

Theory of Change Project: Referral Scheme Organisation: Loughborough University

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1 Situation

There are persistent degree awarding gaps between white and Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students (current gap at 7.8 pp, but this varies across schools). Internal and external evidence points to several factors which underpin this gap: 1) perception of the university as a predominately white institution, 2) historically, data suggests that minority ethnic students with low average marks and low engagement/attendance are not engaging with and benefitting from the university support systems, 3) student-facing staff do not feel equipped to confidently ended culturally competent and anti-ractist methods into their practice and conversations with students.

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Aims

To address the white-BAME ethnicity degree awarding gaps through:

- A referral scheme that identifies BAME students at risk of failing their degrees early (end of Semester 1 Y1) and signposts them to support relevant to them, including services provided by the central student support services of the Student Success Academy (SSA) in a timely manner (piloted in School of Engineering and School of Science)
- Engage more ethnically minoritised students with the support services offered by the Student Success Academy (SSA), aiming to empower students by providing tailored support and development opportunities at key transition points, independently of the referral Scheme
- Greater collaboration developed between central Professional Services and Academic Schools, engendering a shared responsibility of reducing the white-BAME ethnicity degree awarding gap, advocating for and incorporating these priorities in institutional planning.

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Inputs

Activities

Outputs

Outcomes

Impact

Process

Staff

- Senior leadership buy-in
- SSA teams' resources (time and capacity)
- · Coaches training
- Referral scheme relevant training (e.g. empathetic listening) for School staff
- Staff time to engage with referral scheme

Students:

- Mentors' training and reimbursement
- · Student buy-in
- Student time to engage with referral scheme and SSA

Other:

- Script for telephone calls
- Contact lists
- Learner analytics data

 (attendance & assessment marks throughout Y1 Semester

 plus HESA ethnicity marker)
- Protocol for targeting and prioritising students
- Shared Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and/or access for unified data
- Online booking system for SSA activities

Referral Scheme

- Monitor learner analytics to create student priority list in risk of failing
- School staff phone/email all priority list students to check-in & make direct referrals to SSA, wellbeing or other relevant support (includes staff explaining mitigating circumstances –MC-)
- Follow-up calls if students agree for School staff to check progress towards end of Semester 2

SSA

Use data and list provided by School to triage incoming support requests to the following initiatives:

- 1:1 Academic Success Coaching
- Get Ahead Together (peer-mentoring for transition to university support)

SSA also provides the following support services, with which referred students might engage at a later stage:

- Future Talent Programme (support for securing placement/internship)
- Finalist Futures: Step-Up to Final Year (return from placement support to help with academic outcomes)

Referral Scheme and SSA staff in collaboration with central professional services teams

- · Working group with key members
- Monitoring, evaluating and reporting of all activities

- Priority list of students with low attendance and assessment marks is created for each School
- All priority list students contacted by School staff by week 5-6 of Semester 2
- All students who requested a meeting with School staff have had their meeting by the same timeframe
- Students are informed and signposted to support available that is relevant to them (including MC, SSA & other support)
- List with student details who have been referred to SSA is shared by School staff with SSA staff
- SSA triages all directly referred students on the list, sending meeting invitations for the support initiative relevant to each one of the referred students
- The percentage of referred students engaging with SSA initiatives is monitored.
- The number of follow-up calls responded to by students who gave permission to School staff to check in on their progress is monitored.
- The percentage of Black and South Asian students accessing further SSA support (broken down by overarching activity and/or session) is monitored
- The number of working group meetings conducted is monitored alongside relevant resources produced and how this have been used for action planning (e.g reports, publications, oral updates)

Staff:

Increased understanding of students' needs and how to respond to those in a personalised manner

Impact

- Increased awareness of support services available
- Increased awareness of minority ethnic students' experiences, as well as systemic barriers to their engagement
- Increase in quality and timely staff-student interactions

Ethnically minoritised students:

- Increased awareness of skills and opportunities that will enhance their academic studies and grades. Greater sense of institutional support and
- belonging
 Increased self-efficacy in their ability
- to succeed in their studies
 Increased autonomy and entitlement to access university services (e.g. SSA
- and other support) and tutor time
 Increased timely assessment submissions and reduction in resubmissions and capped marks
- Increased engagement with SSA and other support activities
- Increased awareness of MC applications and relevant successful submissions
- Reduction in number of upheld appeals

- Ethnically minoritised students who have engaged with the referral scheme and/or the SSA activities have better degree awards than those who have not
- Ethnically
 minoritised students who
 engaged with the referral
 scheme and/or the SSA
 activities have increased
 continuation and completion
 rates
- Reduction in the white-BAME ethnicity degree awarding gaps by 2027/28.
- Loughborough University provides enhanced student experience for ethnically minoritised students.
- Loughborough University develops an anti-racist culture and a reputation of the institution that 'meets students where they are and helps them succeed in their studies'.

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Rationale & Assumptions

- Ethnically minoritised students with low average marks and low engagement/attendance are not engaging with and benefitting from the university support systems, because they feel what they have to offer is not relevant to them and/or they do not know how to access those,
- Through 1:1 personalised contact from their School, ethnically minoritised students will feel more valued/supported, and will engage with the support systems that are available to them and relevant to their needs.
- The support to which Ethnically minoritised students will be signposted by the referral scheme and the activities offered by the SSA meet the students' personalised needs (ie students find them useful).
- Ethnically minoritised students will feel safe to share their experiences in support service contexts.
 Ethnically minoritised students who access support will be empowered to believe in themselves and their abilities, understanding what they need to do to perform well in their studies and will thus engage more and perform
- Through increased access to support, ethnically minoritised students' attendance and assessment marks will improve. With this increased academic engagement and success, in turn degree awards will also improve.
 Ethnically minoritised students will apply and implement learning from the referral scheme and/or the SSA and embed these skills into their educational experience independently across time.