toolkit

- What are your initial thoughts of the toolkit – e.g. does it go far enough in its proposals/guidance?

- What issues have you had with integrating the Toolkit in your own modules with regards to pedagogy, assessment and disruption of ideas? (Assessment, modelling, etc.)

- Has this process prompted you to reflect on your own and others' practice?

- Are there any modifications/improvisations/that the Toolkit has prompted you to make/reflect upon, etc.

Award gap and satisfaction

- Why do you think there is a satisfaction gap between White students and students of colour (generally) in sociology or/and across the uni?

- There has been some focus on the preference of particular types of assessment (over others) by students of colour. If you had to speculate, what assessment(s) do students of colour prefer and why do you think they have a preference for these over others?

- Do you think this is about assessments in and of themselves or something different? E.g. do you think this is about preparation, modelling, etc., (seen exams?

Institutional support

- What can the university do to help ensure that decolonizing the curriculum is an exercise that fosters long lasting and meaningful change? E.g. Training, policy, practice, reward, sanction, long term commitments, link to appraisals, place greater importance on teaching and good practice

The current Covid-19 period

- Are there any challenges in implementing the TK during the current Covid-19 period?

- How does teaching online impact you? Does it make decolonizing the curriculum more challenging?