**Background**

- While there has been sustained work to improve the diversity among undergraduate students, this issue has received less attention at postgraduate level.
- Research to date has shown that differential progression rates to, and success in, postgraduate taught study (PGT) has a negative effect on:
  - earning outcomes (compared to those with a first degree only)
  - access to the professions
  - progression to postgraduate research
- Non-financial factors such as information and guidance have previously been identified as having an important influence on progression to PGT study

**Proposal**

- To work to increase understanding of and progression to postgraduate taught (PGT) study among two target groups:
  1. students from neighbourhoods with low rates of participation in higher education (whose home postcodes are POLAR quintiles 1 and 2);
  2. Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students
- To take two existing programmes at the University of Leeds known to be successful for undergraduates, and to adapt and scale up these interventions for taught postgraduate study:
  1. An online course to support progression to UG study
  2. Activities and events to support transition and success for UG students
- To robustly evaluate the effectiveness of both interventions using randomised control trials

**Strand 1**

- The ‘Discover Postgrad’ programme:
  - E-bulletins
  - Information webinars
  - Buddying scheme with current postgrads
  - Workshops with alumni
  - Skills session to prepare for next steps
- Working with final-year undergraduates in six subjects, randomly assigned as control or intervention groups in each institutions
- Pre and post-intervention surveys measure changes in attitudes, awareness and understanding of taught postgrad options, as well as intentions to progress
- Comparing the control and intervention groups measures the effect of the programme on the interventions
- Also comparing the engagement of students from BAME and Polar Quintile 1 & 2 backgrounds to their whole subject cohort

**Randomised control trials will enable us to robustly measure the impact and effectiveness of each intervention**

**Strand 2**

- ‘Prepare for Postgrad’, pre-entry online course
- For UK BAME offer-holders with a place on taught masters courses in any subjects
- Aims to prepare offer-holders for the transition to postgraduate study by:
  - improving understanding of the demands and expectations of PGT study
  - building confidence and awareness of the support available throughout their course
  - providing opportunities to develop both personal and academic skills to support success.
- BAME offer-holders randomly assigned to control and intervention groups. Only the intervention group take the pre-entry course.
- Engagement with the online course and its different types of modules is monitored
- Evaluation compares the rates of enrolment and retention (as of 1 Dec) of the control and intervention groups to measure the impact of the pre-entry course

**Benefits**

**Students**

- Improved student experience
- Students engaged through co-creation of interventions
- Informed decision-making
- Improved sense of belonging

**Institution**

- More diverse PGT cohort
- Contribution to sector evidence on non-financial factors influencing progression to PGT
- Contribution to social mobility agenda
- Improved visibility and recognition of challenges faced by under-represented groups
- Improved student outcomes
- Research into factors that influence positive changes in outcomes measured through TEF
- PGT diversity leading to diversity in the professions and PGR study
- Influencing institutional and sector policy
- Common agenda between Students’ Unions and universities

**Benefits for higher education, funding bodies and policy makers**

- Improved understanding of challenges faced by BAME / WP students
- Evolution of the evidence base of the definition of WP at PGT level
- Demonstrable good practice of how early intervention can improve the PGT student experience and contribute to student success and progression outcomes for BAME and WP groups
- Improved student progression outcomes to PGT from identified groups
- Contribution to future policy direction (access and participation agreements)

**£500,000 HEFCE funding secured**

**£704,000 total project funding**

**The Partnership and the Evaluators**

- A consortium of five Russell Group Universities, led by the University of Leeds in partnership with Manchester, Sheffield, York and Warwick
- Independent evaluators: Dr Paul Wakeling and Dr Sally Hancock, University of York, experts on participation in taught postgraduate study

**Project runs from March 2017 to February 2019**

**Find out more**

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