BAME Awarding Gap Case Study

Investigating awarding gaps on PGT programmes in the Medical School

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What did you do/who's involved?

This is an exploratory project which aims to explore any awarding gaps for students with Protected Characteristics on UCL medical school's two PGT programmes, and to support tutors in understanding how they can make a difference for students' experience and attainment. A project team comprising myself, the lead for Postgraduate Education, (Ann Griffin) and the Programme Lead for one of the programmes (Tom Baker) employed two interns from UCL Connected Learning Internships to identify and address 3 core questions to try to address our aims.. We established a working group for this project comprising colleagues with EDI leadership and research experience to provide strategic input.

The project evaluation takes three arms:

- Looking at Tableau data to find out if there is an awarding gap for students with protected characteristics.

- Interviewing other departments to learn from their best practice in addressing their own awarding gaps.

- Synthesising policy and academic literature on the topic

We shared the findings with our tutors in an interactive faculty development session, and will include the findings in a written teaching resource as well. We're treating this project as a pilot, and we're hoping to use the data we gather to inform some focused questions, and source resources for other work in the future. Whilst this project focuses on postgraduate courses, the processes could be replicated at undergraduate level.

What evidence/rationale underpinned your choice?

In our Divisional Teaching Committee meetings, we discussed evidence regarding the existence of awarding gaps for students from a variety of Protected Characteristic

backgrounds and felt it important to consider this for our PGT programmes. We took the decision to apply for the Connected Learning Internships to create capacity for us to research further and raise awareness among our MSc tutors.

What would you tell someone who is interested in doing something similar?

I would advise them to create a clear conceptual backbone for project. This is important when you are trying to knit together complex issues, and keeps you focussed on your goals. It also helps to be very clear on what issues you want to address, for whom, and why, and to keep reminding yourself of this throughout the life of the project. One thing that really helped us with this was to have a project steering group comprised of different types of stakeholders.

What difference has this made to staff and students?

Tutors on the two programmes are now aware of any awarding gaps, and are equipped with a toolkit to help address any contributing issues on their modules. Tutors also have a better understanding of how students' experiences in Higher Education can be improved to address awarding gaps. With this, I hope students will find that staff are more pre-emptive and supportive of any issues they may have and in turn their experiences of teaching and learning is improved.

It's also helped us as a project team, as we now have better insight into any awarding gaps and how to explore them more effectively. Plus, through the interview process, we have made contact with others doing similar work across UCL which has helped us to learn a lot.

For more information on this case study, please contact Miranda Kronfli
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