



**UCL**



# **BAME AWARDING GAP PROJECT**

Staff Toolkit 2020



# Contents

<b>Foreword</b> .....	<b>4</b>		
<b><u>INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM</u></b> .....	<b>7</b>	<b><u>BELONGING</u></b> .....	<b>28</b>
What is an inclusive curriculum? .....	8	What does belonging mean? .....	29
Why is it important? .....	8	Why is it important? .....	30
Students' views .....	9	Students' views .....	31
Tips.....	11	Tips.....	33
Inclusive Curriculum Health Check .....	14	Further reading and resources .....	35
Case studies.....	16	References .....	36
Further reading and resources .....	17		
References .....	18	<b><u>CREATING SAFE SPACES</u></b> .....	<b>38</b>
<b><u>INCLUSIVE TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT</u></b> .....	<b>19</b>	What are safe spaces? .....	39
What is inclusive teaching and learning and assessment? .....	20	What are microaggressions?.....	40
Why is it important? .....	20	Understanding race and racism in higher education.....	41
Students' views .....	21	Understanding the decolonise movement.....	41
Tips.....	23	Why is it important? .....	42
Case studies.....	25	Students' views .....	43
Further reading and resources .....	26	Tips.....	45
References .....	27	Further reading and resources .....	49
		References .....	50
<b>UCL specific initiatives and resources</b> .....	<b>51</b>		
<b>Glossary of terms and acronyms</b> .....	<b>52</b>		
<b>Appendix 1</b> .....	<b>53</b>		

# Foreword

## **Background of UCL's BAME Awarding Gap Project: Addressing disparities in degree outcomes between UK domiciled BAME and White undergraduate students**

Analysis of UCL data shows that there is a statistically significant discrepancy in the rate of good degrees (First or 2:1) awarded to UK Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students compared with UK White students, despite entering UCL with the same high entry qualifications. This phenomenon, more commonly known as the 'attainment gap' is not unique to UCL, but is a pervasive and long-standing issue across the sector.

UCL is committed to eliminating this gap and in 2017, began undertaking the University's BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) Attainment Project. Since then, progress has been made in raising awareness of the gap and putting in place various initiatives, such as UCL's Inclusive Curriculum Health Check (ICHC) and the recruitment of Faculty Leads (senior academic staff) to drive change at a local level.

However, the institution is continually learning from its own efforts and those of the wider sector. This is reflected in the recent decision to rename the project. Rather than recognising the multiple factors, including institutional structures and discrimination, that contribute to the success of our students, the term attainment implies that the responsibility for inequality in attainment lies with the students themselves. UCL refutes this student deficit model, and as a result are now referring to the BAME awarding gap and the BAME Awarding Gap Project instead.

Last year, UCL issued the following statement on race:

*"Action for race equality exists because racism exists in our daily lives, our institutions and society at large. Racism in the UK is the exercise of historic power relations that produce discrimination and is ideologically driven. It means students and staff who identify and are identified as part of the white ethnic majority enjoy a position of relative and typically unspoken and unacknowledged privilege over Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students and staff. Racism manifests at work, in student attainment, staff appointments and promotions. Racism must be fought by everyone. This statement names the challenge."*



## The toolkit

The toolkit aims to support staff to achieve outstanding teaching. The existence of differential outcomes like the awarding gap suggests we are falling short in our efforts to ensure success for all our students. The toolkit is designed to help staff understand factors associated with the awarding gap, which are broken down into four key themes: inclusive curriculum, inclusive teaching, learning and assessment, belonging and creating safe spaces. Each section explains why the theme is significant and provides a selection of practical tips, resources and further reading related to that theme.

The toolkit also aligns with objective one of the UCL Education Strategy 2016-2021: Personalising Student Support. The objective includes the priority to make UCL more welcoming for BAME students, with the target to eliminate the BAME awarding gap by 2024. Importantly, BAME student voices, from UCL and the sector, are incorporated into each section of the toolkit to emphasise how the academy's structure, culture and curriculum impact students' experiences, feelings and personal development. The toolkit is available as a single PDF, or online as Teaching Toolkits (broken down by theme) on UCL's Teaching and Learning portal.

## Contacts

### BAME Awarding Gap Project contacts

If you have any questions regarding the content of the toolkit or the project, please contact a member of the BAME Awarding Gap Project Team:

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Project Manager, Student Success

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### Teaching and Learning contacts

If you have any questions regarding teaching and learning practice, please contact the Arena Teaching Fellow for your department. You can find the details of your Arena Teaching Fellow at:

 [www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/about-us/meet-team-ucl-arena-centre-research-based-education/teaching-fellows](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/about-us/meet-team-ucl-arena-centre-research-based-education/teaching-fellows)

### Student Contact

If you have any questions regarding BAME student experience, please contact the Black and Minority Ethnic Students' Officer:

#### Sandy Ogundele

UCL Black and Minority Ethnic Students' Officer

 [bmes.officer@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:bmes.officer@ucl.ac.uk)

# Quick tips

## Tip 1: Use a diverse range of resources and contextualise your content

Consider the cultural and historical context in which your course materials were developed, for example, colonialism. Acknowledge the context and any limitations of your materials i.e. are your materials predominately produced by White authors. Try to include a diverse range of voices and perspectives across your content.

For more information see page 11

## Tip 2: Increase your own pedagogical knowledge

Read articles about pedagogy in your field which speak to questions of diversity, multiculturalism, inclusion and coloniality. Speak to colleagues in your discipline who specialise in different research areas to get recommendations for readings and resources.

For more information see page 13

## Tip 3: Reflect on your own biases and assumptions about students

Create opportunities to get to know your students. Avoid making assumptions about a students' background, ability, point of view or preexisting knowledge of a subject, as these assumptions influence the way we interact with our students.

For more information see page 23

## Tip 4: Conduct a prior knowledge assessment

Students come into university with a range of preexisting knowledge and skills. Conducting an early formative assessment will help you pitch your teaching and future assignments at the right level, but also enable students to understand their own strengths and weaknesses.

For more information see page 24

## Tip 5: Expose students to potential BAME role models

Research suggests that a university environment with few or no BAME professors, senior leaders or academics risks isolating BAME students. Try to expose students to potential BAME role models, for example, through inviting seminar speakers from diverse backgrounds to deliver content.

For more information see page 33

## Tip 6: Model inclusive behaviour, language and attitudes

Ambrose (2010, p.183) asserts that modelling inclusivity can provide a powerful learning experience for students. Address racist and/or discriminatory behaviour head on, as not doing can not only have adverse consequences for the individual(s) targeted, but also the individual(s) responsible.

For more information see page 33

## Tip 7: Learn and pronounce students names correctly

Taking the time to learn and pronounce students names correctly can help them feel valued in your course. To help you learn names, consider asking students to state their name before they begin speaking or use name tents. If you are unsure of how to pronounce a students name, ask them directly and do not be afraid to ask more than once.

For more information see page 45

## Tip 8: Use micro-affirmations

Rowe (2008, p.46) defines micro-affirmations as gestures of inclusion and caring and graceful acts of active listening. Research suggests that students' experiences of micro-affirmations can support their integration into academic communities. Micro-affirmations include recognising and validating experiences, active listening and affirming students emotions.

For more information see page 46

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# INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

# What is an inclusive curriculum?

**Morgan and Houghton (2011) define an inclusive curriculum as: one where all students' entitlement to access and participate in a course is anticipated and taken into account. (p.7)**

Other definitions refer to an inclusive curriculum as 'the process of developing, designing and delivering programmes of study to minimise the barriers that students, regardless of educational dispositional, circumstantial or cultural background, may face in accessing and engaging with the curriculum' (adapted from Grace and Gravestock 2009, Thomas and May 2010, NUS 2011).

## Why is it important to deliver an inclusive curriculum?

### It has a positive effect on the experience and outcomes of all students

Research by Schneider and Preckel (2017) confirms that the effectiveness of courses is strongly related to what teachers do and that the choice of teaching methods has substantial effects on student achievement. The research evidence includes a range of approaches which are also recommended in [UCL's Inclusive Curriculum Health Check](#) at:

➤ [www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching-learning/files/ucl\\_inclusive\\_curriculum\\_healthcheck\\_2018.pdf](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching-learning/files/ucl_inclusive_curriculum_healthcheck_2018.pdf)

Schneider & Preckel's data derives from studies which disregard student ethnicity, demonstrating that inclusive curriculum initiatives benefit all students, whatever their background.

### The curriculum reflects worldviews and implies value judgements

Nunan et al. (2000, p.66) propose that, where curricula reflects 'a dominant Eurocentric world view, those who are not members of this culture or who resist Eurocentrism are effectively excluded from the educational process and social advantages that come with success (Barnett 1994; Bourdieu et al. 1994; Bowser et al. 1995; King 1995). Moreover, neglecting particular issues can imply a value judgement (hooks, 1994), which can alienate certain groups of students.

### Our legal obligation

The Equality Act (2010) outlaws direct and indirect discrimination on grounds of protected characteristics. Therefore, we have a legal obligation to provide education in a non-discriminatory way.



# UCL students' views

See Appendix 1 for further information about the UCL sources cited

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**“All we do is talk about dead white men”**

Challenge Consultancy, focus group

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**“The first lecture we had was, like, the academic was talking about all these photographers that have, like, pioneered in storytelling, but they were all white and men”**

BAME Awarding Gap Project, 1-1 interview

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**“My programme excludes well known knowledge from the global south”**

REC Student Survey

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**“My course content does not present diverse perspectives”**

REC Student Survey

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**“The course is too Eurocentric and Atlantic. Most of the materials and opinions are drawn from North American and Western European authors”**

REC Student Survey

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**“In a lecture there are pictures of scientists on the board. Lecturer asks what is wrong with slide. A student answers ‘all of these scientists are male’. Lecturer says this is the correct answer. Lecturer moves on. Whilst I, the one student of colour was going to say ‘all of these scientists are white”**

REC Student Survey

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**“A lot of the content on the courses is extremely Eurocentric which doesn't make sense to me seeing as there are a wide variety of non-European ideologies and resources to learn from”**

REC Student Survey

# Students' views from the sector

Consult the references for this section for further information about the sources cited

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**“[The] curriculum/white academics doesn't value the contributions of black scholars enough”**

Degrees of Freedom, SOAS

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**“[The] course emphasises white/ Eurocentric perspectives on regions studied”**

Degrees of Freedom, SOAS

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**“We have one particular subject on our course - critical race studies - which is just glanced over and barely touched upon”**

BME Attainment Gap Report, Bristol SU

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**“The selection of reading material on the readings lists for module, particularly in history, is alienating towards BME students”**

Degrees of Freedom, SOAS

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**“[Speaking on their course content] ...it's extremely white, like most of the time it will be about, white European film the whole time and there was even like films with Black-face and, those were shown as examples?”**

Insider-Outsider, The Role of Race in Shaping the Experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic Students at Goldsmiths

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**“It's an institution where you're supposed to receive different ideas, challenge thoughts and not all your authors are supposed to be like White British men from the 1600s, you know”**

Understanding the Attainment Gap, LSE

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**“It's quite frustrating seeing and learning from a curriculum which doesn't accommodate you”**

BME Attainment Gap Report, Bristol SU

# Tips to assess and improve the inclusivity of your curriculum

**A selection of practical tips are provided to help you assess and improve the inclusivity of the curriculum. Additional guidance, tips and resources are provided in the ‘Further Reading and Resources’ section.**

## Use a diverse range of resources

Present a diverse range of voices and perspectives across course content, for example in reading lists, case studies, lecture content etc. Include the voices and perspectives of individuals from a range of ethnic backgrounds and draw on knowledge produced in the Global South. Zepke and Leach (2007) found that students respond well to real or practical examples, especially when these reflect their own backgrounds and identities positively.

In some disciplines, for example science, basic scientific concepts may be associated with White males. However, to address this consider inviting seminar speakers from diverse backgrounds to deliver content (see page 33).

## Contextualise course materials

White, male and western might now dominate current academic discoveries and theories, however this might not always have been the case historically. Consider the cultural and historical context in which the content was developed i.e. when racial inequality was an accepted norm or colonialism was dominant. Explicitly explain to students the kinds of research programmes, assumptions and aspirations that generated your course material. Ambrose et al. (2010) assert that ‘neglecting these issues implies a value judgement, which can alienate certain groups of students, thus impeding their developing sense of identity’ (p.182)

## Example from UCL’s Inclusive Curriculum Health Check: Chemistry

*“In Year 2 Physical Labs, we have introduced a writing exercise where students pick a scientist from a list and write about their research. The list of scientists was generated by asking colleagues to nominate three non-male, non-white or non-western scientists who they admire. This is to ensure that students see that not all science is carried out by White, western males and that they can identify role models that inspire them (and also see that their lecturers admire these people too)”*



### Acknowledge any limitations in the demographic representation of course material

Acknowledge and discuss the potential limitations of any course materials you are providing. This can help students see how and why you chose particular material. For example, if all core readings are produced by White male authors from the Global North, discuss this with your students, explaining the rationale behind your selection. Hockings et al (2008) found that student engagement increased when students were encouraged to question and challenge stereotypes and inequalities inherent in their subject and/or profession. You can reflect on the inclusivity of your curriculum using UCL's Inclusive Curriculum Health Check (see pages 14–15) or visit:

Return to start [www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching-learning/files/ucl\\_inclusive\\_curriculum\\_healthcheck\\_2018.pdf](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching-learning/files/ucl_inclusive_curriculum_healthcheck_2018.pdf)

### Example from UCL's Inclusive Curriculum Health Check: Anthropology

*“As well as using material that explores different approaches to ethnic diversity, students are encouraged at every stage to question what they are being taught and not to take research findings at face value”*



### **Avoid stereotypes in course content and celebrate diversity**

Review course content to ensure material does not perpetuate stereotypes. Ensure the range of examples provided when preparing lectures, reading lists or problem-based scenarios present equality in a positive light and a non-stereotypical way. Try to deliver content which not only allows students to see themselves reflected in the curriculum, but also others in a positive way.

Steele and Aronson (1995) found that stereotype threat (the tension that arises in members of a stereotyped group when they fear they are being judged according to stereotypes (Ambrose et al. 2010)) has a profound negative impact on students' learning and performance.

### **Increase your own pedagogical knowledge**

Read articles about pedagogy in your field which speak to questions of diversity, multiculturalism, inclusion and coloniality. Also talk to colleagues in your discipline who specialise in different research areas to get recommendations for reading and resources. Hockings (2010) produced a synthesis of research which explores different aspects of inclusive curriculum design and pedagogy, including subject based examples. For example, this includes a study by Wolff et al. (2008) which outlines changes to the economics curriculum across six universities in the Netherlands to address the outcomes and dropout rates of international and ethnic minority students.

## UCL's Inclusive Curriculum Health Check

**An inclusive curriculum aims to improve the experience, skills and outcomes of all students, including those in protected characteristic groups, by ensuring that all students, regardless of background, are able to participate fully and achieve at equal rates.**

This guide is designed to support UCL staff to reflect on how to embed the principles of inclusivity in all aspects of the academic cycle. All higher education institutions are reviewing their activity to

support student success and fair outcomes for all students. This document will be reviewed for each programme through the UCL Annual Student Experience Review (ASER) process.

**Use this checklist to reflect on how to embed the principles of inclusivity in all aspects of the academic cycle.**

<b>Content:</b> to what extent does your programme curriculum	<b>Programme meets all criteria</b>	<b>Programme meets some criteria</b>	<b>No evidence on our programme</b>	Please give a brief statement explaining how this is being met and what actions will be taken to improve in this area.
Create opportunities to discuss different perspectives within and outside the UK related to ethnic diversity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Use material that explores different data, models and theories related to ethnic diversity – even within an historical context	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Have reading lists and resources that contain a diverse range of authors including those from different ethnicities, from outside the UK and from non-academic sources where relevant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Develop students' critical thinking and awareness of different perspectives on issues relating to diversity in ethnicity, culture and nationality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Allow students to gain an understanding of how different factors e.g. social, economic, ethnicity influence outcomes and perspectives	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

## UCL's Inclusive Curriculum Health Check

In teaching and supporting learning: to what extent does your programme	Programme meets all criteria	Programme meets some criteria	No evidence on our programme	Please give a brief statement explaining how this is being met and what actions will be taken to improve in this area
Have an engagement strategy - that follows up those not attending or engaging	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Ensure that allocation of students to small group work enables the creation of ethnically diverse groups from different educational backgrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Encourage discussion from students with diverse backgrounds and include topics where personal experience and views are expressed	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Assessment: to what extent does your programme	Programme meets all criteria	Programme meets some criteria	No evidence on our programme	Please give a brief statement explaining how this is being met and what actions will be taken to improve in this area
Offer a variety of forms of assessments ensuring that all students have the chance to practise new forms of assessments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Offer formative assessments before all summative assessments ensuring that all students have the chance to practise new forms of assessments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Offer individualised and peer feedback	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Offer opportunities for students to reflect on feedback and marks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Involve students – apart from the ASER process – in the formative and summative annual review of your programme looking at content and attainment from an ethnic diversity perspective	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	



# Case studies from UCL and the sector

## Creating an inclusive curriculum in the Medical School at UCL

A podcast on a project to create a more inclusive curriculum in the Medical School funded by UCL's Liberating the Curriculum:

- [www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/case-studies/2017/may/creating-inclusive-curriculum-ucl-medical-school-podcast](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/case-studies/2017/may/creating-inclusive-curriculum-ucl-medical-school-podcast)

## Diversification of reading lists in Anthropology at UCL

Reading lists of compulsory Anthropology modules were made more inclusive and representative through a student-led project funded by UCL's Liberating the Curriculum:

- [www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/news/2017/oct/diverse-voices-brought-anthropology-reading-lists-student-led-project](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/news/2017/oct/diverse-voices-brought-anthropology-reading-lists-student-led-project)

## Internationalising the rural geography curriculum at Kingston University

A case study on how a geography module was reorganised and updated to enable students to more readily see themselves and their backgrounds reflected in the curriculum

- [www.kingston.ac.uk/aboutkingstonuniversity/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/our-inclusive-curriculum/inclusive-curriculum-framework/](http://www.kingston.ac.uk/aboutkingstonuniversity/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/our-inclusive-curriculum/inclusive-curriculum-framework/)

## Black Germany course at UCL

A YouTube video featuring Dr Jeff Bowersox describing how he developed a course covering the experiences of Black people in Germany since the middle ages:

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=k\\_e2-Q0xCIs&yt%3Acc=on](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_e2-Q0xCIs&yt%3Acc=on)

## Diversification of reading lists in Philosophy at University of Edinburgh

An online resource for teaching Philosophy that aims to combat under-representation of particular groups and encourage an increase in the demographic diversity of the subject:

- [www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/learning-teaching/funding/funding/previous-projects/year/october-2015/diversity-reading](http://www.ed.ac.uk/institute-academic-development/learning-teaching/funding/funding/previous-projects/year/october-2015/diversity-reading)

## “Who are you?” at UCL

A YouTube video featuring Dr Showunmi describing the course she designed: “Who Are You?” The course looks at what it means to be white and the concept of privilege:

- [www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPCnXuQTa-E&yt%3Acc=on](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPCnXuQTa-E&yt%3Acc=on)

# Further reading and resources

For resources and initiatives specific to UCL, please see the 'UCL specific resources and initiatives' section

## Looking for more tips?

### University of Plymouth

A selection of quick guides containing tips on six themes of inclusivity:

- [www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/teaching-and-learning/inclusivity/how-can-i-be-more-inclusive](http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/teaching-and-learning/inclusivity/how-can-i-be-more-inclusive)

## Looking for resources?

### University of Hertfordshire

A curriculum design toolkit (created in Prezi) designed to help staff take a considered look at the inclusivity of their current curriculum:

- [prezi.com/cibi5tp5pa3d/curriculum-design-toolkit/](http://prezi.com/cibi5tp5pa3d/curriculum-design-toolkit/)

### SOAS

A toolkit designed for programme and module convenors on what 'decolonising' learning and teaching might entail:

- [blogs.soas.ac.uk/decolonisingsoas/learning-teaching/toolkit-for-programme-and-module-convenors/](http://blogs.soas.ac.uk/decolonisingsoas/learning-teaching/toolkit-for-programme-and-module-convenors/)

## Looking for further reading?

### NUS

A briefing on liberation, equality and diversity in the curriculum. The briefing outlines basic facts about inclusivity in the higher education curriculum and highlights resources and best practice in the sector:

- [www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/about-dmu-documents/quality-management-and-policy/academic-quality/programme-approval-management/programme-approval-validation-revalidation/equality-liberation-curriculum.pdf](http://www.dmu.ac.uk/documents/about-dmu-documents/quality-management-and-policy/academic-quality/programme-approval-management/programme-approval-validation-revalidation/equality-liberation-curriculum.pdf)

### Race, Ethnicity and Education

Peer-reviewed journal on racism and race inequality in education. The journal publishes research that explores the dynamics of race, racism and ethnicity in education policy, theory and practice:

- [www.tandfonline.com/loi/cree20](http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cree20)

## Looking for subject specific guidance?

### Oxford Brookes University

Discipline-specific toolkits (Business, Law and History):

- [sites.google.com/brookes.ac.uk/diversifying-the-curriculum/discipline-specific-toolkit?authuser=0](http://sites.google.com/brookes.ac.uk/diversifying-the-curriculum/discipline-specific-toolkit?authuser=0)

### HEA Inclusive Curriculum Design Guide

The Higher Education Academy (now AdvanceHE) commissioned a guide to support the sector to think creatively about inclusive curriculum design from a generic, as well as subject specific perspective. The guide contains advice for 26 subject areas:

- [www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/inclusive-curriculum-design-higher-education](http://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/inclusive-curriculum-design-higher-education)

### University of Sheffield

A series of nine subject level case studies presented as posters:

- [www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly\\_fs/1.132964!/file/Posters2.pdf](http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.132964!/file/Posters2.pdf)



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# INCLUSIVE TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

# What is inclusive teaching and learning and assessment?

Hockings (2010) defines inclusive teaching, learning and assessment as:

**the ways in which pedagogy, curricula and assessment are designed and delivered to engage students in learning that is meaningful, relevant and accessible to all. It embraces a view of the individual and individual difference as the course of diversity that can enrich the lives and learning of others. (p.1)**

## Why is inclusive teaching, learning and assessment important?

It prepares students to succeed in diverse working environments

Evidence shows that organisations perform better if their workforce is more diverse (McKinsey & Company 2018). Through inclusive teaching and learning practices, for example, providing opportunities for students to work in diverse groups, we will equip our learners with the knowledge, skills and understanding to succeed in global working environments.

### Students value an inclusive approach

Research by Hockings (2010) found ‘students value teaching that recognises their individual academic and social identities and that addresses their particular learning needs and interests’ (p.6).

### Our legal obligation

The Equality Act (2010) outlaws direct and indirect discrimination on grounds of protected characteristics. Therefore, we have a legal obligation to provide education in a non-discriminatory way.

### An inclusive approach benefits all students

O’Neill (2011) argues that inclusive assessment benefits all students as offering a range of assessment takes into account students’ different learning styles, strengths, time constraints and personal or employment commitments.

# UCL students' views

See Appendix 1 for further information about the UCL sources cited

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**“I feel some teachers are not comfortable approaching BAME students. They avoid eye contact and if a BAME student and a White student have a question at the same time, the teacher will address the White student first”**

REC Student Survey

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**“I feel teachers generally are not ready to accept BAME students and come with assumptions”**

REC Student Survey

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**“As a BAME and non-UK/EU student, I often feel excluded from group discussions. Some people are polite on the surface, but do not give a genuine sense of friendliness or inclusion”**

REC Student Survey

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**“I’ve received comments from professors about how my English is ‘very good’ apart from some things a ‘native speaker would not say...I am a native speaker! There are variations of English outside of British English. Comments like these reinforce my sense of being perceived as an inferior ‘Other’”**

Challenge Consultancy, focus group

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**“I am comfortable contributing to group discussions but only if I know the answer. Being picked on when I don’t know the answer makes me feel stupid and makes me not want to go”**

REC Student Survey

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**“As a BME student, I feel like my voice isn’t valued or respected”**

REC Student Survey

# Students' views from the sector

Consult the references for this section for further information about the sources cited

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**“There was a class where the seminar became a space to share experiences. This was lovely at first but after a few lessons I was looked upon as the spokesperson for all black women”**

Degrees of Freedom, SOAS

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**“I felt I didn't have any friends in the class. Group work was a good way to make friends with people. I wish the teacher could have mixed us up”**

Exploring the BME Student Attainment Gap, Leeds Beckett University

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**“Sometimes when my opinion was the same as another white student, my voice was tended to be ignored but the white student's was heard”**

Insider-Outsider, The Role of Race in Shaping the Experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic Students at Goldsmiths

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**“Often, I have said something in a seminar and a white peer will repeat my same point but will get praise and acknowledgement. Also, I have noticed that my white peers often speak over and speak more in seminars than me and my people of colour peers”**

Insider-Outsider, The Role of Race in Shaping the Experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic Students at Goldsmiths

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**“It has always typically been white males that will talk dominating conversation and tutors actually allow that to happen...sometimes they kind of get intimidated themselves... rather than saying hey, this is a conversation that should be led by everyone”**

Degrees of Racism, SOAS

# Tips for inclusive teaching, learning and assessment

**A selection of practical tips are provided to help you reflect on the inclusivity of your teaching, learning and assessment practice. Additional guidance, tips and resources are provided in the ‘Further Reading and Resources’ section.**

## Reflect on your assumptions about students

Do not assume a students’ background, ability, point of view or preexisting knowledge of a subject, as these assumptions influence the way we interact with our students, which in turn impacts their learning (Ambrose et al. 2010). Hockings et al (2008) found that when teachers based their lessons on their own interests or assumptions about students (in the absence of knowledge about students identities, prior education, experiences etc.), this left some students bored, under challenged or overwhelmed. Therefore, create opportunities to get to know your students and reflect on any assumptions you may hold.

## Set explicit expectations for your students

Clearly articulate and help all students understand course aims, objectives and expectations, including assessment criteria. This will enable students to prioritise their work and ability to meet conflicting priorities. Moreover, Ambrose et al (2010) asserts that it is important to ‘explicitly identify discipline specific conventions’, as in the absence of this guidance, ‘students may analogise from other experiences of fields that they feel most competent in, regardless of whether the experiences are appropriate to the current context’ (p.36).

## Avoid ignoring or singling out students to speak for an entire group

Students of underrepresented identities often report either feeling invisible in class, or sticking out like a

sore thumb as the token member (Ambrose et al. 2010). This experience is heightened when they are addressed as spokespeople for their whole group, and can have implications on performance (Lord & Saenz, 1985). The Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) suggest teachers avoid the extremes of ignoring and singling out students, and instead focus on ensuring that students feel recognized as individuals from the outset of the course. In doing so, they may feel more comfortable voluntarily offering their opinions during class discussions or in lectures.

▼ [www.fau.edu/ctl/Diversity\\_in\\_the\\_College\\_Classroom.pdf](http://www.fau.edu/ctl/Diversity_in_the_College_Classroom.pdf)

Ambrose et al. (2010) propose that ways to make students feel recognised as individuals include, learning names and encouraging all students to use office hours.

## Build rapport

Endeavour to build staff-student rapport, as well as student-student rapport in the classroom. Get to know your students by learning their names, sharing your own interests and personal learning process. Also provide students with opportunities to get to know each other, for example, through group work. Ellis (2004) found that building rapport and creating a positive classroom climate leads to positive student outcomes, including increased student motivation and reduced student apprehension.

## Example from UCL's Inclusive Curriculum Health Check: Electric and Electronic Engineering

*"The Department carries out Strength Finder exercises and teamwork-based projects with the undergraduate students. The Strength Finder exercises allow the students to identify their top five strengths, which they are encouraged to share with their peers in their team-working activities in the first and second years. Then students are asked to reflect on the benefits of diversity within the team. To improve, the Strength Finder exercise leaders could ask the students to describe experiences and views, originating directly from their personal culture, ethnicity and background, which can contribute to the teamwork, and share it with their peers."*

### Conduct a prior knowledge assessment

Students come into university with a range of preexisting knowledge, skills and competencies. It is important to understand students' strengths and weaknesses in order to determine the appropriate level of challenge for each cohort. Ambrose et al. (2010, p.86) states that students will not be motivated to engage with an assignment, if they do not expect they will be successful with reasonable effort. However, if the assignment is too easy, students will not think it has value or is worth their time to engage with.

Therefore, Ambrose et al. (2010, p.145) suggest conducting an early performance based (formative) assessment. This will not only help you pitch your teaching and future assignments at the right level, but also enable students to understand their own strengths and weaknesses. Conducting this assessment early in term is important, as it will give students the opportunity to learn from your feedback, and address any knowledge and/or skill gaps ahead of summative (final) assessments.

### Design and facilitate effective groupwork

Whilst it may be easier to allow students to self-select their group during groupwork, research indicates there are benefits to randomly allocating groups and enabling students from diverse backgrounds to work together. For example, McClelland (2012) found that randomly allocated groups enhance both an individual's task capabilities and their team working capabilities.

Employ facilitation strategies to create a collaborative environment and ensure that group work improves all students learning. For example, clearly establish expectations for group work that promote inclusive and respectful interactions amongst students. Ambrose et al (2010) suggest involving students in the process of establishing expectations to maximise their buy-in. Also consider defining and allocating students roles, as this has been shown to promote greater learning gains (Bailey et al. 2012) and student satisfaction (Brown, 2010).

### Offer a diverse range of assessment methods

Using a diverse range of assessment methods (for example, in-class tests, group/individual presentations, creation of audio-visual material, multiple choice tests, coursework etc.) will ensure that students are not unfairly disadvantaged or advantaged by a specific form of assessment (University of Plymouth, 2014). For example, traditional exam conditions work well for students who have good recall under-pressure, but not for others.

Offering a range of assessment methods not only reflects the needs and prior experiences of a diverse student body, but also enables students to develop a broader range of personal and employability skills (Brown and Glasner, 2013).



# Case studies

## Using peer-assisted learning to support attainment in Pharmacy at Kingston

A case study discussing how the use of peer-assisted learning resulted in higher progression, retention and module pass rates at Kingston University

➤ [eprints.kingston.ac.uk/43610/11/Maccabe-R-43610-VoR.pdf](https://eprints.kingston.ac.uk/43610/11/Maccabe-R-43610-VoR.pdf)

## Making and using video for teaching at UCL

Professor Andrea Sella (UCL Chemistry) discusses the various ways in which creating his own teaching videos help him to 'shake things up and make things different.'

➤ [www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/case-studies/2015/jul/making-using-video-teaching-professor-andrea-sellas-advice](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/case-studies/2015/jul/making-using-video-teaching-professor-andrea-sellas-advice)

## Using research-based blogging to develop students' skills at UCL

Dr Kerstin Sailer (UCL Bartlett School of Architecture) discusses how her students have benefited from hands-on teaching and learning by visiting specific buildings and writing a weekly blog

➤ [www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/case-studies/2015/jun/research-based-blogging-developing-students-skills](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/case-studies/2015/jun/research-based-blogging-developing-students-skills)

# Further reading and resources

For resources and initiatives specific to UCL, please see the 'UCL specific resources and initiatives' section

## Looking for more tips?

### Kings College London

Seven Practitioners' tips for teaching in the context of diversity:

- [www.kcl.ac.uk/study/learningteaching/learning-and-teaching-support/quickguides/kcl-qg/dl/7-practioners-tips-teaching-context-diversity.pdf](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/study/learningteaching/learning-and-teaching-support/quickguides/kcl-qg/dl/7-practioners-tips-teaching-context-diversity.pdf)

### University of Washington

Five inclusive teaching strategies with corresponding practical tips:

- [www.washington.edu/teaching/topics/inclusive-teaching/inclusive-teaching-strategies/](http://www.washington.edu/teaching/topics/inclusive-teaching/inclusive-teaching-strategies/)

### University of Plymouth

A list of tips and advice videos for academic staff about fostering inclusive teaching and learning environments:

- [www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/teaching-and-learning/inclusivity/how-can-i-be-more-inclusive#cta-content-1](http://www.plymouth.ac.uk/about-us/teaching-and-learning/inclusivity/how-can-i-be-more-inclusive#cta-content-1)

## Looking for more resources?

### Western Washington University

A toolkit containing approaches and resources for inclusive teaching practice:

- [www.wwu.edu/teachinghandbook/student\\_considerations/inclusive\\_toolkit.shtml](http://www.wwu.edu/teachinghandbook/student_considerations/inclusive_toolkit.shtml)

### Washington University in St. Louis

A selection of strategies, references and resources on inclusive teaching and learning, including topics such as reducing stereotype threat and facilitating challenging conversations in the classroom:

- [teachingcenter.wustl.edu/resources/inclusive-teaching-learning/](http://teachingcenter.wustl.edu/resources/inclusive-teaching-learning/)

### University of Kansas

A site providing resources for inclusive teaching, including topics like cooperative small group learning:

- [cte.ku.edu/resources-inclusive-teaching](http://cte.ku.edu/resources-inclusive-teaching)

## Looking for further reading?

### AdvanceHE

A synthesis of research on inclusive teaching and learning in higher education by Christine Hockings:

- [advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/inclusive-learning-and-teaching-higher-education-synthesis-research](http://advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/inclusive-learning-and-teaching-higher-education-synthesis-research)

### Creating a Positive Classroom Climate for Diversity, UCLA

A guide produced by UCLA containing research evidence and tips on creating a positive classroom climate:

- [equity.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CreatingaPositiveClassroomClimateWeb-2.pdf](http://equity.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/CreatingaPositiveClassroomClimateWeb-2.pdf)

### AdvanceHE

A guide to developing inclusive learning and teaching in higher education developed by exploring 15 institutions' approaches:

- [www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/inclusive-learning-and-teaching-higher-education](http://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/inclusive-learning-and-teaching-higher-education)

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# BELONGING

# What does belonging mean?

Goodenow (1993a) defines belonging in educational environments as:

**students' sense of being accepted, valued, included and encouraged by others (teacher and peers) in the academic classroom setting and of feeling oneself to be an important part of the life and activity of the class. More than simple perceived liking or warmth, it also involves support and respect for personal autonomy and for the student as an individual. (p.25)**

Whilst belonging is defined in a number of ways, many scholars agree that a sense of belonging is critical to students' academic motivation, success and well-being (Osterman 2000, Newman 1991, Goodenow 1993b) The REC Student Survey (2018) found that 83% BME students agreed that the ethnic and racial diversity of UCL impacts on their sense of belonging. The BME Attainment Project conducted 1-1 interviews with students in the 2018-19 academic year. Students were asked what the concept of belonging means to them, responses included:

*"I think it means, like, being comfortable, feeling like not out of place"*

*"Belonging for me is like identifying with a group...and feeling like I can talk to the group and feeling like it's natural, like a natural communication rather than a forced communication"*

*"It means having a network of people that you can rely on to make you feel comfortable"*

*"It means being accepting of difference"*





## Why is creating a sense of belonging important?

### It is associated with academic success and motivation

Research indicates a sense of belonging is positively associated with academic success and motivation (Freeman, Anderman and Jensen 2007). Students who feel they belong are more likely to see the value of required work and have higher self-belief in their chances to succeed on their course (Verschelden 2017). Becker and Luthar (2002) found this is especially important for the performance of adolescents coming from ethnic minority and lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

### It affects students' well-being

Empirical studies have linked perceptions of school and campus belonging to positive psychological outcomes, including positive emotions, feelings of self-worth and social acceptance (Pittman and Richmond 2007, Wilson et al. 2015). More broadly, Maslow (1968) found that proper, adequate and timely satisfaction of the need for belonging leads to physical, emotional, behavioural and mental well-being.

### It influences prospective students choice of university

Winter and Chapleo (2017) explored prospective students reasons for choosing one university above another. They found a university's ability to create a sense of a belonging was critical in the decision making process.

## UCL students' views

See Appendix 1 for further information about the UCL sources cited

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**“I don't feel represented at all in this university, in terms of the systems and the people that go to this university”**

**Challenge Consultancy, focus group**

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**“I wouldn't apply for a job in academia or for a PhD as I don't feel I belong in the community”**

**REC Student Survey**

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**“Contrary to the LGBT staff, who are visible and hold meetings and events. I personally do not know any BME faculty and that says something”**

**BAME Awarding Gap Project, focus group**

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**“Myself and fellow minority ethnic students were engaging in a debate on terms of our own lived experiences of belonging to a social minority group and how symbolic representation mattered to us. We found it frustrating that our lecturer seemed to explain away or somewhat disregard the relevance of our perceptions”**

**REC Student Survey**

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**“Odd cycle from first to third year where there are moments when you do fit in and moments when you don't and the ones where you don't are more frequent and isolating”**

**BAME Awarding Gap Project, focus group**

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# Students' views from the sector

Consult the references for this section for further information about the sources cited

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**“My perspective is valued only because I mirror whiteness, in my mannerisms, my spoken voice and choice of words. That’s why people value my perspective. Because of my performance”**

**BME Attainment Gap Report, Bristol SU**

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**“In terms of feeling at home within LSE, I’m a bit concerned... in the whole department, we all have only one African professor, someone who was born in Africa, someone who understands Africa, someone who has written about Africa”**

**Understanding the Attainment Gap at LSE**

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**“I did not fully enjoy my 4 years at SOAS, it was very isolating. There seems to be a underlying... race issue that I can’t pinpoint, this feeling that you’ll never belong here”**

**Degrees of Freedom, SOAS**

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**“Often times I’d modify the words I use or my accent to my ‘white voice’ to make people feel more comfortable. My parents purposefully gave me a white name at birth to give me more opportunities as an adult”**

**Insider-Outsider, The Role of Race in Shaping the Experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic Students at Goldsmiths**

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**“I have only seen one black lecturer and there are only 5 black people on my course. Sometimes, I feel a bit lost because I do not see people that look like me very often... but if I do see a fellow black student I feel happy for some reason”**

**BME Attainment Gap Report, Bristol SU**

# Tips for fostering a sense of belonging

**A selection of practical tips are provided to help you improve BAME students sense of belonging at UCL. Additional guidance, tips and resources are provided in the ‘Further Reading and Resources’ section.**

## **Expose students to potential role models from BAME backgrounds**

Research by Arday (2015) shows that a university environment with few or no BAME professors, senior leaders or academics risks isolating BAME students. Research also suggests that increased staff diversity, among both academic and support staff might make BAME students more likely to engage in pastoral and academic support (Dhanda 2009) Therefore, where possible, ensure some teaching is delivered by BAME academics. If no in-house staff are available, invite guest lecturers from a BAME background.

## **Example from UCL’s Inclusive Curriculum Health Check: Medical Sciences and Engineering**

*“Extra-curricular lectures are scheduled in each term and are delivered by external industry experts and a clinician-scientist from a BAME background to provide students with positive role models.”*

## **Model inclusive behaviour and attitudes**

Ambrose et al. (2010) assert that ‘modelling inclusiveness can provide a powerful learning experience for all students’ (p.183). For example, avoid using idioms as these may be unfamiliar to students who do not speak English as their first language. Try to use language which acknowledges different lived experiences, for example, you could say ‘for those of you who have studied abroad/read ‘X’ author/seen ‘x’ documentary’.

## **Host inclusive events from the outset**

Thomas et al. (2017) propose that belonging begins at induction, presenting a ‘logic chain’ linking induction activities to student retention and success. They suggest that induction activities should have ‘an explicit academic focus’ and ‘enable students to get to know each other and members of the academic team’ (p.17). Avoid only hosting activities which may exclude groups of students; for example, evening events such as networking over drinks maybe alienating to students who do not drink or commute long distances.





### Facilitate the development of positive teacher-student relationships

Research indicates positive teacher-student relationships contribute to students' sense of belonging (Burke et al. 2016), motivation (Zepke and Leach, 2010), achievement and intellectual development (Halawah, 2006) and commitment (Strauss and Volkwein, 2004). Moreover, 'the more often students have out-of-classroom interactions (e.g. office visits) with their university teachers, the better the quality of the relationship and the more connected the students to the university' (Hagenauer and Volet, 2014 p.373). However, research also shows there are differences in how students from different ethnic groups engage with their teachers.

Stevenson (2012) carried out study exploring the link between attainment and students' views of their future 'possible selves.' The study found 'White students were the most strategic and purposeful in their academic help-seeking approaches and most likely to draw on all forms of support, including from their lecturers...spending significant time talking to and working with their lecturers' (p.108 -109).

In contrast, BAME students devised strategies for getting by' without direct contact with lecturers, for example, by trying to cope alone or through peers. Appreciate there may be cultural differences in how students perceive and act on seeking help and support.

Encourage all students to interact with academic staff through establishing positive norms around this behaviour from the outset (i.e. induction). Also provide opportunities (in addition to office hours) for students to develop relationships with teaching staff in the faculty i.e. department coffee mornings and encourage student attendance.

### Facilitate the development of positive peer relationships

The What Works? programme (2012) funded several projects designed to investigate and improve student engagement, belonging, retention and success. Findings showed that staff can play an important role in encouraging and facilitating the development of positive peer relationships through 'integrating social elements into academic programmes', for example, through field trips, collaborative teaching and learning and opt-out peer mentoring (p.52). This is particularly important as some students may not have opportunities to develop friendships in other settings, for example, students who spend less time on campus, i.e. commuter students and/or students with work and family commitments. Evidence from What Works? shows that strong peer relationships not only promote students' sense of belonging, but also their confidence as learners, academic integration and motivation to study and succeed (p.49).

# Further reading and resources

For resources and initiatives specific to UCL, please see the 'UCL specific resources and initiatives' section

## Looking for more tips?

### The Ohio State University

Tips for supporting students' sense of belonging in the classroom:

- [ucat.osu.edu/bookshelf/teaching-topics/shaping-a-positive-learning-environment/sense-of-belonging-in-the-college-classroom/](https://ucat.osu.edu/bookshelf/teaching-topics/shaping-a-positive-learning-environment/sense-of-belonging-in-the-college-classroom/)

### Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

Five strategies for improving students' sense of belonging in first-year seminars:

- [nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Cultivating-a-Sense-of-Belonging-in-First-Year-Seminars.aspx](https://nacada.ksu.edu/Resources/Academic-Advising-Today/View-Articles/Cultivating-a-Sense-of-Belonging-in-First-Year-Seminars.aspx)

## Looking for further reading?

### University of Wolverhampton

A paper exploring how a sense of belonging in higher education differs between ethnic groups:

- [wlv.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/2436/622733/Cureton%20and%20Gravestock%20%282019%29%20COMPASS%20%281%29.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wlv.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/2436/622733/Cureton%20and%20Gravestock%20%282019%29%20COMPASS%20%281%29.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

### University of Leicester

A review of existing research literature on sense of belonging among students:

- [www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/projects/student-retention-project/dissemination/papers-and-publications/Sense%20of%20Belonging%20Lit%20Review.docx/view](https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ssds/projects/student-retention-project/dissemination/papers-and-publications/Sense%20of%20Belonging%20Lit%20Review.docx/view)

### What Works? Final Report

The final report from the What Works? Project which investigated means for improving student belonging, engagement, retention and success:

- [www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/building-student-engagement-and-belonging-higher-education-time-change-final-report](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/building-student-engagement-and-belonging-higher-education-time-change-final-report)



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# CREATING SAFE SPACES

## What is a safe space?

Holley and Steiner (2005) propose:

**“The metaphor of the classroom as a ‘safe space’ has emerged as a description of a classroom climate that allows students to feel secure enough to take risks, honestly express their views and share and explore their knowledge, attitudes and behaviours.**

**Safety in this sense does not refer to physical safety. Instead classroom safe space refers to protection from psychological or emotional harm...Being safe is not the same as being comfortable. To grow and learn, students must confront issues that make them uncomfortable and force them to struggle with who they are and what they believe.” (p.50)**



## What are microaggressions?

Sue et al. (2007) define microaggressions as:

*are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of colour. (p.271)*

Some examples of microaggressions include:

- Inappropriate jokes
- Stereotyping
- Exclusion from groups and/or being dismissed or ignored
- Not learning names
- Denial of racial reality

Whilst microaggressions are typically subtle and interpersonal, macroaggressions are often overt and occur at a systemic level.



## Understanding race and racism in higher education

Warmington (2018) states:

*“The greatest barrier to addressing race equality in higher education is academia’s refusal to regard race as a legitimate object of scrutiny, either in scholarship or policy. Consequently, there is little recognition of the role played by universities in (re)producing racial injustice.” (p.v)*

It is important to recognise and address the ways in which we as individuals, as well as an institution, ‘contribute to academia’s racialised culture and practices’ (Warmington, 2018, p.v). This is explored in detail in Arday and Mirza’s (2018) work, *Dismantling Race in Higher Education*. The book contains a collection of essays which explore the ideology of whiteness and the roots of structural racism in the academy.

## Understanding the decolonise movement

There are increasing calls to decolonise the university and curriculum across the sector. Although evidence of inclusive practice is clear, for example, the diversification of reading lists, decolonising extends beyond these practices in isolation. Whilst there is no consensus regarding a definition of decolonising in an educational context, Begum and Saini (2019) propose:

*“decolonisation is crucial because, unlike diversification, it specifically acknowledges the inherent power relations in the production and dissemination of knowledge, and seeks to destabilise these” (p.198)*

# Why is creating a safe learning environment important?

## Racial microaggressions have an adverse impact on students' self esteem and wellbeing

Nadal et al. (2014) found that racial microaggressions negatively affect students' mental health. Their results showed that microaggressions that occur in educational and workplace environments are particularly harmful to victims' self esteem.

### Our legal obligation

The Equality Act (2010) outlaws direct and indirect discrimination on grounds of protected characteristics. Therefore, we have a legal obligation to provide education in a non-discriminatory manner.

### Creating a safe space is important to students and their perception of how much they learn

Holly and Steiner (2005) researched student perspectives on safe learning environments. They found that 'the vast majority of students consider the creation of a safe space to be very or extremely important and that the majority of students perceive that they learn more in such a classroom' (p.61)

### It affects students sense of belonging, which is associated with academic success and motivation

Research suggests that racial microaggressions can make students feel unwanted, unwelcome and reduce a sense of belonging (Hurtado and Carter, 1997; Smith et al., 2007). Fostering a strong sense of belonging is important as it is positively associated with academic success and motivation (Freeman, Anderman and Jensen, 2017).



## UCL students' views

See Appendix 1 for further information about the UCL sources cited

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**“Racial discrimination is subtle, in the sense that it’s not explicit, but rather the way lecturers and students word things, this can come across as offensive for a person of a minority background”**

REC Student Survey

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**“Discrimination often occurs in a very subtle way... people who do it, may not notice it. The way teachers for example sometimes refer to “the Chinese people” or “the Indian people” etc. in a lecture, just because of physical appearances”**

REC Student Survey

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**“Teaching staff poke fun at international students – knowing they will not get the joke”**

Challenge Consultancy. focus group

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**“From blatant comments to a lot of microaggressions and subtle racism from peers. None gets addressed because the majority of lecturers and seminar tutors are also White. Therefore, either unable to recognise it or have an unwillingness to do so”**

REC Student Survey

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**“Whilst I feel that race and ethnicity is discussed in academic discussions, I find it is only ever briefly brushed past or not spoken about explicitly enough... This often gives the impression that issues of race and ethnicity are outside the norm, that they are in the peripheries of what is important as opposed to central to many peoples’ life experiences alongside how many issues are navigated in our world”**

REC Student Survey

# Students' views from the sector

Consult the references for this section for further information about the sources cited

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**“Nicknames have to be adopted by lecturers for minority students for whom their names are deemed too difficult. Often this takes place initially when a lecturer screws their face upon seeing an ‘ethnic’ name on the register”**

Tackling racial harassment: Universities challenged, Equality and Human Rights Commission

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**“A lecturer commenting about people speaking in ‘difficult’ accents – it made me feel self-conscious about the way I speak. I feel that in the beginning of my course, I was not very sensitive towards microaggressions and would a lot of the time just blame it on myself and thus resulted in me feeling less able than my white peers”**

Insider-Outsider, The Role of Race in Shaping the Experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic Students at Goldsmiths

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**“My teacher ignored me and went round the class asking everyone in order questions, when she got to me she skipped past me and asked the person next to me instead (I was the only BME person in the class). She also never knew my name and just said “you” or point at me, whilst she knew everybody else’s name”**

Degrees of Freedom, SOAS

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**“Most of the time it’s in the way teachers talk to you, their body language, their demeanour. They’ll use certain phrases that they wouldn’t use with your Caucasian peers. There is a change in the attitude when they address you. And you can feel it”**

Tackling racial harassment: Universities challenged, Equality and Human Rights Commission

# Tips for creating safe spaces

**A selection of practical tips are provided to help you create safe and inclusive learning environments. Additional guidance, tips and resources are provided in the 'Further Reading and Resources' section.**

## Learn and pronounce students names correctly

Ambrose et al. (2010) state that 'creating an effective learning climate often includes making students feel recognised as individuals, both by instructors and peers' (p.182). This can be achieved through learning students' names and providing opportunities for students' to learn each other's names.

However, whilst learning names can reduce anonymity, pronouncing names correctly is also important. Research by Kohli and Solorzano (2011) shows that mispronouncing names can have a negative impact on the world view and emotional well-being of students.

In order to help you learn names, consider asking students to state their name before they begin speaking, for example if they are responding to a question or comment, or use name tents (a folded piece of card with a students' name on it). If you unsure how to pronounce a student's name correctly, ask them directly and do not be afraid to ask more than once.

Taking the time to learn and correctly pronounce a student's name will not only make the individual student feel valued, but also provide an opportunity to model inclusive behaviour for all students and create a positive classroom climate (O'Brien et al., 2014).

## Address challenging behaviour head on and use these as teachable moments

Do address any challenging behaviour head on, for example, microaggressions, alienating behaviours or attitudes etc. Research shows that students will take cues from teachers about how to react in tense moments, therefore, ignoring challenging behaviour can further marginalise students, and squander opportunities to promote mutual understanding and dispel stereotypes (Sue et al., 2009; Bergom et al., 2011).

Not dealing with challenging behaviour such as microaggressions, can have an adverse consequences for the individual responsible, which include lowering empathic ability and maintaining false illusion (Spanierman et al. 2006). Therefore, try to turn these difficult moments into teachable moments and opportunities for learning.

Ambrose et al. (2010) suggest that if tensions are running high, to 'funnel those emotions into useful dialogue' for example, encourage students to take a different perspective using role play, or use a time out to allow students to write down their reactions, thoughts and feelings (p.184).

## Use micro-affirmations

Rowe (2008) defines microaffirmations as ‘tiny acts of opening doors to opportunity, gestures of inclusion and caring, and graceful acts of listening’ (p.46). Research by Estrada et al. (2019) found that students’ experiences of microaffirmations can positively contribute toward their integration into discipline communities’ (p.13). Moreover, studies have shown that ‘students with high levels of identity affirmation are more likely to have: (a) higher self-esteem, self-concept, academic achievement; (b) fewer mental health problems; and (c) positively cope with and respond to everyday discrimination (Ghavami et al., 2011; Umaña-Taylor et al., 2008, as cited in Ellis et al. 2019, p.2).

Powell et al. (2013) condenses micro- affirmations into actions, which you can use in your everyday interactions with students.

These include:

### Active listening

Focus on hearing clearly what is being said by students, and reinforcing this understanding through use of eye contact, nodding, open body language, summarising statements and asking questions to confirm understanding.

### Affirm students emotions

If a student discloses an experience (positive or negative) to you, verbally acknowledge and validate students’ feelings regarding this experience. Express affirming statements with genuine sentiment and appropriate body language. Statements can be simple, such as “I appreciate this is frustrating...”

“I can see you are really excited by this opportunity...”

If the experience is challenging, validate students’ feelings whilst guiding them to develop a productive perspective on their experience. Where appropriate, signpost students to services and identify relevant resources and options available to them.

### Recognise and validate students experiences

This does not mean you have to have agree with the student’s interpretation of the experience. Instead, focus on making it clear to the student that you understand the challenge of their experience, and that you are willing to help them consider productive ways of dealing with it. You can do this through using verbal, written and body language cues that show you care about what the student is saying and are interested in helping them.



## Establish ground rules for interaction with your students at the beginning of the course

Research suggests that students must confront their biases and be aware of their values and beliefs in order to think critically and become culturally competent (Diller, 2004; Van Soest and Garcia, 2003). This can be facilitated in a number of ways, including classroom discussion. However, Holly and Steiner (2005) suggest that if students are to risk self-disclosure in discussion (i.e. expressing views that might not be readily accepted by others), the rewards of doing so (i.e. personal growth) must outweigh perceived consequences (i.e. possible embarrassment or ridicule). One way to facilitate and encourage open and honest discussion is through establishing ground rules with your class.

Ambrose et al. (2010) state that 'ground rules can help to assure that peers are being inclusive and respectful in order to create an effective learning climate and promote students' development' (p.183). Garibay (2015) suggest that if possible, instructors should dedicate a portion of the first session to develop ground rules with students, however, if this is not possible due to time constraints, ground rules should be included in the syllabus.

### Example ground rules

Garibay (2015, p.9) provides the following suggestions for ground rules:

- Respect the opinions of others in class discussions.
- When you disagree, make sure that you use arguments to criticise the idea, not the person.
- When offering an opinion or answering a question, support your assertion with arguments and evidence, not generalisations.
- Avoid dominating class discussions.
- Be open to the ideas and experiences of others in the class.
- If you are nervous about speaking in class, remember that your perspective is valid and the class deserves to hear it.
- Be conscious of body language. Nonverbal responses can also indicate disrespect.



## Write a diversity and inclusion statement for your syllabus

The Harriet W. Sheridan Centre for Teaching and Learning (HWSCTL) at Brown suggest ‘including a diversity statement on your syllabus can set the tone for your classroom environment. It shows students that you value and respect difference in intellectual exchange, and are aware of current campus conversations surrounding diversity.’ Tips on how to write a diversity statement, as well as more examples are available from Yale’s Poorvu Centre for Teaching and Learning.

[www.poorvucenter.yale.edu/DiversityStatements](http://www.poorvucenter.yale.edu/DiversityStatements)

## Example diversity statement from University of Iowa College of Education

*“Respect for Diversity: It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students’ learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you.”*

[education.uiowa.edu/services/office-dean/policies/syllabus-checklist](http://education.uiowa.edu/services/office-dean/policies/syllabus-checklist)

## Example diversity statement by Monica Linden, Neuroscience, Brown University

*In an ideal world, science would be objective. However, much of science is subjective and is historically built on a small subset of privileged voices. I acknowledge that the readings for this course, including the course reader and BCP were authored by white men. Furthermore, the course often focuses on historically important neuroscience experiments which were mostly conducted by white men.*

*Recent edits to the course reader were undertaken by both myself and some students who do not identify as white men. However, I acknowledge that it is possible that there may be both overt and covert biases in the material due to the lens with which it was written, even though the material is primarily of a scientific nature.*

*Integrating a diverse set of experiences is important for a more comprehensive understanding of science. Please contact me (in person or electronically) or submit anonymous feedback if you have any suggestions to improve the quality of the course materials...*

[www.brown.edu/sheridan/teaching-learning-resources/inclusive-teaching/](http://www.brown.edu/sheridan/teaching-learning-resources/inclusive-teaching/)



# Further reading and resources

For resources and initiatives specific to UCL, please see the 'UCL specific resources and initiatives' section

## Looking for more tips?

### Carnegie Mellon University, Eberly Centre

Eight tips for learning students names:

- ▶ [www.cmu.edu/teaching/solveproblem/strat-cheating/tips-studentnames.html](http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/solveproblem/strat-cheating/tips-studentnames.html)

### The Ohio State University

20 tips for learning students names during activities in class, through instructor-led practices in class, instructor-led practices outside of class and for large classes:

- ▶ [ucat.osu.edu/bookshelf/teaching-topics/shaping-a-positive-learning-environment/20-tips-learning-student-names/](http://ucat.osu.edu/bookshelf/teaching-topics/shaping-a-positive-learning-environment/20-tips-learning-student-names/)

### University of Washington

Suggestions for addressing microaggressions in the classroom:

- ▶ [www.washington.edu/teaching/addressing-microaggressions-in-the-classroom/](http://www.washington.edu/teaching/addressing-microaggressions-in-the-classroom/)

### University of Denver

Examples of microaggressions and suggestions on how to address them:

- ▶ [otl.du.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/MicroAggressionsInClassroom-DUCME.pdf](http://otl.du.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/MicroAggressionsInClassroom-DUCME.pdf)

### University of Nebraska-Lincoln

Tips on how to write a diversity statement:

- ▶ [www.unl.edu/gradstudies/connections/writing-diversity-statement](http://www.unl.edu/gradstudies/connections/writing-diversity-statement)

## Looking for resources?

### Carnegie Mellon University, Eberly Centre

A selection of sample ground rules for lectures and group discussions, and advice for involving students in creating ground rules:

- ▶ [www.cmu.edu/teaching/solveproblem/strat-dontparticipate/groundrules.pdf](http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/solveproblem/strat-dontparticipate/groundrules.pdf)

### Vanderbilt University

A guide on leading difficult dialogues with students:

- ▶ [cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/difficult-dialogues/](http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/difficult-dialogues/)

## Looking for further reading?

### Harvard Graduate School of Education

A short YouTube video on the power of microaffirmations:

- ▶ [www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/16/12/accentuate-positive](http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/16/12/accentuate-positive)

### Decolonising the University

A collection of essays focused on understanding and transforming universities' colonial foundation:

- ▶ [www.plutobooks.com/9780745338200/decolonising-the-university/](http://www.plutobooks.com/9780745338200/decolonising-the-university/)

### The Fire Now: Anti-Racism in Times of Explicit Racial Violence

A collection of essays exploring how anti-racist scholarship and activism can overcome the challenges posed by a resurgence in White supremacy:

- ▶ [www.zedbooks.net/shop/book/the-fire-now/](http://www.zedbooks.net/shop/book/the-fire-now/)

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# UCL specific initiatives and resources

There are a range of initiatives and resources you can draw on at UCL to help you address the BAME awarding gap. These include:

## Inclusive Curriculum Health Check

The ICHC has been designed to support UCL staff to reflect on how to embed the principles of inclusivity in all aspects of the academic cycle. A copy of the ICHC can be downloaded here:

- ▼ [www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching-learning/files/ucl\\_inclusive\\_curriculum\\_healthcheck\\_2018.pdf](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching-learning/files/ucl_inclusive_curriculum_healthcheck_2018.pdf)

## Student Curriculum Partners

The BAME Awarding Gap project set-up the Student Curriculum Partners scheme, which enables staff and students to work together to review the inclusivity of curriculum materials. The scheme was piloted with two faculties in 2019 and will be rolled more widely in the 2019-20 academic year. If you are interested in getting involved, please email Sukhi Bath ([s.bath@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:s.bath@ucl.ac.uk))

## How can you make changes to your module or programme?

If you are considering making amendments to a programme or module (for example, changes to the credit value of a programme or module, changes to assessment methods, criteria or weighting, or balance of learning activities), you will need to complete the relevant amendment form. Process guidance, forms and deadlines are available in Chapter 7 (Programme and Module Approval and Amendment Framework) of the UCL Academic Manual.

- ▼ [www.ucl.ac.uk/academic-manual/sites/academic-manual/files/chapter\\_7\\_programme\\_and\\_module\\_approval\\_and\\_amendment\\_framework\\_2019-20.pdf](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/academic-manual/sites/academic-manual/files/chapter_7_programme_and_module_approval_and_amendment_framework_2019-20.pdf)

## BAME Awarding Gap project resource bank

A range of resources from UK and US universities focused on closing the awarding gap project webpage.

- ▼ [www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/education-strategy/1-personalising-student-support/bme-attainment-project/resources](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/education-strategy/1-personalising-student-support/bme-attainment-project/resources)

## Science of Inclusion Training

The BAME Awarding Gap project will be piloting Science of Inclusion (unconscious bias) training in 2019-20 for academic staff. Details of this will be available on the BME Awarding Gap project webpage in due course.

- ▼ [www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/education-strategy/1-personalising-student-support/bame-awarding-gap-project-supporting-student](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/education-strategy/1-personalising-student-support/bame-awarding-gap-project-supporting-student)

## Training and workshops

The BAME Awarding Gap project will be delivering a staff training series in 2019-20.

Details of upcoming workshops will be available on the BAME Awarding Gap project webpage under the events section.

- ▼ [www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/education-strategy/1-personalising-student-support/bame-awarding-gap-project/bame-awarding-gap-0](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/education-strategy/1-personalising-student-support/bame-awarding-gap-project/bame-awarding-gap-0)

# Glossary of terms and acronyms

**Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME)**  
as defined by the Institute of Race Relations

Refers to the term used in the UK to describe people of non-white descent

**Global South** as defined by Dados and Connell, 2012

Refers broadly to the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa and Oceania. The term is used to denote regions outside of Europe and North America mostly (though not all) low-income and often politically or culturally marginalised

**Microaggressions** as defined by Sue et al. 2007

Refer to brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of colour

**Global North**

Refers broadly to the developed countries of Europe and North America

**Stereotype threat** as defined by Ambrose et al. 2010

Refers to the tension that arises in members of a stereotyped group when they fear they are being judged according to stereotypes

**Micro-affirmations** as defined by Rowe (2008)<sup>1</sup>

Refer to tiny acts of opening doors to opportunity, gestures of inclusion and caring, and graceful acts of listening. For example, these might include, using friendly facial expressions and gestures, recognising the achievement of others and asking others for their opinion

<sup>1</sup> Rowe, M. (2008). Micro-affirmations and micro-inequities. *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association*, 1, 45-48.



# Appendix 1: Sources and data collection methods

Further information about the sources and data collection methods used to capture UCL student views presented in the toolkit

## Challenge Consultancy, Focus Group

A 'Belonging' focus group was facilitated by the external organisation, Challenge Consultancy, in March 2017. The focus group was open to students who identify as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME). There were seven students in attendance, together with the Sayeeda Ali (BME Students' Officer at the time) and Professor Ijeoma Uchegbu for the latter part of the focus group which lasted two hours.

## REC Student Survey

A survey was administered to all students in December 2018 as part of UCL's Race Equality Charter Mark submission for February 2020. A total of 1136 responses were received. The toolkit has drawn on the responses of BAME students.

## BAME Awarding Gap Project 1-1 interviews and focus groups

Focus groups and 1-1 interviews with UK- domiciled BAME students were carried out in 2018 and 2019 as part of the BAME Awarding Gap project. These included:

### 6 Focus groups:

- Brain Sciences: 6 students
- Laws: 10 students
- SHS (3 focus groups): 7 students per group
- Arts & Humanities: 4 students

1-1 interviews: 5 students across Arts & Humanities and IOE

# UCL students' views

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**“UCL has a diverse student body and I enjoy being able to meet people from a range of backgrounds”**

REC Student Survey

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**“My experience has been one of warmth, I have been every welcomed and feel safe in my environment”**

REC Student Survey

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**“I would recommend the institution based on multiple factors but great diversity will also be a factor and UCL have a diverse population of students”**

REC Student Survey





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