**6 tips for supporting BME Student Success with Personal Academic Tutoring**

1. **Learn student names**

Learning the names of your students is good pedagogical practice. It helps to demonstrate your interest in each student by creating ‘instructor immediacy’, which Cooper et al describe as ‘the perception of physical and psychological closeness between students and an instructor’. Students feel more supported when they know you know their name.

As a tutor, you have your own background and culture, which will likely make you more familiar with some names than with others. Take the time to learn to pronounce the names of your tutees before you meet them. Websites such as [www.pronouncenames.com](http://www.pronouncenames.com) can help you with any names you are unfamiliar with. Ensuring that you know and can pronounce each students’ name will help avoid a situation where a student feels ‘othered’ by a tutors’ unfamiliarity with their name. If you’re not sure, ask, and whilst it’s important for students to do what they are comfortable with, if they are using an anglicised version of their name, ask if they would rather use their given name or the anglicised version of it.

Before your first tutorial, you could also ask your students to record – either as audio or video – a short introduction to themselves, and then send them a link to a Sharepoint or OneDrive folder to upload the file to. This will allow you to begin to familiarise yourself with your tutees in advance of your first meeting with them.

1. **Assess your own biases**

Unconscious bias describes a learned set of behaviours for classifying people unfavourably according to race, gender, age, ability, sexual orientation, and other characteristics. It is understood to be an outgrowth of a common human behaviour for classifying the overwhelming amount of information we process each day, which has nonetheless produced a range of identities that are unfairly discriminated against.

Unconscious bias operates via a subset of biases, including: affinity bias, where one person has a preference for another because they perceive them to be alike; confirmatory bias, where someone searches for information to confirm their pre-existing beliefs; and social categorisation, when someone processes their experience of another person into an in-group or an out-group.

Understanding and being aware of your unconscious biases will help you to develop a more equitable and inclusive relationship with your students. Harvard University has an online resource for testing your own unconscious biases, which is available at: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>. The University of Brighton also has [online training resources for assessing unconscious bias](https://studentcentral.brighton.ac.uk/webapps/blackboard/content/listContent.jsp?course_id=_106168_1&content_id=_2833634_1&mode=reset), as well as [Equality & Diversity workshops that regularly run across campuses](https://staff.brighton.ac.uk/hr/equality/Pages/Training.aspx).

1. **Be aware of microaggressions and stereotype threat**

Microaggressions are defined by Derald Wing Sue as ‘brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to certain individuals because of their group membership’. They are often subtle, verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual actions that occur in everyday life, which signal the presumed right of the person who commits the microaggression to exercise power over people with historically marginalised identities.

Microaggressions are frequently underpinned by a stereotyped image of the person with the marginalised identity that is held by the person who commits it. One example of this would be a white tutor talking in a different and less complex register to a black student about a topic than when discussing it with a white student, because of what Sue describes as a stereotype of the former group as ‘lack[ing] global abstract/conceptual reasoning’. Such a stereotype could lead to the microaggressive act of speaking in a patronising manner about a topic when discussing it with a black student.

The University of Brighton’s [online training resources for assessing unconscious bias](https://studentcentral.brighton.ac.uk/webapps/blackboard/content/listContent.jsp?course_id=_106168_1&content_id=_2833634_1&mode=reset), as well as its [Equality & Diversity workshops that regularly run across campuses](https://staff.brighton.ac.uk/hr/equality/Pages/Training.aspx) are again useful for assessing and addressing microaggressions and stereotype threat.

1. **Consider opportunities for students to work with BME role models**

The University of Brighton runs a mentoring scheme called Momentum, which is designed to build students’ confidence and boost employability. Students are matched with a volunteer professional who is trained to support them in working towards goals and building confidence. Momentum is available to Black Asian Minority Ethnic students. The time commitment is twelve hours over six months starting in late November and finishing in May (equivalent to an hour’s meeting every two weeks). However, if you are in contact with a student who you feel would benefit from a mentor after the start of the programme, please contact the co-ordinators to see if there is availability. Momentum@brighton.ac.uk You can find out more about Momentum at <https://www.brighton.ac.uk/careers/mentoring/momentum-programme/index.aspx>.

The university also has a BAME education programme, which offers six months of mentoring to students who identify as Black Asian Minority Ethnic and who are trainee teachers. The programme starts in November and concludes in May. The programme gives students the opportunity to meet with a BAME person who lives or works locally and discuss issues in confidence, with around two hours per month of mentoring. This is a good opportunity if you have a tutee who is a trainee teacher at the university. However, if you are in contact with a student who you feel would benefit from a mentor after the start of the programme, please contact the co-ordinators to see if there is availability. Momentum@brighton.ac.uk More details can be found at: <https://www.brighton.ac.uk/careers/mentoring/bame-education/index.aspx>

In addition to these mentoring schemes, [the University of Brighton’s Students’ Union](https://www.brightonsu.com/studentactivities/societies/findasociety/) also has a wide range of societies that students can join, which may help students to connect with other BME students whom they may be able to relate to.

1. **Make sure it is clear when you are available and how to arrange to see you**

Students come to university with different levels of familiarity with Higher Education. Some students may need to be personally encouraged, either in person or via email, to come and see you. It’s also a good idea to explain (either in an email or in your first session) when you are available for tutorials and how students can arrange these (e.g. is it a particular time of the week with a sign-up sheet on the door, or should students simply email you to arrange a session). You should also explain how to address staff, to ensure that any uncertainty around this doesn’t prevent students from contacting you. If doing group work in a tutorial session, it can also be a good idea to allocate roles within the group, to ensure that everyone is clear what they are doing and has a chance to participate.

1. **Look for informal ways to catch up with students**

This will help you to get to know students and demonstrate that you are available, and can be as simple as a quick chat if you bump into a student on campus, or after a seminar or lecture. Importantly, regular conversations with you can build students’ confidence to seek other co- or extra-curricular opportunities, increasing their sense of belonging at the university.

**Useful resources**

The information in this document has been drawn from the following resources:

Cooper, K., Haney, B., Krieg, A. and Brownell, S. (2017). *What’s in a Name? The Importance of*

*Students Perceiving That an Instructor Knows Their Names in a High-Enrollment Biology Classroom*. [online] Available at: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5332051/> [Accessed 11 Dec. 2018].

Brighton.ac.uk. (2018). *BAME education programme*. [online] Available at:

https://www.brighton.ac.uk/careers/mentoring/bame-education/index.aspx [Accessed 11 Dec. 2018].

Brighton.ac.uk. (2018). *Momentum programme*. [online] Available at:

https://www.brighton.ac.uk/careers/mentoring/momentum-programme/index.aspx [Accessed 11 Dec. 2018].

Implicit.harvard.edu. (2018). *Project Implicit*. [online] Available at: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>

[Accessed 11 Dec. 2018]. Raratutor.ac.uk. (2018). [online] Available at: http://www.raratutor.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/SRHE-SD-EB-061217.pdf [Accessed 11 Dec. 2018].

Sue, Derald Wing. (2010). *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation.* Hoboken: John

Wiley & Sons.

Ucl.ac.uk. (2018). [online] Available at: <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching->

learning/files/ucl\_guide\_to\_bme\_belonging\_2017\_ucl\_equality\_diversity\_and\_inclusion.pdf [Accessed 11 Dec. 2018].