

Supporting and enabling BME Student Success through the Lifecycle

A Teaching Excellence Alliance Sandpit

University of Brighton 17th June 2019

Watson House, Falmer, University of Brighton 10.00-16.30 (registration from 9.30)

Context

The sandpit has been designed to build on good practice across the University Alliance, to facilitate cross-institutional discussion and foster creativity.

HESA data from 2017-18 reveals that: ¹

1. 82.6% of First class honours degrees were awarded to white students even though white students only made up 75.0% of all graduates.
2. Only 3.2% of graduates awarded a first class honours degree were black even though 6.4% of all graduates were black.
3. 76.4% of white graduates were awarded a First Class or Upper Second Class degree compared with 64.4% of Asian graduates and 55.6% of black graduates.
4. The attainment gap is narrower for science, engineering and technology (SET) subjects.

The Equality Challenge Unit have stated:

Action needs to focus on institutional barriers and inequalities, rather than 'improving' or 'fixing' the student. Traditionally the language of the attainment gap has focused on students' underachievement or lack of attainment, whereas it should focus on the institutional culture, curriculum and pedagogy. ²

¹ Further data is available in the Appendix.

² Equality Challenge Unit (no date) <https://www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/student-recruitment-retention-attainment/student-attainment/degree-attainment-gaps/>

Facilitators

The event will be led by two facilitators with extensive experience of academic development and curriculum design:

John Canning – John is Senior Lecturer in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education at the University of Brighton where he coordinates the PGCert in Learning and Teaching in HE and runs HEA Fellowship preparation workshops. He is also a member of the University Alliance’s Teaching Excellence Alliance (TEA) Implementation Group.

Penny Sweasey – Penny joined University Alliance as a consultant in November 2018 to lead the TEA Programme. Prior to this Penny was Head of the Centre for Excellence at Manchester Metropolitan University and Deputy Director of the University Alliance’s Teaching Excellence Alliance (TEA).

Staff from Brighton will also provide expert knowledge and expertise to support and guide teams through the event in their role as theme experts and facilitators for the groups.

Purpose of the day

The purpose of this event is to consider short and medium term actions to support and enable BAME student success through the entire student lifecycle and to enable us to foster a culture of continuous enhancement of inclusive provision by:

- identifying short and medium-term changes to our practice that will lead to significant improvements in student outcomes regardless of background
- cultivating a Community of Expertise to take these changes forward.

Design Challenge

Your challenge in responding to this context to is twofold:

Drawing on what you do well and taking inspiration from innovative practice across the University Alliance and the sector:

1. Identify and develop a ‘quick win’ change to educational practice or curriculum design and delivery that could be implemented, without the need for approval, for the start of 2019/20. You are looking for ‘the difference that will make the difference’ to the development of your students’ experience / outcomes. This could be something new that you think would have an impact or something that is ‘in-flight’ that you want to extend across all the courses in your school / department.
2. Building on this, identify and develop a proposal for a more radical change to your practice, policy, or curriculum and its delivery. This will be a step-change that will ensure that significant reductions in attainment gaps are achieved.

These will be captured and ‘pitched’ to the other design teams and external facilitators.

Outputs from the sandpit

Each Design team is asked to present their two proposals (am and pm) which describe and articulate their response to the two design challenges above, and which set out:

1. how the proposal addresses BAME student success and what the proposal aims to achieve – the problem you looking to solve;
2. what the key features of the proposal are, and what the outcomes and impact of the proposal will be.

Supporting Materials/Resources

Design Teams will be provided with a range of resources on the day to support them with this task.

The Sandpit blog <https://blogs.brighton.ac.uk/uasandpit2019/>, developed by John Canning and his colleagues at Brighton, with contributions from the TEA team, provides you with:

1. the context for the Sandpit approach
2. the context of BAME success and attainment gaps
3. key reading and reports on the BAME attainment gap
4. a Slack site which has been set up to share your ideas and resources.
<https://btonsandpit.slack.com/>

The sandpit approach

1. Strength in diversity. As far as possible we have put people from different universities and different job roles together. This is a feature of the sandpit approach, not a shortcoming.
2. Nobody is more important than anyone else here. Everyone’s perspective/ view point is valid and no-one’s job role or experience makes their opinion worth more than anyone else’s.
3. The group own the topic, not the organisers. If your group feels the organisers have asked the wrong question or have not framed the problem in the best possible way you can respond to this in your action plan.
4. Be idealistic: The sandpit gives us the freedom to work outside the constraints of a single institution. Do not use reasons like ‘that wouldn’t be allowed at University X’ or ‘Our senior management would never agree to that’ stop you recommending an action –

assume our established systems, procedures, rules, traditions and cultures can be changed.³

5. Your group decide how you will work. The facilitator is there to help you keep on task in terms of time and guide your discussions if necessary. However, they are not there to lead your group, scribe, or evaluate or present your ideas.
6. Your whole group own the action plan. You may not agree with other members of your group all the time, but aim to produce an action plan you can all reasonably support.

Tips on being a good group member.

The sandpit is why you are here. Give your time and attention to the task and to your group. Please do not check email, make phone calls or do other work during the day.

1. *Be open to learning from others.* People in other roles or working in other universities can have important insights.
2. *Be honest, but optimistic.* Use the freedom of the sandpit to find ways to overcome barriers, not to be constrained by them.
3. *Respect each member of the group.* Allow everyone to heard.
4. *Don't be fearful.* Please do not feel intimidated by group members who may be more experienced or more senior to you.
5. *Do some background reading.* You don't need to be an instant expert, but coming prepared will help you make a better contribution.

Following the Event

Design Teams are expected to further develop their plans, both short and long term, and encouraged to present the impact of their plans in appropriate for their own university context.

The TEA team at UA will collate the outcomes into a position paper that will inform future TEA events and be shared across the sector.

³ If you feel there are constraints or challenges that will impede your ideas, do not focus on them on the day but 'park' them in the sandpit 'Car Park' (post-its on a flip chart).

Outline of the Day

Other than the required deliverables and the schedule of activity there are purposefully very few rules applied to the event, in order to enable innovative thinking and radical approaches to the curriculum. Facilitators will keep your group to the scheduled timings.

Arrival 9.30am for 10.00 start	
9.30-10.00	Registration and tea/ coffee available. Watson Building Foyer
Welcome, introductions, and instructions for the sandpit, Sir David Watson Lecture Theatre, Room 129	
10.00-10.30	Welcome and Housekeeping: John Canning University Alliance: Penny Sweasey University of Brighton: Ruth Whittaker, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education and Students) Context: Amandip Bisel and Jo MacDonnell, University of Brighton Brief introduction to the sandpit approach
Initial Thinking and Quick wins. Rolling comfort and coffee breaks	
10.30-11.00	Group work: Getting to know the other members of group: (10mins) then each group to identify 3-5 'quick wins'.
11.00- 11.15	Group hop. Pitch ideas to one other group, reflect, frame again and assess. Other groups provide 'critical friend' feedback on the pitch and generate questions for team to consider.
11.15-11.45	Plenary: each group to present their 'quick wins' for 2 minutes.
Defining priorities	
11.45-12.45	Drawing on what you have done so far, discuss and share experiences to define a proposal for a more radical change to your curriculum and its delivery that can be implemented by 2020 . . . A change that will ensure that the BAME attainment gap is directly challenged. Answer this question: What is your priority and what do we want to achieve? What is 'the difference that will make the difference' to the development of your students' experience / outcomes?
12.45-13.00	Plenary 12.45. Each group will present a 2 min 'elevator pitch' to the rest of the participants on their outline proposal.

Working Lunch**	
13.00-13.30	You can choose to keep working over lunch. This can be an opportunity to come up with some actions to address your priorities and develop your proposal into a fleshed-out action plan.
Developing Strategic Thinking	
13.30-14.30	<p>Group work. Before the presentation we recommend you have considered these design prompts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What aspect of embedding inclusive practice will it address? ● Who is the intervention aimed at (e.g. year 1, final year etc.)? ● What are the aims of the intervention? ● How will it impact on student experience / outcomes? ● What do you need to do to make this happen? ● How will you know if it is successful – what will change look like?
Group presentations	
14.30-16.00	<p>Group presentations (max 10-12 minutes per group) using Criteria Sustainability of the proposal in terms of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Coherence of idea – does it make sense? 2. Impact - addresses the core concerns most effectively 3. Scalability – can be applied in a range of contexts
16.00-16.30	<p>Crowdsource the priorities – vote as a group for the priorities for TEA. What happens next? Concluding remarks and end of session</p>

**Lunch and refreshments will be available from the Watson café between 11.30 and 14.30. There will be no charge for sandpit delegates.

Appendix: Statistical data from Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)⁴

Table 1: Number of graduates by degree classification and ethnic group 2016-17 (Source HESA)

Ethnicity marker	First class honours	Upper second class honours	Lower second class honours	Third class honours/ Pass	Unclassified	Total
Asian	7845	16555	8240	1950	2705	37290
Black	2970	9245	7060	1975	720	21975
Mixed	3330	6430	2335	550	535	13175
Other	940	1990	1110	280	300	4620
Unknown	1030	1970	1395	1190	570	6160
White	76575	124000	39285	8060	14490	262415
Total	92690	160190	59425	14005	19320	345635

Table 2: Percentage of students awarded each classification: by ethnic group 2016-17 (Source HESA)

	First class honours	Upper second class honours	Lower second class honours	Third class honours / Pass	Unclassified	Total
Asian	21.0	44.4	22.1	5.2	7.3	100
Black	13.5	42.1	32.1	9.0	3.3	100
Mixed	25.3	48.8	17.7	4.2	4.1	100
Other	20.3	43.1	24.0	6.1	6.5	100
Unknown	16.7	32.0	22.6	19.3	9.3	100
White	29.2	47.3	15.0	3.1	5.5	100
Total	26.8	46.3	17.2	4.1	5.6	100

⁴ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/outcomes>

Table 3: Percentage of total degrees awarded by ethnicity and classification, 2016-17

	First class honours	Upper second class honours	Lower second class honours	Third class honours/ Pass	Unclassified	Total
Asian	8.5	10.3	13.9	13.9	14.0	10.8
Black	3.2	5.8	11.9	14.1	3.7	6.4
Mixed	3.6	4.0	3.9	3.9	2.8	3.8
Other	1.0	1.2	1.9	2.0	1.6	1.3
Unknown	1.1	1.2	2.3	8.5	3.0	1.8
White	82.6	77.4	66.1	57.6	75	75.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100