



# **BAME Awarding Gap Case Study**

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**Inclusivity Involves Everyone workshop**

**Charmian Dawson**

## What did you do/who's involved?

I designed and ran an inclusivity workshop for 1st year neuroscience students. The workshop was not compulsory, but it was expected that the students would attend. The students were given a questionnaire at the beginning and end of the workshop, each containing the same questions (who benefits from inclusivity and diversity? What are the benefits? How can we improve?) to gauge how the answers changed, if at all.

The overall aim of the workshop was to get students to appreciate the value of inclusivity and diversity for themselves ie. how it benefits them individually and how they can use it as a skill to gain knowledge. Inclusivity means having respect for everyone and appreciating differences. It's not just about being nice, it requires individuals to pay attention and think about things, which requires effort.

The workshop included a PowerPoint presentation, group work, and discussion. I started the workshop with an ice breaker, asking the students to tell the group something about themselves that is surprising. We examined the students' answers and why they were surprising, this is a useful exercise to show that stereotypes can also come from within.

We looked at quotes from student surveys on diversity at UCL. The students were asked to put the statements in the order of when they believed they were given. Students didn't rank in the order that I was expecting ie. with the more positive comments being given most recently. Students reported having heard the same types of quotes from their fellow students. From doing this, I wanted to show that everyone has different experiences and that the way an individual perceives a situation is based on these experiences.

We also covered topics such as the link between diversity and quality and the concern that people are hired for reasons other than their qualities, how diversity can have a meaningful impact on output and why that

might be, how people from different backgrounds bring different perspectives, how the system needs to change to allow different people in/people shouldn't be expected to be extra strong to get past other people's prejudices, and that diversity alone is not enough – simply mixing people from different backgrounds does not mean that a group is automatically inclusive. We explored how when people are in a homogeneous group, they are more likely to think people around them will agree, so they don't check their presumptions as much and they put less effort in to thinking about what they say and how they say it. Research shows that a diverse group raises the performance of the group.

Throughout the workshop I used data, research and evidence from scientific studies to provide examples and facilitate discussions.

Looking at the before and after questions, it was clear that after the workshop the students were thinking about inclusivity from a more self-reflective position and taking more personal responsibility.

Feedback from the students was that they were glad that staff are talking about these issues, and that the workshop raised perspectives that they hadn't previously thought about. In the workshop I tried not to focus on any particular issue (eg. Race, gender, disability) and after the workshop students came to me with things that I hadn't considered/explicitly mentioned, which was good to

hear those students were using what they had learned in the workshop to focus on the aspects of diversity and inclusion that they find the most challenging.

## What evidence/rationale underpinned your choice?

From working on the BAME awarding gap project it was clear that we had no idea what the causes of the awarding gap were.

As part of the Inclusive Curriculum Health Check, it is recommended that students are mixed in terms of ethnicity and race for groupwork, but the research I undertook shows that simply 'mixing' students doesn't help as this just gives students another opportunity to be prejudiced against each other – you have to prime them to value each other's differences and be respectful. Evidence given at a conference attended by another BAME awarding gap leads showed that when you try to promote diversity you can often get backlash from the 'other' group because people feel they're not being valued. I wanted to create the workshop to show that we can value differences without alienating other groups. I wanted to work in a way that genuinely benefitted everyone. My research showed that the best way to promote that was to show people that they will also genuinely benefit from the mixing of students.

## **What would you tell someone who is interested in doing something similar?**

This workshop was aimed at Life Sciences, but staff can find examples relevant to their degrees/subject area and create something similar. The main message is to show how diversity and inclusion can benefit everyone. Diversity is usually framed as a problem of how we can help the people who are excluded, but it is important not to discount the value of evidence and personal experiences of everyone.

## **What are your plans for the future?**

The module was a one off, but I have been in discussion to potentially make it available to ARENA.

There has also been talk of making it a compulsory module, which I may propose to the EDI Committee in the Faculty.

I have also considered giving a workshop on how to run this workshop, for example to student societies, so that it can be rolled out across the university without me delivering it each time.

**For more information on this case study, please contact Charmian Dawson**  
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