

Theory of Change Project: Uniting Perspectives: Staff Accountability Partnerships within the STRIVE 100 Programme Organisation: Manchester Metropolitan University

There is a persistent ethnicity degree awarding gap (EDAG) at Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), which is currently 19.5% and 16.1% for Black and Asian students, respectively. There is a high-level structure and strategic approach to enhancing student experience and outcomes, but there is a lack of unit-level leadership within these. Work is happening to address this across the institution - for example under the overarching education strategy of the Situation University there is an awarding gap working group and a series of related interventions - but these activities are compartmentalised, and for the most part, focused on students' contributions to awarding outcomes rather than staff. Access to institutional data shows a story that this can be attributed to culture issue within the institution, particularly amongst staff in terms of their understanding of the awarding gaps, their own accountability towards these and how they can contribute to their narrowing. At the institution level, the University has a strategic aim to develop a whole-institution approach to addressing racialised inequalities in degree outcomes by acquiring a 'critical mass' of antiracist staff and fostering a culture of collective accountability Staff Accountability Partnership: To facilitate the development of a critical mass of anti-racist staff (at various levels of seniority), and for staff to contribute to student development opportunities in a way that Aims appreciates unique student backgrounds. STRIVE 100: To increase racially/ethnically minoritised students' access to academic and employment opportunities, as well as develop their work readiness capital (predominantly level 4, but not exclusively). 5 6 **Activities Outcomes Inputs** Outputs **Impact Process** Impact >Student recruitment to STRIVE 100 ># of students participating in STRIVE 100 Short-term: >Increase the number of activities co-created with students >Communication strategy for STRIVE 100 ># of students participating in STRIVE Events >Workload hours >Increased cultural competency amongst staff For students to thrive and ># of executive staff receiving anti-racism coaching recruitment, activities, and dissemination >Budaet >Increases in students' networking skills, confidence. >Student STRIVE activities (as ># of staff participating as mentees succeed >Estates for events agency, sense of belonging, mattering, and satisfaction on existing ToC) ># of staff reflection logs >Improved grades by end of level 4 >Student fora ># of staff presentations at conferences with >Increased number of BAME students attaining People: Staff role-modelling reflective placements, internships, and part-time jobs >Students as partners >RISE data analytics coordination and STRIVERS >Staff feel that their work is meaningful and inclusive practice >Heads of Departments oversight ># of staff engaged with accountability activities (e.g. >Increased awareness of awarding gaps amongst staff >Risk assessments for student-mentor, # of staff who attended executive coaching sessions >Faculty exec group >Increased understanding of racialised experiences (eg student-external colleagues relationships; data >Revised PDR process >Academic board microaggressions, barriers to engagement) An integrated approach to EDI ># of opportunities for STRIVERS to engage in sharing; talk about race forums; escalation of >Education committee Medium-term: student issues for example on social programme coordination across the university >G5 Project co-ordinator > Increased accountability towards the EDAG amongst media/communication platforms ># of connections between staff and students >Professional services staff involved in the accountability partnerships >Staff recruitment to STRIVE 100 established through the programme >Student services > Reduced unconscious bias amongst staff An anti-racism culture >Accountability partnerships (pairing of staff >Amongst students involved in the STRIVE 100 >Wellbeing ambassadors programme, expect increased: throughout the university with BAME students from the STRIVE 100 STRIVE 100 students will have: >Student ambassadors Career thinking programme) -2 internships (student-led evaluation/advisory group) >Peer support / guide Unit performance >Communication strategy for -# of LinkedIn profiles developed >Alumni (for mentors and guest speakers) Continuation rates Opening up access and -# of RISE points staff accountability strand >Academic coaches Sense of belonging >Mentoring team >Messaging of clear vision -# of completed virtual internships Overall satisfaction opportunity >Incorporate objectives to address EDAG into >PALS (peer assisted learning support) -# of reverse mentoring relationships and # of Long-term: PDR process sessions >Chaplaincy >Students and graduates who are confident to challenge MMU is intentionally inclusive in >Health and Wellbeing ambassadors >Staff fora >Mindset change in (white) staff and students >Relationship management with individual Dissemination: terms of challenging the hidden >Employers >More STRIVE ambassadors and alumni team members -Present at conference with STRIVERS >Mentors >Staff and students empowered to effect change curriculum and removing > STRIVE 100 is a sustainable project -TEF case study >External partners structural inequalities -Micro-credentials for students

Rationale & Assumptions

Rationale: The predecessor (Aspire) was successful; students who participated gave overwhelmingly positive feedback and were engaged throughout. However, these students reported that having the program earlier in their academic journey would be even more impactful, as a) students have more free time to engage, and b) it would allow them to utilise learning throughout the rest of their degree programme. That engagement with STRIVE will increase engagement with the MMU and in turn increase unit performance. BAME students will form a community which will translate to a sense of belongingness with MMU, and that improvement in experience will lead to improvement in outcomes.

Assumptions: that staff will continue to dedicate time and resource. That students will actively engage with the programme. That virtual internships will lead to real placements. That workloading change will be supported by senior leaders. That there will

be a change of onus of responsibility (there is precedent in Law with an accountability tracker in annual performance reviews, but assumption that we can implement across the whole institution). That changing student experiences lead to an improvement in outcomes. Assumption that staff accountability partnership will motivate staff to change their practice. That increased confidence, understanding, and discussions will lead to a reduction in fear. That there will be a ripple effect to those less engaged.