

Progression to, and success in, postgraduate study by students from BAME and POLAR Quintile 1 & 2 backgrounds

HIGHER EDUCATION
FUNDING COUNCIL

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FOR ENGLAND

HEFCE Call B (Barriers to Student Success)

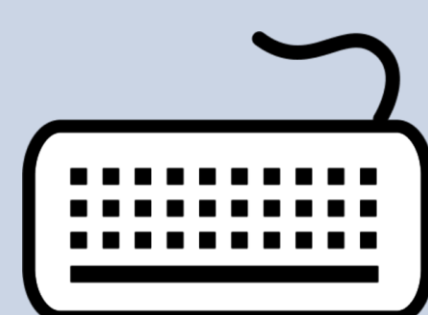
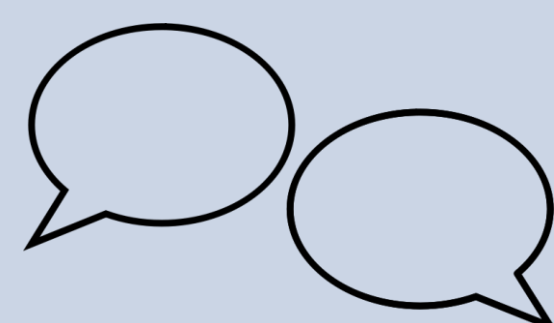
Background

- 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



£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

Strand 1

- The 'Discover Postgrad' programme:
 - E-bulletins
 - Information webinars
 - Buddying scheme with current postgrads
 - Webinars 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

Discover
Postgrad
TAUGHT STUDY
AND YOU

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

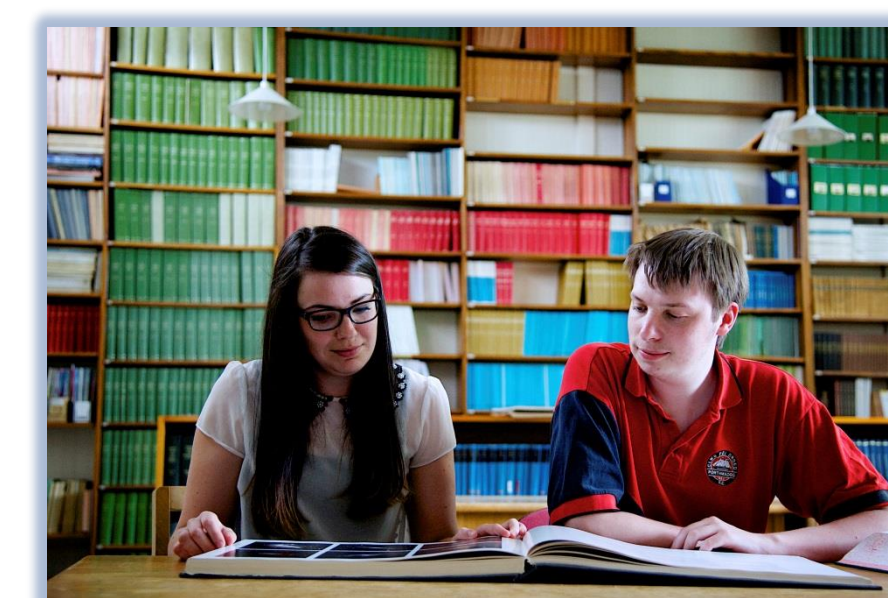
Strand 2

- '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)



Find out more

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