



8.1 Developing an inclusive curriculum: BA (Hons) Social Work

The cohort

The BA (Hons) Social Work degree recruits approximately 114 students per year. Of these students on average 26% are White and 73% are BME (1 U/K). 25% of these students enter the course via Access routes.

Factors which triggered the interventions

- 1. Award and attainment gap data** In 2012/13 the attainment gap between White and BME students achieving a good honours degree was 17% with 45% BME students awarded a 1st or 2.1 compared to 65% of White students.
- 2. Analysis of student engagement and progression** We recognised that some students needed more support in relation to their academic writing and comprehension particularly to progress from year 1 to year 2.
- 3. Appointment of new Course Director** I was appointed as a new Course Director after undertaking the Leadership Foundation in Higher Education 'Diversifying Leadership' programme designed to support staff from black and minority ethnic backgrounds into leadership. This enabled me to bring my perspective to the analysis of the needs and issues for the student cohort.

Interventions

- 1. Introduction of diagnostic formative assessment and feedback** Our approach to feedback practice is designed to be action-oriented and dialogue-based. Team members give clear guidance on assessment task requirements and provide formative feedback on the first 500 words of draft essays before submission. The introduction of a diagnostic assessment early in the first semester of the first year and midway formative presentation during placement measure progress and provide formative feedback.
- 2. Review of content to reflect student cohort** We audited the reading lists and broadened them to reflect BME authors and concerns. We included more case examples reflective of the Southwark community in the course and used them to challenge student assumptions. Local service users are involved in student recruitment, curriculum design, teaching and assessment.
- 3. Embedding learning development at key stages for progression** We introduced learning development at key progression stages of the course including workshops for developing



reflective practice to support transition between year 1 and year 2 and critical thinking between year 2 and year 3.

4. **Building course learning community and promoting cross-cultural learning** Students are often taught in small seminar groups. We allocate groups exercises to work on together and we define mixed groups to foster cross-cultural learning that challenges student assumptions and experiences.
5. **Role modelling and promoting academic success** Critical self-awareness is fundamental to students understanding of social work and the capacity to reflect on their own identity is central to learning as well as BME role models in the course team, contributing practitioners, alumni and employers/placements opportunities.

Outcomes

We have seen progression rates from year 2 to year 3 remain stable while progression rates from year 1 to year 2 have improved:

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Progression Yr 1-2	75%	74%	91%	88%
Progression Yr 2-3	88%	80%	85%	90%

The attainment gap has decreased to 25% in 2015-16 to 9% in 2016-17 while the awarding of a good honours degree for BME students has risen from 45% in 2012-13 to 91% in 2015-16.

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