

Closing the undergraduate BME attainment gap at UCL

Dr Julie Evans, Faculty Tutor Brain Sciences

Paulette Williams, Head of Student Success Projects
OVPEA

Rebecca Allen, Head of Data and Insight (Education),
OVPEA

Session Overview

Attainment and belonging at UCL

Focus of the UCL BME attainment gap project

Project approach and interventions

Resources and support available



What is the BME attainment gap?

According to the Equality Challenge Unit:

“the difference in ‘top degrees’ – a 1st or a 2:1 classification – awarded to different groups of students”

- The biggest differences in achievement is found by ethnic background.
- In England in 2015/16, there was a gap of **15.6%** between the proportion of UK-domiciled white students (78.8%) and minority ethnic groups (63.2%) achieving a good degree.
- The gap is not this large at UCL and other Russell groups universities – where there are very high entry criteria.

There is variation in the attainment gap by ethnic group in England

- Chinese students: 72.2% attain a 'good degree' – 6.6% gap
- Indian students: 70.7% attain a 'good degree' – 8.1% gap
- Pakistani students: 61.8% attain a 'good degree' – 17% gap
- Black other students: 50.5% attain a 'good degree' – 28.3% gap
- There is also a variation in the attainment gap by subject disciplines
- The gap is smaller for those students studying science, engineering and technology (SET) subjects compared to non-SET subjects

What are the potential causes of the gap?

- Lack of diversity and representation in the curriculum
- Lack of belonging in institutions and feeling isolated
- Lack of strategic leadership in addressing related issues
- Implicit / unconscious bias
- Racism in the form of institutional racism, discrimination and micro aggressions.
- Lack of diversity in staff and limited role models

Impact of the BME attainment gap

National research shows:

- Increasing numbers of students are likely to be affected - nationally nearly 20% of students are from BME backgrounds and this is likely to rise.
- A less positive experience of higher education for BME students which may put students off from applying to particular institutions.
- Students less likely to become academics when there is a clear need to increase the pool of BME UK academics.
- Many graduate entry level jobs or training schemes require a minimum 2:1 degree – BME graduates are less likely to benefit from such opportunities.

Where are we now?

Low BME student satisfaction

Data shows a small but significant attainment gap

Lack of awareness of the attainment gap

Curriculum is variably inclusive

Low staff confidence in dealing with curriculum material relevant to BME groups

Lack of knowledge and skills to underpin the creation of inclusive curricula

Lack of support for and no record of informal complaints of racist behaviour

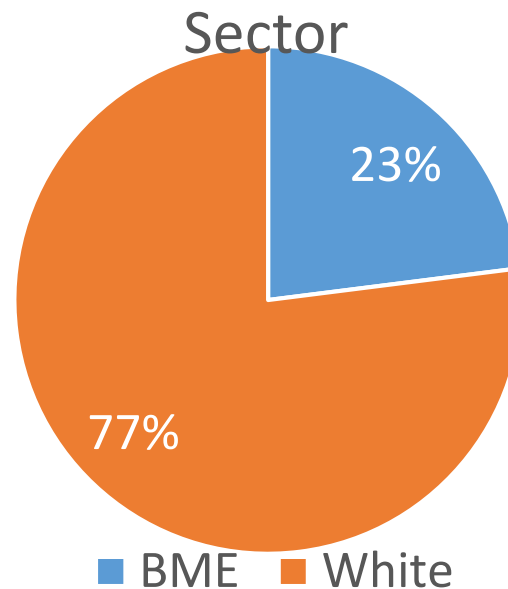
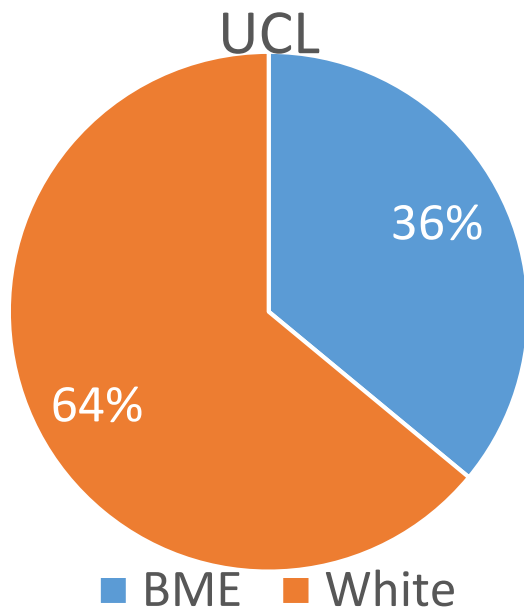
UCL Attainment Project

- A history of researching attainment at UCL
- Education Strategy 2016 - 2021
- An institutional approach – HEFCE funded Kingston-led project
- Develop and adapt tools and resources
- Working in partnerships with our students

Value Added Data

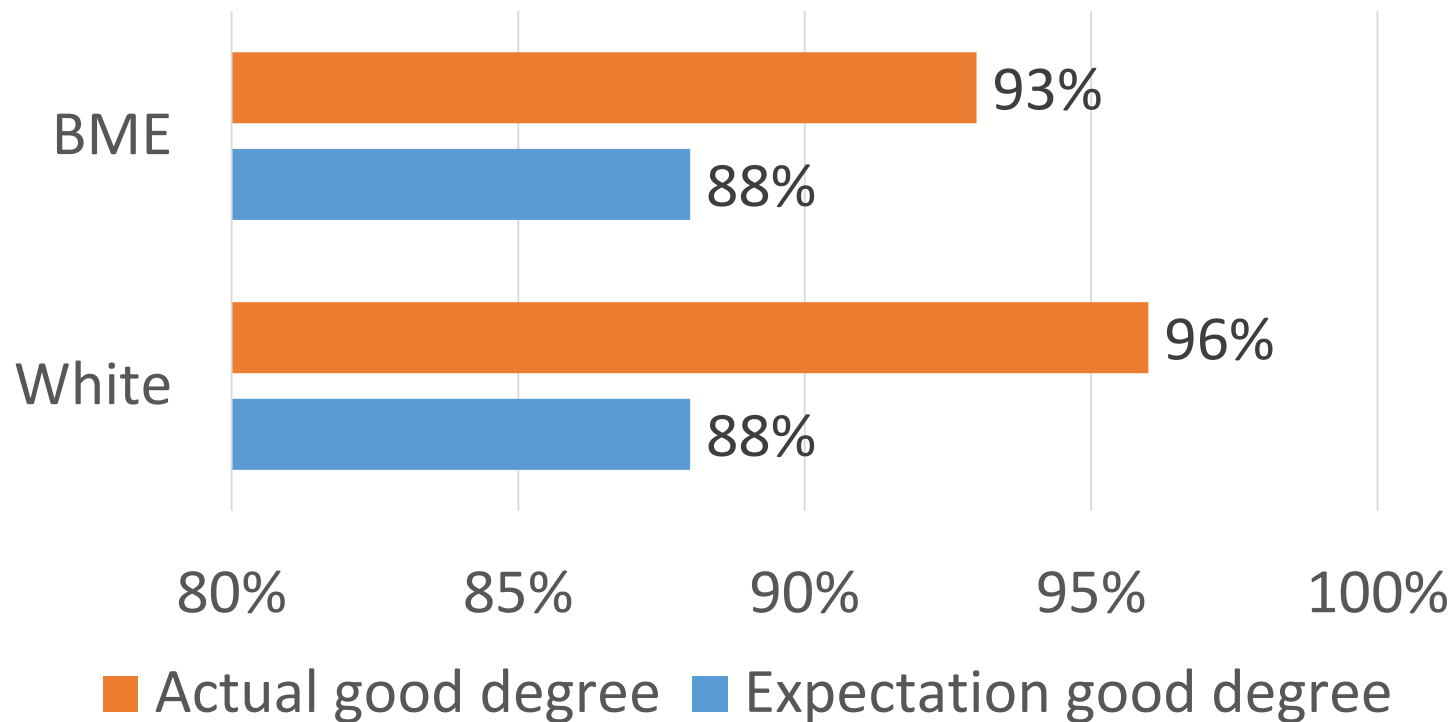
- Takes into account entry points at A-level or equivalent
- Accounts for subject studied
- Provides level of expected good degree as baseline for measuring difference
- At UCL, white and BME students have equal expectations but gap appears while they are here
- Gap ranges between 0 and 4% over seven years

Ethnic breakdown (3 year avg)



Note: UK undergraduates only

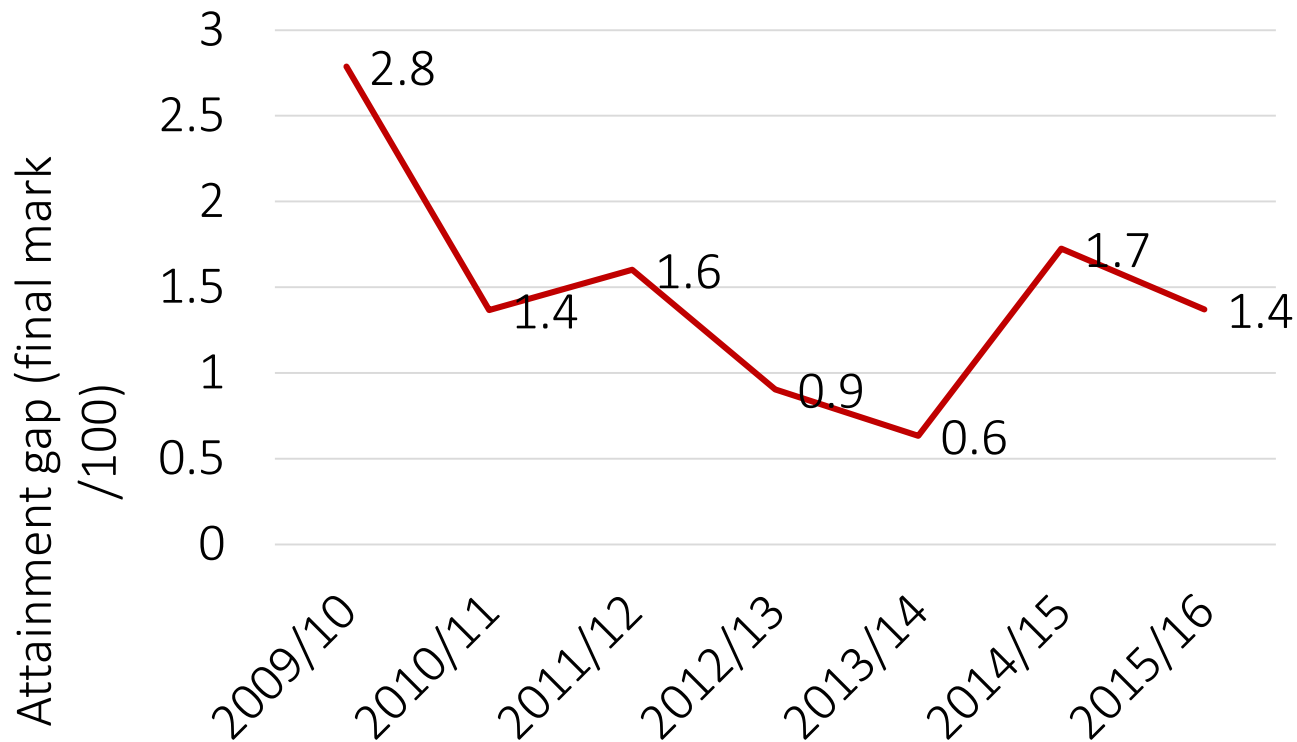
Value Added measure 2015/16



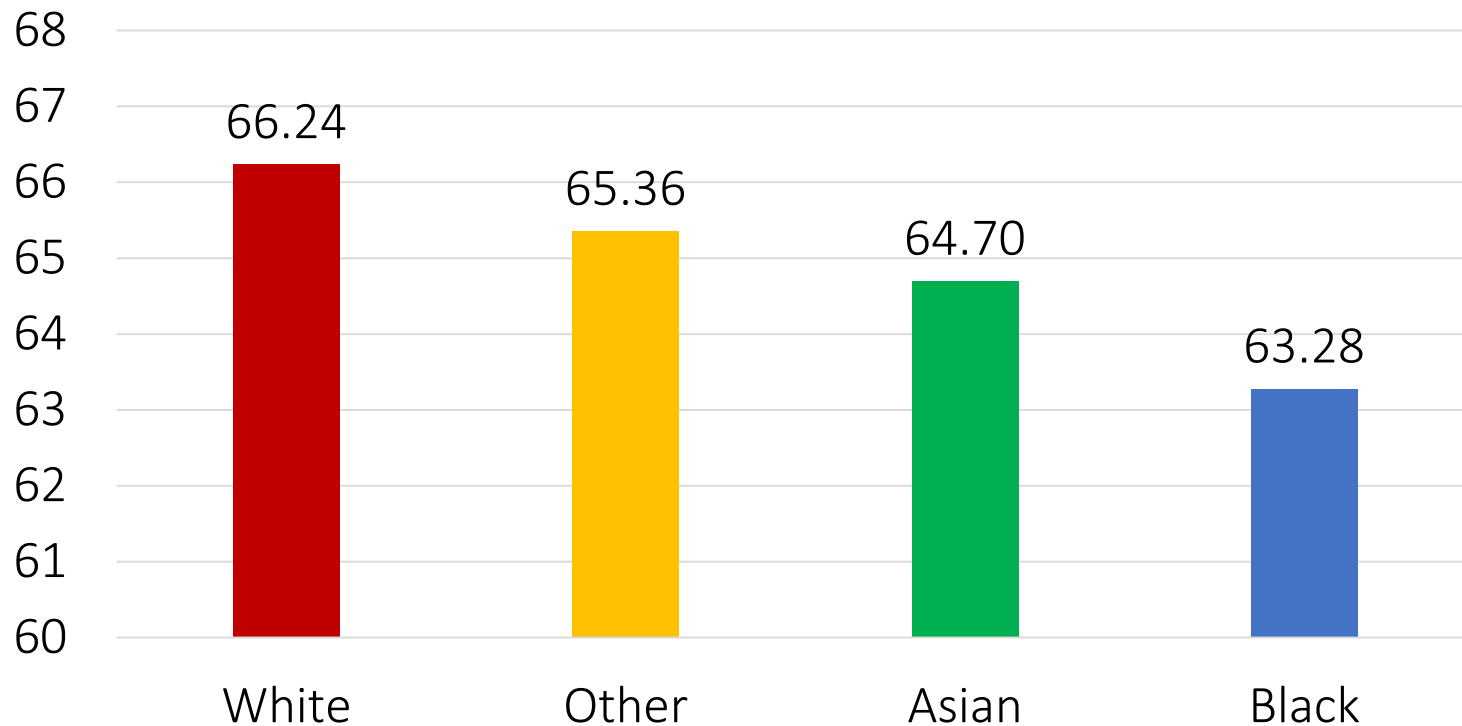
Average final mark

- Average final percentage mark /100 determining degree classification
- White students 66.24%
- BME students 64.74%
- Black students' outcomes are particularly low

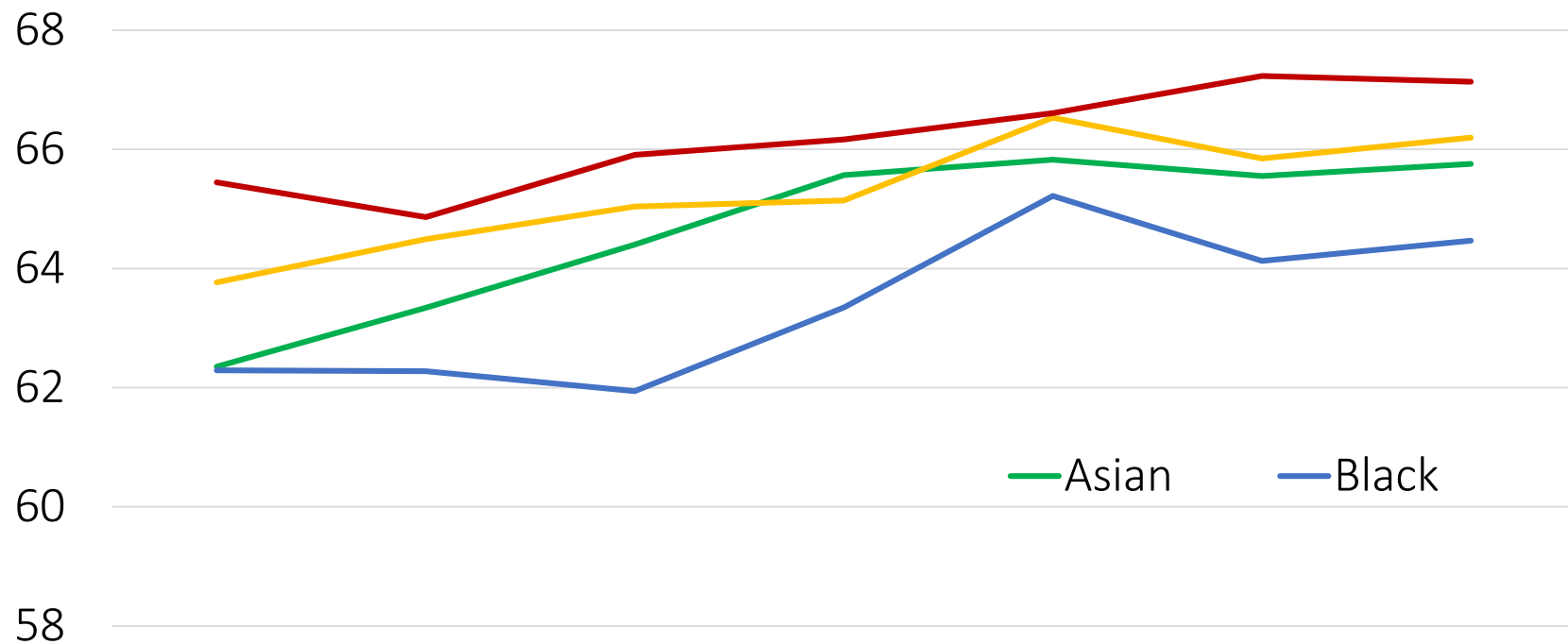
UCL attainment gap 2009-16



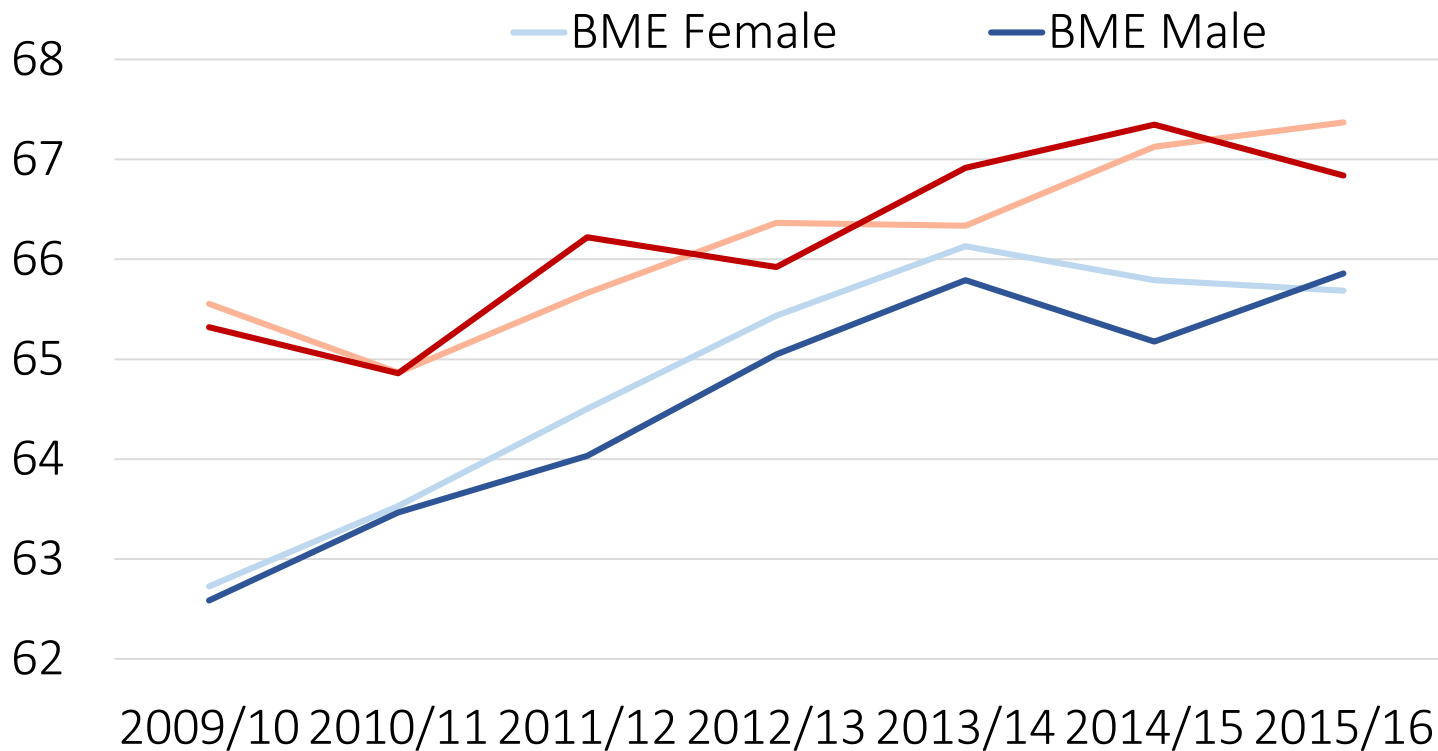
Attainment by ethnic group



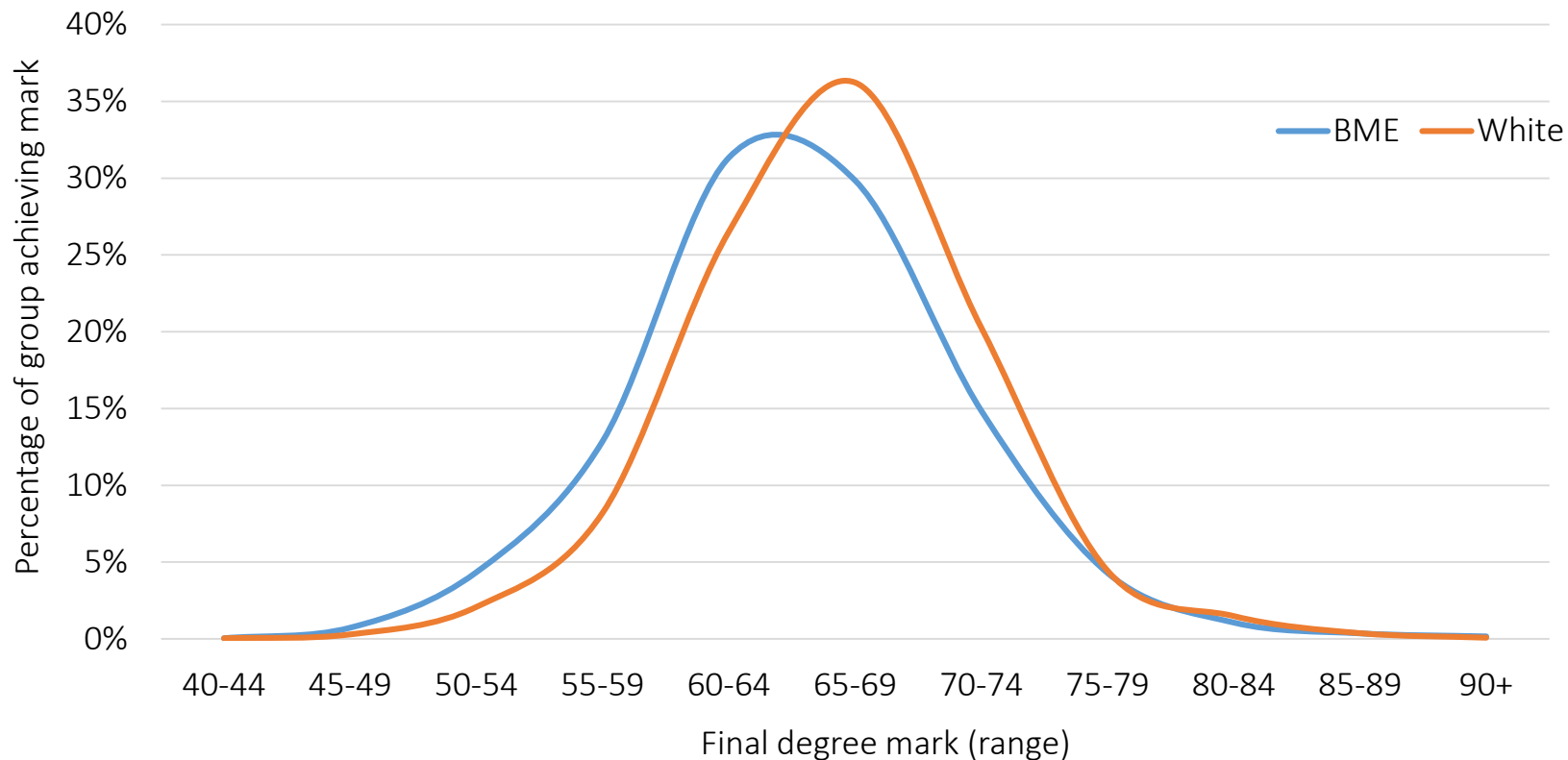
Attainment trend by ethnic group



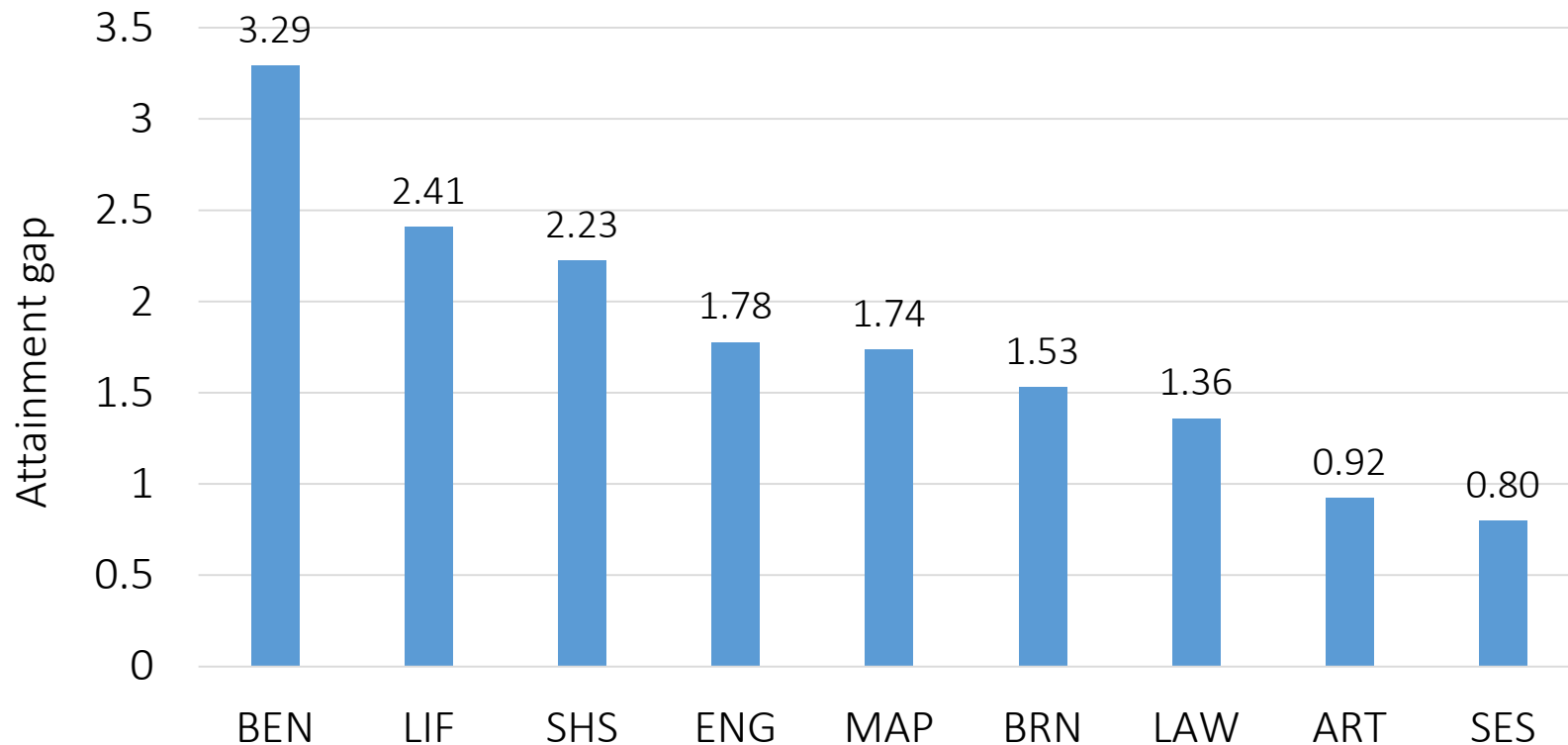
Ethnicity by gender



Distribution of final marks



Attainment gap by faculty



What next?

- We've only just started interrogating the data
- Each faculty will receive own results + statistical significance
- Project also looking at attainment gap within the years (where does gap emerge?)

Project approach and interventions

- Data led approach
- Changing organisational culture and attitudes
- Providing a framework for developing a more inclusive curriculum
- Developing leadership appointments in faculties to focus on attainment
- Working in partnership with students and the Students' Union

Project approach and interventions

- Formed a working group
- Raise awareness of the project and the attainment gap
- BME Attainment Faculty Leads
- Develop tailored resources and training to support staff
 - Online unconscious bias training
 - Resource bank
- Roll out our Inclusive Curriculum Health Check for all programmes

Project approach and interventions

- Work in partnership with students, colleagues and other institutions
- Co-create a more inclusive curriculum – Curriculum Consultation Panel
- Address issues around informal complaints of racist behaviour towards BME students
- Promote role models and student success

What does an Inclusive Curriculum look like?

- A curriculum that is accessible in terms of concept, content delivery and assessment
- For example, case studies or examples are taken from a range of different perspectives.
- Reading lists include a diverse range of authors and where relevant non-academic perspectives.
- Students from diverse backgrounds have an opportunity to use their personal experiences and perspectives.
- This might be in small group work or seminars or discussion forums.
- Assessments are varied and students have formative assessment opportunities

What are we doing as part of the project?

- Based on a successful intervention at Kingston we have developed an Inclusive Curriculum Health Check for programmes.
- This will be part of the Annual Student Experience Review and will be an opportunity for programme directors to reflect on where they are now.
- The ASER will require a development an enhancement plan, times lines for completion and who is responsible for delivery. Students are involved in the ASER. The actions will be part of the annual academic review of programmes.
- There will also be supplementary workshops about developing a more inclusive curriculum for areas where this is more of a challenge, plus a resource bank with examples.

Where do we want to be in 3 years time?

Improved BME student satisfaction

Eliminate attainment gap

Increased staff awareness of the attainment gap

A forum or space to discuss attainment gap issues

Curriculum that is consistently more inclusive

Staff are confident about creating inclusive learning environments

BME students feel confident that racist behaviour will not be tolerated at UCL

What next?

- Completion of the Health Check for all programmes as part of the ASER process.
- Pathfinder programmes
- Announce BME Attainment Leads and encourage you to make contact
- Launch resource bank
- Roll out of training – both online and face to face

Questions?

