

STUDENT VOICE REPORT

>> BAME Inclusive Student Experience

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Foreword.

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As an organisation, Royal Holloway Students' Union prioritises inclusivity as one of our core values. It is something that influences the decisions we make, the behaviours we champion and, ultimately, how the organisation should feel to the student community. Royal Holloway University prides itself as one of the most forward-thinking, international and community-oriented universities in the UK. Founded on the principles of education for all, Royal Holloway originally opened as a women's college in a time when higher education for women was a scarce luxury, rather than a right. You need only look at the University colours – green and purple – which are taken from the suffragette movement to see this. The 20th and 21st centuries have been a time of immense change, socially and politically, and this has rightly impacted on the higher education sector. Changes in the demographic of the student population and increasing student numbers have put significant pressure on the higher education sector and have brought to light a number of challenges that question if the higher education sector is still fit for purpose.

This report focuses on the issues faced by BAME students at Royal Holloway and sets out a series of recommendations in the hope that we can better support all students from all backgrounds in keeping with the spirit of our founders. We are aware of our own shortcomings, particularly the lack of visible diversity within our staff team, and we are concerned that we may not have supported BAME students as much as we could. We hope that this report and the recommendations proposed will change the way that we, and the University, function and will help to make us a more inclusive and welcoming community for all students. It is long past time for something to be done and this report - while it will not be able to fix everything - is the first step in the right direction. We will continue to prioritise inclusive education and support students from all backgrounds until there is no attainment gap, no discrimination and diversity is universally celebrated.

Jessica Okafor, Chair of the BAME Collective.

Diversity comes in many forms including gender, religion and sexual orientation. However, the BAME Collective focuses on Black Asian minority ethnic groups. As the BAME Collective, our main objective is to encourage and assist ethnic groups to feel heard by Royal Holloway. Whether it's mental health or educational based, our aim is to make sure that the BAME community at our university feels listened to and respected. That's why the report has huge importance. As it not only highlights the need for reform but also finds a root cause as to why historically the educational system at Royal Holloway has failed to meet the demands of BAME students.

Acknowledgements.

This report is the product of Royal Holloway students who identify as Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic, we would like to thank all students who fed into our research through interviews, surveys and consultation for sharing their experiences. We would like to especially thank our student researchers, Neelam Akhtar, Shahmir Akram and Rebecca Goh for their fantastic work and contribution to the research and findings which inform this report.

Executive Summary.

This Student Voice Report on the BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) Inclusive Student Experience presents our work over the last two years, and examines the issues negatively impacting the higher education experience of BAME students in a national context as well as at Royal Holloway. This report addresses Royal Holloway's current BAME attainment gap and the University's plans to reduce it. It also discusses the various ways we engaged with the BAME student community about the project and proposed recommendations, which we hope will have a substantial and long-lasting positive impact on the current and prospective student experience at Royal Holloway.

Below is a summarised list of recommendations, which can be found in full at the end of the document.

- | | |
|------------|---|
| 1.1 | The University will ensure all academic departments utilise data to analyse year-on-year figures which will be monitored and reported on annually. |
| 1.2 | The University should breakdown the data on student ethnicities into smaller groups where possible. |
| 1.3 | Data should be collected and analysed on a module, course and departmental level. |
| 2.1 | There should be clear ownership and accountability of the BAME attainment gap by the University's senior leadership team. |
| 2.2 | The University should set up a specific attainment gap project with a clear funding resource and staff lead. |
| 2.3 | There should be a clear and accessible method of feedback that students can comment on the work being done to reduce the BAME attainment gap. |
| 2.4 | The University should set up a recognition scheme for staff and students who contribute to tackling barriers to equality. |
| 3.1 | The University will implement a coherent and easily-accessible reporting platform, including different levels of action, for students to report abuse. |
| 3.2 | The Students' Union will work alongside local police and other relevant authorities to support a piece of work around hate crime reporting in the local area. |
| 4.1 | The University and Students' Union should work together to introduce mandatory training for all staff and students. |

4.2	The Students' Union should run an awareness campaign to foster a sense of belonging and community feel for all students.
5.1	The Students' Union and the University should introduce trading services and extra-curricular programmes that provide for our BAME community.
5.2	The Students' Union and the University should improve signposting on food products for BAME students.
6.1	The Students' Union should train academic reps to identify areas where diversity can be increased and empower them to challenge curricula and teaching practices.
6.2	The Students' Union and the University will ensure that the curriculum is as diverse as possible.
7.1	The Students' Union and the University should both ensure that representation within communications is more diverse.
7.2	The Students' Union and the University should be more proactive in reaching out to groups who may be celebrating, acknowledging or developing events in advance.
7.3	The Students' Union and the University should ensure the respectful acknowledgement of religious and cultural needs within our diverse population.
8.1	The Students' Union has been mandated by the student body through an all-student referendum to produce a no platform for hate speech policy.
9.1	The Students' Union and the University should prioritise implementing specific action plans to address the lack of diversity in the staff population.
9.2	The Students' Union and the University should undertake work to understand why people of colour do not apply in equal proportion for positions and consider action to reduce the BAME recruitment gap.
9.3	The Students' Union should address the lack of diversity within the Sabbatical Officer positions.
10.1	The Students' Union and the University should implement targeted careers advice, internships and support for BAME students.
10.2	Data should be collected about Year in Industry and Year Abroad demographics to provide insight and offer personalised support to students unable to participate.
10.3	The University should set up a mentoring programme for BAME students.

Section A.

The Context.

A1. Identity and Belonging.

The Students' Union discussed in our BAME Inclusive Student Experience Briefing Document (2019) how the inequalities which exist at higher education institutions in the UK for students from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds mirror and perpetuate, those which appear in society. This is especially true for the BAME student community, and their university experience is one that has received much attention from higher education institutions and education policy makers in the last decade. Multiple studies and published reports have highlighted how a student's race and ethnicity can impact every single experience that shapes their student lifecycle - starting with their undergraduate application and influencing progression, degree attainment and, finally, their career prospects after graduation. While attempts have been made by individual institutions to reduce these inequalities and injustices, there has been little movement to bring about widespread progress across the sector which would fundamentally improve the BAME student experience and reduce the attainment gap.

As an organisation, we understand that ensuring students feel included both within the academic and social community at Royal Holloway directly correlates to their level of engagement during their time at university. Previous studies like the What Works? Student Retention & Success Project (2012) have already examined in extensive detail the relationship between the idea of belonging and how it impacts student attainment, progression, retention and, crucially, the development of student identity. Dr. Debra Cureton from the University of Wolverhampton discusses how the development of a 'coherent and authentic identity' is reliant on a student being involved in a 'rich, respectful and developmental interaction within the university environment'.¹

¹ Debra Cureton, 'The secret of student success: Student identity, belonging and the psychological contract', in *Student Attainment in Higher Education: Issues, controversies and debates*, ed. by Graham Steventon, Debra Cureton and Lynn Clouder, London: Routledge, 67-78, (p. 69).

A student's identity, however, can be stifled by the ways in which organisations begin to impose definitions onto students, often for the institution's own convenience.²

'BAME student', 'mature student', 'commuting student' are only a few examples of how certain identity descriptors are imposed on students - often before they even arrive on campus to begin their studies. These descriptors do not take into account the multiple identities of students, including the complexities of their lives outside the confines of the university like employee, parent or business owner. When students are identified by and referred to as, labels, it can affect their self-perception and also infers they are not unique beyond a stereotype.³ Where negative stereotypes emerge in some instances, it can lead the student to fear negative repercussions for being associated within this group. This results in their disengagement with the student community and impacts their university experience. Cureton points out in her discussion that, where communities believe particular groups are less likely to be successful, individuals who are associated within that group are more likely to embed this mindset within their own identity. BAME students are particularly vulnerable to this experience because, 'at a national level, they are more likely to get a lower second and third class degrees than upper second or first class degrees'.⁴

The Students' Union is very much aware we are participating in a similar action of imposed identification with our own use of the descriptor, 'BAME', in this report. One of our main concerns when drafting this document was our use of language surrounding race and identity. We decided the best way to decide how to proceed was by asking current Royal Holloway students who identify as Black, Asian or minority ethnic how they wanted to be identified in our final report. We did this through our BAME Inclusive Student Experience Survey, which will be discussed in further detail in the next section, 'Policy Inquiry: Methodology'. Our online survey explained the current Policy Inquiry included 'BAME' in the title, and we asked respondents: 'Would you identify yourself using the terminology 'BAME'?'

2 There are instances where institutions are required to use certain descriptors in order to comply with the Office for Students (OfS) requirements, for example, university Access and Participation Plans and reporting.

3 Debra Cureton, 'The secret of student success', p. 69.

4 Debra Cureton, 'The secret of student success', p. 70.

The survey had 140 respondents and the table below explains the breakdown of their responses:

Answer	Number of responses	% of responses
Yes	96	69
No	31	22
Blank	11	8
Occasionally	2	1

Table 1: Student responses to BAME Inclusive Student Experience Survey

We included a follow-up question and asked students: ‘Is there an alternative phrase that you prefer or feel more comfortable using?’ Of the 140 survey respondents, only 129 answered this question, and the breakdown of their responses is seen in the table below.

Category	Count	% of responses
No (BAME is fine)	74	57.5
Black	8	6
By their specific ethnicity & be more specifically identified	8	6
POC/WOC/SOC	8	6
N/A or Don't Know	5	4
Mixed Race	5	4
Ethnic minority	5	4
Human/person	4	3
By their residency status	3	2
Not to be labelled at all	2	1.5
Student	2	1.5
Diverse	2	1.5
BME	1	<1
Non-White	1	<1
Name	1	<1

Table 2: Student responses to BAME Inclusive Student Experience Survey

The Students' Union understands that each student has their own preference for how they wish to self-identify and that our decision to use homogenising language like BAME will not be received positively by every student reading this report. Our decision was influenced by the large percentage of respondents who agreed that they would self-identify with BAME at 69 per cent. Therefore, we have decided to continue to use this descriptor in this report and to maintain consistency with our other publications associated with this project.

A2. UK BAME Attainment Gap

As discussed above, one significant difference in experience for BAME students from White students in higher education is attainment. Previous research in the area from higher education institutes and education policy makers has found that BAME students are less likely to obtain a first or 2:1 degree classification in comparison to White students. The higher education sector refers to this statistic as the BAME attainment gap. For the purpose of clarity, the BAME attainment gap is identified by the National Union of Students (NUS) and Universities UK (UUK) as the 'difference between the proportion of White UK-domiciled students who are awarded a first or upper second degree and the proportion of UK-domiciled Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students who are awarded degrees in the same class'.¹

In this report, we will examine in depth the ways the University and the Students' Union currently address the BAME attainment gap, and how we can improve our work in this area to further reduce the gap. Crucially, when discussing the BAME attainment gap the Students' Union will avoid using the deficit model, which focuses on students' skills, experiences and knowledge as the main contributing factors towards attainment, rather than the institution.

The most recent figures across the higher education sector reveal the current BAME attainment gap for the 2017-18 academic year was 13.2 per cent, which is down from 13.6 per cent in the previous year. In a geographical context, London has the highest BAME attainment gap of 15.6 per cent whereas the East Midlands is 9.2 per cent.²

1 The National Union of Students and Universities UK, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment at UK Universities: #CLOSINGTHEGAP', (May 2019) p. 5 <<https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/bame-student-attainment-uk-universities-closing-the-gap.pdf>> [accessed 15 May 2019].

2 NUS and UUK, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment at UK Universities, p. 11, 12.

The graph below shows how the attainment gap is spread out across universities in the UK for the 2017-18 academic year.³

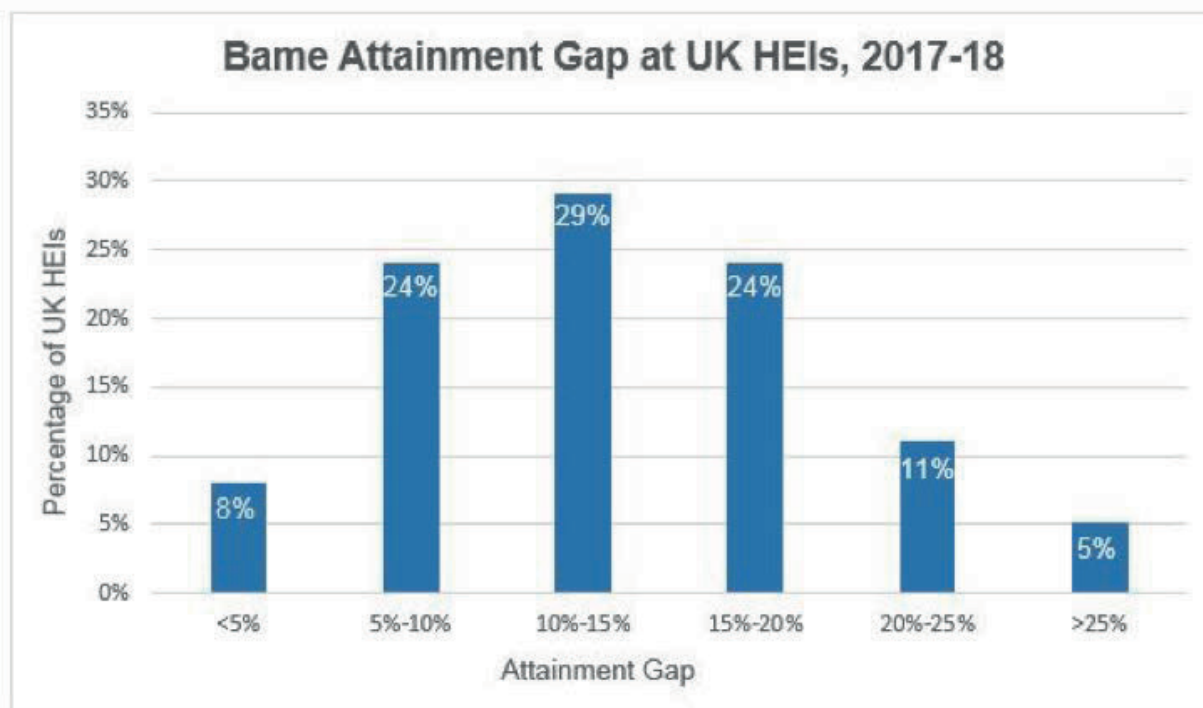


Figure 1: BAME attainment gaps at UK HEIs, 2017-18.
Source: HESA Student record, 2017-18.

The data for Figure One was sourced from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and published in The National Union of Students and Universities UK's report, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment at UK Universities: '#CLOSINGTHEGAP' (2019). The quantitative analysis of the sector-wide attainment gap reveals that over two-thirds of UK higher education institutes had an attainment gap above 10 per cent for the 2017-18 academic year while 29 per cent of universities had an attainment gap of between 10 and 15 per cent.⁴ Crucially, these figures represent the percentages of all students identified as BAME, but the attainment gap can be further broken down by ethnicity. The Office for Students has identified that the largest attainment gap is between White and Black students at 17 per cent while White and Asian students is currently at 10 per cent.⁵

3 Figures for the 2018-19 academic year should be published in May 2020.

4 NUS and UUK, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment at UK Universities, 13.

5 NUS and UUK, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment at UK Universities, p. 15.

Further research into the BAME attainment gap and intersectionality has identified how additional factors like age, geographical location, student status, known mental health conditions, socio-economic status and gender can additionally influence a student's attainment at university. Consequently, universities need to take these contributing factors into consideration when deciding the best route to address the BAME attainment gap at their specific institution.

Research in this area has further highlighted that, in the past, universities have had varied success in reducing their attainment gaps. Primarily, this is because the issue is so complex and every university is different. The factors listed above like geographical region, socio-economic status and student population can influence success rates for reducing the gap, and it is clear the sector needs to focus greater time and resources on this issue. Many universities have directed their attention on marginalised groups of students through the Office for Students' required Access and Participation Plans which all institutions are required to submit. 2019 marks the first time these plans have moved from a one-year plan to a five-year plan, which allows universities to present a long-term plan and promote more resources towards reducing the BAME attainment gap. The Office for Students has also noted there is a lack of disaggregation of data surrounding different ethnicities in previous plans. They have placed more pressure on institutions to improve their intersectional analysis and understanding of race and identity in their Access and Participation Plans. Even small changes like these can make a difference.

Education policy makers have also invested more time and attention in recent years towards reducing the BAME attainment gap. In February 2019 the Government announced the Race Disparity Audit which will hold universities to account over their submitted Access and Participation Plans. Advance Higher Education is also in the process of reviewing the Race Equality Charter, a membership organisation universities can join which aims to improve the representation, progression and success of minority ethnic staff and students at higher education institutes. 48 universities are current members of the Race Equality Charter, and ten institutions have received a Bronze award, including Royal Holloway in 2019. To date no institution has received a Silver or Gold award, which highlights the amount of work that still needs to be done in this area nationally as well as locally.

A3. BAME Attainment Gap at Royal Holloway

It is not surprising that a similar picture to the national context appears at Royal Holloway. The University Access and Participation Plan puts the overall BAME attainment gap at 11 per cent, which is further broken down in the following areas by the Office for Students:

- 11 per cent for Asian students
- 15 per cent for Black students
- 10 per cent for Mixed students
- 10 per cent for Other students

Compared to the overall higher education sector, Royal Holloway by no means has the largest attainment gap, especially as the above percentages for individual groups are all currently below the sector average by 2.2 percentage points. Additionally, it is evident that the Royal Holloway BAME attainment gap has consistently reduced year-on-year, which can be seen in the table below. At the time of this report we did not have the figures for the 2018-19 academic year, which should be published in May 2020.

Year	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
BAME Attainment Gap	17%	15%	11%

Table 3: Royal Holloway BAME attainment gap by year from 2015-18

Seeing a reduction of six percentage points over a period of three years is both encouraging and highlights successful work undertaken by the University in that time period. This is further underpinned by its commitment to address inequalities related to race with the University's renewal of its membership in the Race Equality Charter. There is still work to be done, however, especially if the University intends to meet the Access and Participation Plan target of an attainment gap for Black students of 5 per cent by 2024 with an aim to eliminate the gap completely by the 2029-30 academic year.

An example of where further work needs to be done towards reducing the attainment gap involves both the University and the Students' Union to look

further at the intersection between students who identify as BAME alongside commuting students and students from non-A Level backgrounds. For example, in the 2017-18 academic year there were 749 BAME students enrolled at the University, which is 38 per cent of the student population. In that number, 37 per cent of students also commute, which is above the total University average of 20 per cent, and 32 per cent have non-A Level qualifications. A further area which should be further investigated is the intersection of BAME students who are also international students. In the majority of published reports and studies on the BAME attainment gap, the focus remains solely on Home students and does not take into consideration the international student population. If Royal Holloway is committed to erasing the BAME attainment gap entirely within the next ten years, it needs to include international students in its plans as well as Home students.

Another area of intersection the University should look into are programmes of study. The number of BAME students varies significantly by subject at Royal Holloway, with larger percentages of BAME students found within certain departments. The table below gives an overview of the academic departments at Royal Holloway which have the highest numbers of BAME students enrolled in the 2017-18 academic year. It should be noted, however, that because the University only currently calculates an attainment gap for Home students, the difference in percentage points includes both EU and International BAME students.

School	Programme	Total BAME	% Home BAME
B&M	Business Management	229	67
LSS	Economics	223	61
LSE	Biosciences/Biology/Biochemistry	212	59
B&M	Psychology	136	33
EPM	Accounting and Finance	117	72
LSS	Computer Science	104	50
LSS	Criminology	103	38
LSS	LLB Law	102	46
HUM	English (including Creative Writing)	85	29
TOTAL		1311	60

Table 4: Royal Holloway departments with the highest number of BAME students in 2017-18

Some of the above departments have implemented plans to reduce the gap, while others have yet to start. The table below shows which departments have current known actions in place.

School	Programme	BAME Actions
B&M	Business Management	Module-level analysis/BAME ambassadors
LSS	Economics	No attainment gap
LSE	Biosciences/Biology/Biochemistry	Module-level analysis
B&M	Psychology	
EPM	Accounting and Finance	Module-level analysis
LSS	Computer Science	Needs to focus on progression
LSS	Criminology	Diversity project
LSS	LLB Law	Diversity project/Student diversity champions
HUM	English (including Creative Writing)	

Table 4: Current and planned actions for BAME students in Royal Holloway departments with the highest number of BAME students in 2017-18.

While some of the above examples highlight good practices some departments are taking to reduce the BAME attainment gap at Royal Holloway, it is clear that work in this area is fragmented, sometimes within departments, and there is currently no unifying strategy which draws these different streams of work together. The Students' Union believes an institutional approach needs to be taken, especially as there has been a significant growth of BAME students applying to and being accepted at Royal Holloway in the last three years.¹

A4. BAME Student Experience at Royal Holloway

The National Student Survey (NSS) is managed by the Office for Students on behalf of the Department for the Economy (Northern Ireland), the Scottish Funding Council, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, and Health Education England. The NSS is an annual survey completed by third-year undergraduate students and is designed to measure their opinions on their student experience at university.

¹ In the 2015-16 academic year, 26 per cent of the student population at Royal Holloway were BAME students. In just three years this has grown 14 percentage points to 40 per cent in the 2018-19 academic year.

Whilst we acknowledge there are aspects of the student experience not covered by the NSS, it is the most useful quantitative data we have to conduct analysis on student experience at undergraduate level.

The NSS is composed of 27 questions which evaluate the core academic experience including; teaching, learning opportunities, assessment and feedback, academic support, learning resources, organisation and management, learning community, and student voice. The Office for Students believes the NSS Survey 'is an influential source of public information about higher education and gives students a powerful collective voice to help shape the future of their courses and their university/college for current and prospective students'.²

An analysis of the 2019 NSS results provides a useful insight into our research on the experiences of BAME students at Royal Holloway. Ethnicity data in the NSS is broken down into five categories: Asian, Black, Not Known, Other, and White. No mixed category is included which prohibits understanding of potential differences for students who identify as mixed ethnicity, particularly when attempting to compare results against other data sets like the Office for Students. This is an obvious example where disaggregation of data needs to occur.

The below table shows the overall satisfaction score for the last two years for these groups.

Overall I am satisfied with the quality of the course

Ethnicity	2019 % Agree		2018 % Agree	
	RHUL	Sector	RHUL	Sector
Asian	87.95	83.01	83.58	82.60
Black	84.91	82.19	73.33	82.07
Not Known	84.25	81.79	84.25	82
Other	82.17	81.07	86.73	80.35
White	89.76	84.25	89.09	84.1

Table 6: Overall satisfaction of BAME students at Royal Holloway, NSS 2018 and 19.

² See for further information: <https://www.thestudentsurvey.com/about.php>

With the exception of students classified in the Other group, whose overall satisfaction score decreased by 4.56 percentage points since the 2018 NSS, all of the other groups saw a rise in their score, or experienced no change. Black students saw the largest jump between scores with an increase of 11.58 per cent in the last year. The response rates by percentage of all ethnicities were similar.

Importantly, every ethnicity group saw significant increases of at least five percentage points in multiple question categories from 2018 to 2019. Some of the largest increases, however, were seen in Black students who agreed with the following questions:

I feel part of a community of staff and students

Ethnicity	2019 % Agree	2018 % Agree
Black	67.92	46.67
Asian	70.77	67.77
White	72.3	72.87
Other	64.57	69.79

Table 7: BAME student responses, NSS 2018 and 2019.

The Students' Union effectively represents students' academic interests

Ethnicity	2019 % Agree	2018 % Agree
Black	56	27.59
Asian	64.61	58.11
White	56.02	48.23
Other	54.76	44.57

Table 8: BAME student responses, NSS 2018 and 2019

Despite these increases, there were five instances where there was a decrease in satisfaction of at least five percentage points among Black and Other students. Black students' overall satisfaction dropped in the following categories: 'The teaching on my course' as well as 'Organisation and management'. The table below highlights the differences between the 2018 and 2019 NSS results with a minimum five percentage point decrease.

Ethnicity	Question	2019	2018
Black	Staff are good at explaining things	79.25	86.67
	My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learned.	67.92	73.33
	The timetable works efficiently for me	71.7	76.67

Table 9: Black student responses for NSS 2018 and 2019.

Students categorised as Other saw a decrease of at least five percentage points in overall satisfaction in the following categories: 'Academic support' and 'Learning Community'. The table below highlights the differences between the 2018 and 2019 NSS results.

Ethnicity	Question	2019	2018
Other	Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices on my course	69.53	74.74
	I feel part of a community of staff and students	64.57	69.79

Table 10: Other student responses for NSS 2018 and 2019.

In addition to these decreases, there were ten instances in the survey where there was a gap of at least ten percentage points between the top and bottom scorers. This occurred in the following categories: 'The teaching on my course', 'Learning opportunities', 'Assessment and feedback', 'Organisation and management' and 'Student Voice'. The table below identifies the top and bottom scorers for each question as well as the percentage point differential.

Question	Top	% Agree	Bottom	% Agree	Gap
Staff are good at explaining things	White	86.67	Black	79.25	12.62
Staff had made the subject interesting	White	88.11	Not Known	74.22	13.89
My course has provided me with opportunities to apply what I have learned	Asian	80.49	Black	67.92	12.57
The criteria used in marking have been clear in advance	Other	75.59	Not Known	58.14	17.45
Marking and assessment have been fair	White	75.79	Not Known	62.02	13.77
Feedback on my work has been timely	Not Known	80.47	Black	62.26	18.21
I have received helpful comments on my work	White	77.62	Black	62.26	15.36
Good advice was available when I needed to make study choices on my course	Asian	79.18	Black	67.31	11.87
The timetable works efficiently for me	White	83.74	Black	71.7	12.04
Any changes in the course or teaching have been communicated effectively	Asian	83.15	Black	69.81	13.34
It is clear how students' feedback on the course has been acted on	Not Known	70.16	Black	59.62	10.54

Table 11: Top and Bottom responses for total student population, NSS 2018 and 2019.

It is evident that White students' overall satisfaction was the top scorer in the majority of the above questions, and Black students' overall satisfaction scores were the lowest. The NSS results further underpin the importance of necessary work the University must undertake to improve the BAME student experience and reduce the attainment gap.

Section B.

Methodology.

The University is not the only one responsible for undertaking work to try and reduce the BAME attainment gap at Royal Holloway. The Students' Union also has a responsibility to its BAME students to improve their overall student experience and amplify their collective voice to promote change. While we work with students involved in societies like ACS: African and Caribbean Society, CSSA: Chinese Students & Scholars Association, and Islamic Society to name a few, we know we can do more for BAME students on campus. This was the very reason why we joined up with The Student Engagement Project (TSEP) in January 2018 to better understand the BAME student experience at Royal Holloway. What initially began as a research project with TSEP eventually expanded further into our very first Students' Union Policy Inquiry.

In 2019, the Union reviewed its approach to how we develop proposals that lobby the University for improvements to the student experience at Royal Holloway. Our Democracy Review introduced the concept of a Policy Inquiry, which is an in-depth, research-informed process that generates a high-quality Student Voice report on a particular topic. The ultimate goal of a Policy Inquiry is to produce a range of recommendations that the Officer Group will present to the University, which will have a substantial and long-lasting positive impact on the current and prospective student experience at Royal Holloway.

Our association with TSEP was invaluable in shaping our research methodologies for this project. In January 2019, three BAME Student Researchers were recruited by the Students' Union and, throughout Term 2, conducted 65 hours of qualitative interviews with 29 current BAME students. Interviews with participants lasted for an hour on average and revealed candid and thoughtful insights into BAME student experiences. While analysis of the findings shows a mixture of experiences, some positive and some negative, the experiences of one student are often shared by at least one other. In addition to the interviews, the Students'

Union created an online questionnaire, and 21 BAME students completed it. We asked students at the start of the survey to provide their student ID number in order to verify they were currently enrolled at the University, but all answers were anonymised following verification and we have removed any identifying features in students' responses for this report.

At the conclusion of this initial stage of research for the TSEP project, we engaged with a total of 50 current BAME students at Royal Holloway. It is important to state that the research methods we used were based on a grounded theory approach. The Students' Union did not follow a process that was based on preconceived theories. Instead, we wanted to try and identify new theories and ideas through a process of open questioning. Consequently, students were asked in both our in-person interviews and online survey to describe their experiences on campus in their own words through free-text responses. Our questions focused on specific elements of the student lifestyle, such as the University application process, open days, the first few weeks after enrolment, their course, their daily life on campus and any extra-curricular activities they were involved in. A detailed breakdown of the interview questions can be found at the end of this document in Appendix A, and the online survey questions can be found in Appendix B.

We asked participants to self-define their ethnic origin in this first stage of research, and the following answers were given:

British Asian	Indian
Black American	Pakistani
African	Asian
Black African (British)	Somali
North African	South African
Mixed Race	Malaysian
Kenyan	Sri-Lankan

While a number of Chinese students were approached and commenced the interview process, there was a withdrawal of comments from a majority of the interviewees with Chinese heritage. Specifically, when these participants understood that they were being invited to talk both positively and critically about their experiences, they expressed discomfort and asked to withdraw. As a result, we will seek to engage with the Chinese community to ascertain their student experience through a different approach via email. This is an area we need to do further work on.

Following this initial stage of research through the TSEP project, the Students' Union published a report on our findings titled, BAME Inclusive Student Experience: Briefing Document. This document additionally introduced background content to national experiences of BAME students at UK higher education institutes and the BAME attainment gap at Royal Holloway. We also included a potential number of recommendations for both the Students' Union and the University to implement at the conclusion of this Policy Inquiry.

Alongside the publication of this briefing document, we asked current BAME students to participate in a second survey. This survey was created with the aim to increase our sample size of participants in the project, improve our insight into the BAME student experience at Royal Holloway and, finally, to get student feedback on our proposed recommendations. Student discussion and debate is a crucial element of our Policy Inquiries, and for an issue so deeply personal like the BAME university experience and attainment gap we wanted to hear students' thoughts. The survey included ten questions that asked students to respond to the list of potential recommendations that would appear in the final draft of our Policy Inquiry. We wanted to hear to know if they agreed with what we proposed, were they satisfied with our use of language, were the recommendations too vague and, if so, how could they be improved?

Our second survey was completed by 140 students, increasing our engagement number to 190 students for the entire project over the two year period. For the questions specifically concerned with the recommendations, we had anywhere from 33 to 68 student responses. We received an array of comments - both positive and negative - and many included excellent suggestions for improving our list of recommendations and we have made the necessary changes for this document. Importantly, many students highlighted in their responses that they

were pleased to see the Students' Union take a stance on these issues and take the BAME student experience seriously.

Like the first survey, all questions were composed as free text responses. There was a survey prize draw and respondents were asked to provide their student ID number in order to verify they were currently enrolled at the University. Following the prize draw and student verification, all answers were anonymised before analysis began and any identifying features in student responses have been removed for this report. For a full breakdown of the questions we asked in the BAME Inclusive Student Experience survey, please see Appendix C. The next section will discuss in greater detail our findings from both surveys as well as the in-person interviews.

Section C.

Findings.

C1. Overview:

Like in the earlier briefing document, we have separated our findings into separate sections based around themes. We found this was the most coherent way to present the qualitative data from the interviews and two online surveys. As mentioned in the previous section, all responses have been anonymised and any language which might identify a student has been removed.

C2. Visibility and Representation

In our initial sample of 50 students who participated in our in-person interviews and the first online survey, 24 students had participated in either an Open Day, or an equivalent for international students. Their responses about their impressions of the event highlighted the strategic and experiential importance of these events to prospective BAME students. A majority of student responses described the open days as informative, but there were expressed concerns around the visibility of BAME students on campus, both in regards to their physical presence on campus as well as cultural representation. One student highlighted their decision to study at an institution was not based solely on provision, and other factors like whether they felt the institution was accommodating to their religious needs was seen as equally important. One student mentioned that signposting important information like availability of prayer rooms and whether food was halal was lacking at Royal Holloway, but when it came time to make a decision about where to apply they still submitted an application. While it was not considered a 'deal breaker' in this particular instance, it highlights an example of how a small change like signage can have a positive impact on the BAME student experience. Crucially, it needs to be stated that this is an example of where the Students' Union also needs to consider making improvements. For example, the Packhorse offers a diverse range of halal food, but this is not advertised on the menu so students remain unaware of services we offer. Tommy's Kitchen also

offers some halal food, however, due to the small size of the kitchen, there is not capacity to cook the food separately which is why we do not advertise it as halal.

Students' feelings around better representation at the University additionally extends to the classroom. One student commented during an interview that they believed they were only given a space in order to diversify the student population on that particular course, especially as the majority of students enrolled were predominantly White. We found this opinion was shared amongst many of our participants, and 13 other students specifically stated there was a majority White intake of students on their course during the entry process. One student explained they were the only Black woman in all her classes, while another student told one of our hired BAME interviewers that they 'were a dot in an array of White'.

Because these students feel alone in their courses as the only BAME student, or a member of the minority, it subsequently impacts how they engage with other students and academic staff. Many students in both the interviews and the surveys described feeling pressured to speak on behalf of the BAME community during discussions.

[Being BAME] gives me a better insight into certain subjects but being one of the only two black females in the year puts me on the spot sometimes.

Yes, at times you feel like you are speaking for a huge group of people because I'm the only person of that ethnicity. I feel uncomfortable at times because ignorant things are said but because I am outnumbered it's daunting to have to speak up. I need to censor a lot of what is say.

This feeling of having to censor their discussions was repeated in other responses, and one student explained, 'I feel at times I can't voice my opinions on things'. Another student described an incident where another student justified a pro-slavery position during discussion. The interviewee was the only BAME student in the class and decided to refrain from reacting because they feared being perceived as aggressive. In this situation, the seminar leaders challenged this student's pro-slavery views and helped diffuse an 'unnerving' situation.

In addition to a lack of representation among the student population, respondents also highlighted there was a lack of representation of BAME

individuals in staff positions—both professional and academic. One student described how there was ‘[o]nly one ethnic (Black) lecturer’ on their course. This was not a one-off comment, and the lack of BAME staff was identified by 16 students within the interviews and is supported by University data. The 2017-18 Annual Staff Equality and Diversity Data report shows that only 15.6 per cent of staff at Royal Holloway were BAME even though 30 per cent of the student population that year were BAME¹. Recent University figures have shown the percentage of current BAME students has increased to 40 per cent, but there is a lack of data about whether the percentage of BAME staff has also risen. Within this figures, academics who identify as Black British were the least represented. This lack of staff representation undoubtedly influences how BAME students’ engage with lecturers on their course. Below students detailed how a lack of BAME staff has affected their academic experience at Royal Holloway.

Sometimes tutors and seminar leaders have quite Western perspectives and are at a loss of sentiment, I find I can sometimes feel a culture contrast that I might not get if I had more BME teachers.

Yes, there is a need for more BAME staff who are able to help BAME students more effectively. This would address the attainment gap because BAME students tend to suffer in silence as they feel they cannot ask for help and when they do, the help is often minor.

One student in our first survey highlighted the steps their department has taken to try and improve representation on the course by introducing a BAME focus group. This is an example where, even though there is still a small representation of staff, there have been attempts to improve students’ experience within the course and make them feel more included.

¹ Royal Holloway University of London, Annual Staff Equality and Diversity Data Report (2018). <<https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/media/8745/workforce-equality-monitoring-report-2017-18.pdf>> [accessed 1 August 2019], p. 3.

C3. Curriculum.

Ensuring diversity within the curriculum has been an ongoing discussion between the University and the Students' Union for several years. There have been several Officer-led campaigns, and some steps have been taken by the University to move this conversation forward with a new validation tool which utilises questions around diversity. Despite these improvements, many students who participated in our interviews and online survey mentioned issues around White academic staff teaching BAME content, usually from a Western perspective.

Majority of the research is conducting from a White western perspective. There is an extremely small minority of BAME students from what I can see in lectures - most are White and female.

Found that as a BAME student I was engaging with my course differently, I knew more about Asian based cultures and had a wider perspective of non-English subjects whereas English students tend to hold very Western perspectives. Being BAME I am sensitive to subjects like Colonialism and independence and I take them very seriously whereas White students don't always understand where I am coming from.

Many of the students' comments about white-washed curriculum and the lack of diversity in course content associate these problems with the lack of representation in both the classroom and the staff population. It could be argued that improvements in both of these areas could also help diversify course curriculum, which would further allow BAME students to engage more fully with the academic community within their department and course.

C4. Microaggressions.

It was evident from the interviews and online survey that many students described experiences of what we would deem to be microaggressions, but many lacked the knowledge or tools to identify it as such.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a microaggression as a 'statement, action or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority'¹.

Microaggressions can be further categorised into three distinct types:

- Microassault: 'explicit racial derogation characterized primarily by a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behaviours, or purposeful discriminatory actions'.
- Microinsults: 'characterized by communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity'
- Microinvalidations: 'characterized by communications that exclude, negate or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of colour'².

Some of the specific microaggressions experienced by our student participants include:

- Touching of hair.
- Use of the words 'Nigger', 'Chink' and 'Paki'.
 - 'Nigger has reportedly been used both on campus and within the classroom.
- During a club night, White students have said things similar to 'oh hey Mohammed, Allah yea mate'.
- Students appropriating Japanese mannerisms like bowing to a South East Asian student.
- Fetishisation of South East Asian student.
 - One staff member told this student they 'remind them of their wife'.
 - Scantily-clad Asian women were used in promotion for an SU event.
- Mislabelling of food
 - This resulted in a Muslim student eating pork because a product was advertised as halal chicken.
- Appropriation of Holi.
- There are no products for BAME students in the SU shop, such as hair care

¹ 'Microaggression' in The Oxford English Dictionary [online] <<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/64098026?redirectedFrom=microaggression#eid>> [accessed 1 August 2019].

² The above definitions taken from D Wing Sue et al, 'Racial Microaggressions in Everyday Life', *American Psychologist* (May-June 2007, Vol. 62, No. 4, pp. 271-86. (p. 271).

products for textured hair.

- A lack of non-alcoholic events.
- Aggression from flatmates in University Halls. Below are direct quotations from student participants.
 - 'I do not have any brown friends or minority ones.'
 - 'Oh, ew, it's all Asian'.
 - 'Are you from China?' This was combined with offensive facial expressions.
 - BAME student was called 'aggressive' and 'too much' when discussing racism on campus and calling out their flatmates racial jokes and slurs.
- Staring.

Student participants in our interviews and online survey also described the ways they tried to combat these microaggressions. One student explained 'they have to make [themselves] feel smaller [and] to tone down my race to make other people feel more comfortable'. Another student said they experienced comments from other students about their height and weight, with many assuming they were a 'thug' because they wore tracksuits around campus. This same student mentioned they had experienced racial profiling on campus when they were stopped and searched for no reason outside the Union shop. Because of these experiences, this student felt the need to 'soften' their image and appear 'intelligent' for important events like an interview. This is one example of how microaggressions and stereotypical assumptions on campus can have severe repercussions on all aspects of a student's life both within the confines of the university as well as outside.

Importantly, many of the above experiences are in line with findings of the Equality and Human Rights Commission report, *Tackling Racial Harassment: Universities Challenged* (2019), which found that 56 per cent of students surveyed had experienced racist name-calling, insults and jokes³. These students also faced exclusion from conversations or groups, and were exposed to racist materials or displays on campus. Comments and actions like these only perpetuate negative stereotypes about the BAME community, which can lead to students' withdrawing

3 Equality and Human Rights Commission, 'Executive Summary', *Tackling racial harassment: Universities Challenged* (2019), <<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/tackling-racial-harassment-universities-challenged.pdf>> [accessed 27 October 2019] p. 2.

from the academic and social community on campus. More needs to be done by the University and the Students' Union to combat microaggressions on campus.

C5. Off-campus incidents.

During the research phase of the project, the Students' Union learned that Black people were nine-and-a-half times as likely to be stopped and searched in 2017-18. This figure has consistently increased every year, with the number being eight times as likely in 2016-17 and just over four times in 2015-16⁴. Because stop-and-search powers and other more subtle discriminative acts disproportionately affect people of colour, particularly the Black community, our engagement with BAME students highlighted that there are limited places for BAME students to escape the day-to-day harassment.

A token example is being Asian and walking into certain pubs in Englefield Green - whilst not strictly to do with Royal Holloway these things are part of life and do become interlinked with Royal Holloway when societies host functions at these events.

I didn't feel threatened or shunned for being a BAME student [when settling in] but it was just different and a little bit harder to get used to the uni. Maybe it's also because I'm from a city that is very open minded and liberal and Egham is different and small.

Our student participants reported seeing 'It's okay to be White' posters in the surrounding area, and mentioned experiencing abuse from local residents and their children. Such actions feed back into BAME students feeling a lack of belonging to the area, and increases feelings of distrust towards both the University and the Students' Union because they feel like both organisations are not doing enough to tackle discrimination. The Students' Union did mention the posters on social media, but interview and survey participants said that a tougher stance from the Union would have been appreciated, like a statement condemning the posters, as well as organised action with the local council to remove the posters and police the issue.

C6. Reporting.

A number of BAME students we engaged with alluded that such feelings of distrust towards the University and the Students' Union's because they had experienced previous incidents where microaggressions happened and there were little to no consequences for the perpetrator's actions from either organisation. The Students' Union would like to emphasise that, should a student report such an incident to the University and the Students' Union, it would be taken seriously. Student participants in this Policy Inquiry, however, described examples in the past where this was not the case. As a result, this has led many BAME students to remain hesitate about reporting instances of discrimination when they happen.

One interviewee described reporting an incident where another student used a homophobic slur towards one of their friends at an SU night. They said there were 'no repercussions' and that 'security ignored it and seemed to be entertaining the situation'. The student mentioned this was because she and her peers were all BAME students, and the group involved in the incident were White males. Because of the lack of action taken by security during this SU night, the BAME student maintains, 'This encourages BAME students to remain silent whenever they face anything because there is a culture of no action taking place or perpetrators being held accountable'.

Another student described their own negative experience with ignorant and racist flatmates while living in University Halls. They contacted the University for support, but they only referred the student to the Halls Life Time. It appears, however, that racism in this instance was not considered serious enough problem to take action on, unlike a dirty flat, because it was considered a personal issue and no action was taken. The student asked one of our hired BAME interviewers the following question: 'If the police arrest those who engage in hate crimes, then why does the university not handle these in the same manner?' To hear no action was taken in this instance is disheartening, especially as it happened in what is supposed to be a student's safe, private space.

Discrimination can happen anywhere, even the classroom, and one student participant described an incident where the department failed to respond

properly to a report. They recalled that another BAME student on their course was denied a voice during one class because the lecturer refused to believe the student was BAME because she was 'White-passing'. The student recalled that the affected student spoke to the then Head of Department, but no actions were taken—not even an apology from the lecturer. This has subsequently resulted in the affected student's disenfranchisement from the course as that particular lecturer is now in a position of power within the department.

One problem which was addressed during the interviews was that some students were unaware of the process for reporting instances of racial discrimination and microaggressions. One student explained an incident where another student shouted 'Chinese' while riding past on a bike. The victim's main reason why they did not report the incident was because they did not know where to go. A similar sentiment was repeated by the student who was stopped and searched outside the SU shop, which is why a report was never filed with either the University or the Students' Union. It's clear from our engagement with current BAME students that there needs to be a more streamlined, and coherent, system for reporting microaggressions and incidents of discrimination.

C7. Student Groups.

It was noted several times throughout some of the interviews and survey responses that faith and cultural societies feel as though they are treated differently to other student groups. While there may not be explicit sinister reasoning for this to take place, students described instances which demonstrate this has previously happened.

There was an incident during the 2017-18 academic year where a miscommunication issue between the Students' Union and a few cultural societies occurred. While the incident was dealt with and both parties came to a resolution which left the societies feeling relatively pleased with the outcome, this incident has continued to be referenced as a mistreatment of these groups where cultural appropriation of a religious festival occurred. It is because of this reason that a student interviewee suggested it is harder for faith and cultural groups to be recognised by the Students' Union. They also cited an example of Bhangra Society participation at a national competition which received no promotion on the Students' Union social media pages whereas other creative arts societies

who appear to receive more coverage on a more regular basis. While we have learned from these experiences and taken students' comments on board, this example demonstrates both the positive and negative impact we can have on a society's presence within the student group community.

In addition to how we engage with societies, many students who participated in our interviews and surveys highlighted a lack of representation in some student groups and how it impacted their decision on whether to join.

I didn't join [society redacted] because I didn't want to be the only Black person.

Different societies create different cliques, if you feel like you aren't strong enough to be part of one society you can't join it. On paper as a mixed race girl you might feel you should join [society redacted] and not [society redacted] but you don't really feel like you belong to either.

Being mixed race, you don't always feel like you are Black enough for [society redacted] but White enough for the whiter societies and groups.

We appreciated the students' comments about their experiences with student group, and it appears we need to do more work on making sure BAME students feel represented in clubs and work on improving inclusivity among these groups.

One recent change where we feel we have made a difference for BAME students has been the creation of student Collectives within the Union. As previously mentioned, the Students' Union undertook a Democracy Review. Policy Inquires were not the only new stream of work the Students' Union introduced. We additionally implemented eight student Collectives which represent underrepresented and marginalised groups identified on campus: Women, LGBT, Disabled, BAME, Commuting, International, Postgraduate Taught (PGT) and Postgraduate Research (PGR). As well as organising activities, events and campaigns, they receive funding and work with the Union to secure the general interests and rights of students that self-define into the relevant group. Each collective is led by convenors, who were elected in the autumn term of this academic year. As our work in this area is relatively new, and we look forward to working with them in Term 2.

C8. Conclusion and Next Steps.

We are confident that we have undertaken some insightful initial research into the BAME student experience at Royal Holloway and we believe that we have articulated a number of recommendations which, once implemented, would have a substantial and long-lasting positive impact on the BAME student experience.

Recommendations.

1. Data

There are issues with the data collection pertaining to BAME student access, attainment and progression rates across the University, with a lack of confidence from University staff within departments that the data being circulated is accurate. This results in some staff who are working in influential roles to question the fundamental issues, with a lack of clarity in communication on this issue only compounding this problem.

1.1 The University should undertake a piece of work to ensure that all academic departments trust the data that is circulated, and that they utilise the data to analyse year on year figures comparatively. This should be monitored and reported on annually.

1.2 The University should breakdown the data on student ethnicities into smaller groups, where possible. This will allow more in depth and appropriate analysis of the data. This should also help to de-homogenise the language used, as current lack of consistency in language use creates challenges and may lead to misidentification of students.

1.3 Data should be collected and analysed on a module, course and departmental level.

It should be noted that there can be a tendency to become overly reliant on data which should not be the case. It is expected that an accurate recording of the above stated data should supplement any improvements in student engagement and student life, the data should be used within a context so as to avoid this becoming a numbers game.

2. University Strategy.

Although actions have been taken by the University to address the BAME attainment gap, and other disadvantaged groups, it remains evident that a clear and decisive strategy to tackle the BAME attainment gap is necessary to make

significant headway towards reaching the targets the institution has set itself in its access and participation plan.

2.1 There should be clear ownership and accountability of the issue by the University's most senior leadership through a multi-faceted and university wide approach that produces a diverse and intersectional strategy that can be communicated fully and transparently to all staff and students.

2.2 The University should set up a specific attainment gap project with a clear funding resource and a staff lead to coordinate the work around the BAME attainment gap on behalf of the whole institution, rather than the fragmented work that is currently devolved to individual departments. This project should seek to create a culture where open conversations about race, and dialogue with students and staff about the issue are backed up with effective actions. There should also be a clear reporting and governance structure that supplements development of activities around this issue.

The Union notes the progressive work the University is undertaking towards understanding and putting in place actions to close the Gender Pay Gap and would expect similar time and effort to be put in place to close the attainment gap.

2.3 There should also be a clear and accessible method of feedback that students can utilise to keep an ongoing accountability aspect to the work. All feedback mechanisms should allow students the option to submit their views anonymously if they wish.

2.4 The University should set up a recognition scheme for staff and students who contribute to tackling barriers to equality, diversity and inclusion. The awards should be well publicised and lend a high profile to work in this area.

3. Racial Harassment Reporting Platform.

Students have been clear that they (a) do not know how to report any microaggressions, harassment and/or abuse and (b) do not believe that anything will be done once reported. It is imperative that the perception issue is tackled, otherwise there is a risk that any other actions to attempt to distinguish racial

harassment and abuse from campus will fail.

3.1 The implementation of a coherent and easily-accessible platform should be made a priority for the University to allow any student to report abuse and should allow for different levels of action. Students should be able to report any infraction with (a) no action taken/informal reporting, (b) action taken by the University only, or (c) police involvement. This gives the victim maximum control.

The platform should enable reporting of incidents both on campus (students and staff) and within the local area. A limitation on what counts as the local area would need to be defined and should, possibly, link in to the definition of a commuting student. That being said, Royal Holloway could play host to a third-party Hate Incident and Hate Crime reporting centre, similar to that of Goldsmiths University or Students' Union UCL¹.

The language around this platform should be applicable to any type of hate crime, but there should be a specific reference to that which is motivated by race.

Whilst the University has demonstrated good intentions to introduce this platform, following much lobbying from the Students' Union in 2016/17 and 2017/18, the Union is frustrated that two years on from first agreement it is yet to be implemented. Something of this importance, with this level of impact for students, should be driven directly from the most senior management of the institution. It should be noted that at the time of writing, the Report and Support platform is expected to be implemented around the end of spring term 2020 (delayed from September 2019).

Interestingly, when undertaking rudimentary research into the issue of racism with the local area surrounding the University, it has been really difficult to find any studies or examples of best practice for how other institutions work to ensure the safety of BAME students within the local area.

¹ For Goldsmiths, see <https://www.gold.ac.uk/hate-crime-reporting/>. For Students' Union UCL, see <http://studentsunionucl.org/forms/hate-crime-reporting-centre> (last accessed 26 September 2019).

3.2 The Union will work alongside the local police and other relevant authorities to support a piece of work around hate crime reporting in the local area.

4. Awareness and Training.

There should be a mandatory induction course for all staff and all students on race equality, intercultural awareness and microaggressions. It is accepted that some experiences cited could come from ignorance but this should not be an excuse and a mandatory training course would diminish that benefit of the doubt.

4.1 The University and the Students' Union should work together to introduce mandatory training for all staff and students.

4.2 The Students' Union should run an awareness campaign to foster a sense of belonging and community feel for all students. The Students' Union will utilise the VP Education's officer campaign portfolio to run a campaign week on Inclusive Education in January 2020 to include the flagship Academic Rep Conference event. This campaign will contribute to the awareness aspect, bringing the issue of experience and attainment to the attention of students. The University and Students' Union should work together to organise an event for staff on Inclusive Education to run alongside this campaign week.

5. Diversify offerings.

We need to ensure that our activities, venues and outlets promote and champion equality of access to our extra-curricular programme or trading functions. For example, there is currently no provision for Black and Asian hair care within the SU shop. Similarly, ensuring that our Give It A Go programme includes sessions that all students can get involved in is imperative, as these activities can be a gateway to interactions. In previous years, hair and/or make up sessions have not catered to dark skin or textured hair. Reaching out to companies who can cater toward our BAME community is imperative.

5.1 The Students' Union and the University should both introduce trading services and extra-curricular programmes that provide for our BAME community.

One example of possible work in this area is to ensure that catering outlets remain open after sunset during the period of Ramadan. Many individuals who also identify as Muslim are also BAME and supporting them through religious celebrations would have a positive impact on their wellbeing and sense of community. A mechanism for BAME students to identify areas where both the Students' Union and University could improve their provision for trading services and extra-curricular programmes should be developed to support this work.

5.2 Alongside this, work should be undertaken to ensure that both University and Students' Union signposting is as strong as possible across campus. For example, the food in the Packhorse is halal, yet this isn't on the menu anywhere. Where our food cannot be designated as halal (because of operational capacity) work should be undertaken to look to a long term development plan for those spaces.

6. Diversify the curriculum.

Work to diversify the curriculum is ongoing but there still several opportunities where advantage can be taken. Firstly, over the next three years, provision across the University is going to be revalidated. It is important that, as this process begins in the 2020/21 academic year, our Curriculum Consultants are trained and supported to challenge any lack of diversity as they sit on the validation panels.

6.1 The Students' Union should train academic reps to identify areas where diversity could be increased and empower them to challenge curricula and teaching practices.

It is also important for academics to be engaged within this. Highlighting areas of best practice needs to be promoted, although care will need to be taken to ensure that general modules recognise diversity, as well as the expectation that niche modules deliver a diversified curriculum.

6.2 Ensuring that the curriculum is as diverse as possible should continue to be pursued by both the University and the Students' Union, focusing both on individual researcher(s) but also the diversity of publishing houses and intersectionality within that, where possible.

Providing sessions for academic reps on diversification of the curriculum should include scrutiny of curriculum content (course topics, suggested readings, case studies, and identity as part of the curriculum), teaching materials, inclusive assessment, anonymous marking, and inclusive learning environments. Ensuring student-staff co-design of curricula and assessments is explicitly included in teaching and learning strategies will create a culture of inclusive education moving forward as new courses and modules are developed.

7. Celebrate the diversity within our student population.

Educating the student population on the intersectionality and diversity within the BAME community is imperative to engaging with and improving the positive experience of BAME students. The Students' Union's recently created BAME Collective is a step forward in improving the representation of BAME students. The Students' Union and the University should seek to celebrate the diversity within our student population throughout the year through numerous mechanisms:

7.1 The Students' Union and the University should ensure that representation within communications is more than tokenistic representation through visual representation, instead embedding diversity within communications ensuring opportunity for promotion, community practice, or individual successes are made transparent and accessible. This should include, but not be limited to, all member emails, news articles and social media presence, and open day staffing/volunteers.

7.2 The Students' Union and University should also be more proactive in reaching out to groups who may be celebrating, acknowledging or developing events ahead of time, including faith and cultural practices within spaces such as annual communication plans and welcome activities.

7.3 Ensuring the respectful acknowledgement of religious and cultural needs within our diverse population, and using community led practice to highlight the areas for development (by utilising the Students' Union's new collectives and existing student groups), both the University and Students' Union should move to have more open discourse around provision on campus.

This sentiment is carried across different elements of the BAME student experience. Taking a stand against microaggressions by educating students on the topic and providing guidance to students on what to do if they are a victim of racial harassment are just two ways in which the issues affecting BAME students could be put under the spotlight.

8. Zero tolerance.

8.1 The Students' Union has been mandated by the student body through an all student referendum to produce a no platform for hate speech policy. This came about through ongoing debate within the student body around hate speech policies. Therefore, any individual with a sustained history of making statements that can reasonably be interpreted as hate speech will be prevented from entering Students' Union premises and speaking at Students' Union events, including that of student groups, or activities in any capacity. The definition that has been adopted, as per the policy, is below:

“An expression of hatred toward someone on account of that person's colour, race, disability, nationality (including citizenship), ethnic or national origin, religious belief, sex, gender identity, or sexual orientation. The expression should be threatening or abusive, and is intended to harass, alarm, or distress another individual or community of individuals.”

9. Staff population.

The staff population at both the University and the Students' Union is not reflective of the student body and the feedback of our BAME students is that this is to the detriment of the BAME student experience.

9.1 Both the University and the Students' Union should prioritise implementing specific action plans to address the lack of diversity in the staff population.

9.2 Work should be undertaken to (a) understand why people of colour do not apply, in equal proportion, to jobs at the University and the Students' Union and, (b) consider action to be taken in light of this to ensure some balance in working populations.

This BAME recruitment gap should be addressed in a similar fashion to that of the gender pay gap and focus not only on student-facing and core staff roles, but also leadership roles within the university and Union.

9.3 The Students' Union should address the lack of diversity within the Sabbatical Officer positions through development of a structure that encourages BAME candidates to stand for election and supports them throughout the election process.

10. Employability.

Ensuring the University and Students' Union are providing and lobbying for adequate support for BAME students in relation to employability, careers and graduate outcomes is a key part of reducing inequalities that persist in the student population even once they leave Royal Holloway and move onto paid work or further study.

10.1 There should therefore be targeted careers guidance, internships and support for BAME students as these students may be amongst the students who have fewer professional networks available to them.

10.2 Data should be collected surrounding Year in Industry and Year Abroad demographics to provide insights. Offering a personalised support packages to students to access year abroad programmes is likely to help reduce the disparity in this area, taking into account the different identities that could be a barrier to the programme (for example, commuting).

10.3 The University should set up a mentoring programme for BAME students. Such a scheme could utilise the national mentoring consortium for BAME students, BAME staff as mentors, and/or those who work in industry.

Increasing the support for employability will have beneficial impacts on graduate outcomes alongside progression of students to postgraduate study. A key part of this is through providing role models for BAME students.

Funding.

The Students' Union will receive £1500 per annum for three consecutive years to be put towards this project from Santander. The spending of this money will be reported to the relevant Executive through annual plans and circulated among members of the BAME collective for full transparency.

Appendices.

Appendix A: TSEP Question Set.

Below are the set questions our three BAME Student Researchers asked current Royal Holloway BAME students in January 2019.

Application

1. Tell us a about your experience whilst applying to Royal Holloway. Think about why you wanted to come here, your experience at open days or the communication received from Royal Holloway.
2. Do you think that your experience as a BAME student was different compared to non-BAME students?

Arrival

1. What were the first few weeks of your first year like? Think about settling in, meeting people, getting used to your timetable, Freshers' Week.
2. Do you think your experience was different because you identify as a BAME student?

Academic Experience

1. Is your course what you expected it to be? Think about content, applying knowledge to different areas, opportunities to explore different elements of the curriculum, the academic support provided.
2. Has being BAME affected how you engage with your course? Can you explain your answer?

Campus Experience

1. What's it like on campus? What do you get up to? Think about extracurricular activities (societies, clubs etc.), nightlife, catering, living in halls, jobs.
2. Do you think being BAME changes how you engage with the non-academic side of being at university?

Other

1. Is there anything else you'd like to mention that hasn't already been covered?
2. Do you think that the student experience is different at Royal Holloway if you identify as being BAME?
3. Do you have any thoughts / suggestions that would help improve the experience of BAME students at Royal Holloway?

Appendix B. Online Survey.

Below are the questions we asked students following the initial student interviews. 21 students filled out this questionnaire. We asked students to provide their student ID number in order to verify they were currently enrolled at the University. All answers were anonymised following verification for this report.

1. Can you tell us about your experience in applying to Royal Holloway? Think about why you wanted to come here, your experience at open days, etc.
2. Do you think that your experience as a Black, Asian or other Ethnic Minority (BAME) student was different compared to non-BAME students? Please can you explain your answer?
3. What was your experience of Royal Holloway in the first few weeks of your first term? Think about Freshers' Week activities, getting used to your timetable, meeting new people etc.
4. Do you think your experience was different because you identify as a BAME student? Please can you explain your answer?
5. Is your course what you expected it to be? Think about content, applying knowledge to different areas, academic support, etc.
6. Has being BAME affected how you engage with your course? Can you explain your answer?
7. What do you do when on campus? Think about extracurricular activities, nightlife, catering, living in halls, getting a part-time job etc.
8. Do you think being BAME changes how you engage with the non-academic side of being at university? Please explain your answer.
9. Is there anything else you want to let us know about being a student at Royal Holloway?
10. Do you think that the student experience is different at Royal Holloway if you identify as being BAME? Please explain your answer.

11. Do you have any thoughts/suggestions that would help improve the experience of BAME students at Royal Holloway?
12. How do you define your ethnic origin?
13. Gender
14. Does your gender match the gender you were assigned at birth?
15. Do you have any dependants?
16. Do you consider yourself as a commuting student?
17. Do you consider yourself to have a specific learning disability, other disability, impairment, long-term illness or health condition?
18. Could you identify your religion, faith or belief?

Appendix C: BAME Inclusive Student Experience Survey.

Below are the questions we asked current BAME students to answer following the publication of our BAME Inclusive Student Experience Briefing Document (2019) and a first draft of Recommendations for this Policy Inquiry. All questions were composed as free text responses. There was a survey prize draw and respondents were asked to provide their student ID number in order to verify they were currently enrolled at the University. Following the prize draw and student verification, all answers were anonymised for this report.

General Questions.

1. In your own words, how would you describe your race or ethnicity?
2. The current Policy Inquiry is entitled 'BAME Inclusive Student Experience'
 - a. Would you identify yourself using the terminology 'BAME'?
 - b. Is there an alternative phrase that you prefer or feel more comfortable using?

These questions relate to the Data Section of the Briefing Document:

1. How do you feel students should be engaged in work to reduce departmental and institutional attainment gaps?
2. Do you have any comments relating to recommendations 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3?

These questions relate to the ‘University Strategy’ section of the briefing document.

1. How should students be involved in University strategy relating to BAME student experience?
2. How should students be able to feedback on work carried out by the University to improve the BAME student experience?
3. Do you have any comments relating to recommendations 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4?

These questions relate to the ‘Awareness and Training’ section of the briefing document.

1. What do you feel mandatory training for all students should include?
2. What do you feel mandatory training for all staff should include?
3. How should BAME students be engaged with developing this training?
4. Do you have any comments relating to recommendations 4.1 and 4.2?

These questions relate to the ‘Diversity Offerings’ section of the briefing document.

1. How would you recommend we engage with students to understand the provisions that should be introduced?
2. Beyond Trading Services and extra-curricular programmes, do you feel that recommendation 5.1 misses anything?
3. Do you have any comments relating to recommendations 5.1 and 5.2?

These questions relate to the ‘Diversify the Curriculum’ section of the briefing document.

1. What methods should be utilised to engage students in the co-design of curricula and assessments?
2. How do you currently feel about the diversity of your curriculum and why?
3. Do you have any comments relating to recommendations 6.1 and 6.2?

These questions relate to the ‘Celebrate The Diversity Within Our Student Population’ section of the briefing document.

1. Do you have any suggestions of how the Students’ Union or the University can celebrate the diversity within the student population?
2. What mechanisms should be used to advertise these celebrations of diversity?
3. Do you have any comments relating to recommendation 7.1?

These questions relate to the 'Zero Tolerance' section of the briefing document.

1. Is there any further work you feel the Students' Union or University should be doing to ensure zero tolerance is upheld across campus?
2. Do you have any comments relating to recommendation 8.1?

These questions relate to the 'Staff Population' section of the briefing document.

1. What barriers do you feel may currently be in place that prevent BAME students from running for the Sabbatical Officer positions?
2. How do you feel you could be more supported by the SU in running for elections/leadership roles?
3. Do you have any comments relating to recommendations 9.1, 9.2 and 9.3?

These questions relate to the 'Employability' section of the briefing document.

1. How do you feel employability provision should be structured to support BAME students?
2. What are your thoughts on a mentoring programme for BAME students?
3. Do you have any comments relating to recommendations 10.1, 10.2 and 10.3?

Is there anything else you would like to comment on from the briefing document, recommendations or any part of your student experience?

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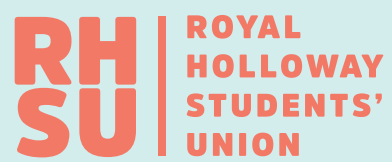
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