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Race to the Top

The Experience of Black Students in Higher Education

A target paper produced by the **Elevation Networks Trust**
and published by its partner, **The Bow Group**

The BOW GROUP

With sponsorship from **Deloitte LLP**

Deloitte.

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Executive summary

Race to the Top: the Experiences of Black Students in Higher Education is the first in a series of reports looking at the experiences of particular groups from non-traditional backgrounds within Higher Education and the challenges faced by that group in gaining employment. This first report focuses on the experiences of Black students from African & Caribbean backgrounds and is the result of a nationwide consultation, which took place over a two year period and engaged over 2500 students.

Research conducted by the Institute for Public Policy Research in 2010 found that ethnic minorities have been disproportionately affected by the recent rise in unemployment. This pattern can also be observed within the graduate market. Indeed, Black graduates are three times more likely to be unemployed than white graduates within six months of graduation and, should they find employment, Black graduates are expected to earn up to 9% less for the same work within five years.

This report, produced to investigate further the causes of these disturbing statistics and to understand the perceptions of Black undergraduates finds:

- **47 per cent. of Black undergraduates believe the Government discriminates in its graduate recruitment.**
- Black students felt they would face discrimination when attempting to pursue a career in the legal services, media, fashion and financial services industries.
- 60% of Black Students do not expect to be in work within 6 months of graduating.
- 68% of Black students expect to be earning less than £25,000 in their first graduate role.
- Black students generally believe there is not currently enough mentoring or support given to them to assist them in their choice of where to go to university.
- Black students generally believe that their parents do not currently receive sufficient guidance from careers counsellors in state schools to understand the choices available to their children.
- There is a sizeable discrepancy between the expectations of Black students and the outcomes they face following graduation.

Recommendations:

1. The Government should develop a coherent strategy to tackle inequality of opportunity within higher education and graduate employment.
2. By way of increasing transparency, we propose that the Government should add a diversity element to any new State-produced University league table that is published.
3. In such official information, data should be included to show the academic and employment outcomes of students within institutions broken down into different ethnic and gender categories.
4. We call on the Government to support the expansion of an industry-wide and corporate funded diversity mentoring scheme, such as the scheme already piloted by Elevation through organisations including financial services firms Deloitte LLP, Ernst & Young, and banking firm HSBC.
5. We propose that State schools should deliver independent careers advice to students and involve parents in the process of selecting universities and choosing careers paths.

Whilst the key person that holds ultimate responsibility for any student's employment and academic outcomes will always be the student, we believe that in order to give everyone the best chance possible there must be **an even playing field**.

Foreword
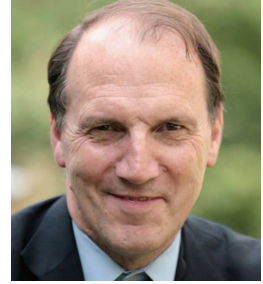
Rt Hon Simon Hughes MP
Advocate for Access to Education
UK Government

I welcome this important research and I commend Elevation Networks and the Bow Group in producing this report. It is clear that many of our institutions of higher education, many leading professional bodies and employers, and government and parliament, are all still failing to deliver equal opportunities to young people from all backgrounds.

Though there is evidence of improvement, there are still too few black youngsters who apply to university, and particularly to the highest ranking universities – which has a harmful knock-on effect on career opportunities after further and higher education.

The Government has made clear the priority it gives to social mobility at the heart of all domestic policy. The recent appointment of Professor Les Ebdon to be the new Director of the Office for Fair Access (to universities) is a clear sign of determination to do everything possible to change the theory and the practice of university admissions. The Social Mobility Foundation (in which I am proud to play a minor role) has also just been appointed to run the Whitehall Social Mobility Internship Programme - more evidence of determination to do training better.

Delivering equal opportunities for black students starts in primary schools. Then in all secondary schools and colleges there must be good mentoring, good work experience and good career information, advice and guidance as well as good teaching and learning and the maximum family and peer group encouragement. The benefits are not just to black students and black families and communities with large numbers of black people. All of the country will benefit. We cannot afford not to maximise the opportunity for all our talent to flourish. This report must be taken seriously - and help to influence policy and practice from this month on.

Simon Hughes
House of Commons

About the Contributors

Author

Elevation Networks (EN) is an award winning charity set up by students to tackle employment challenges within Higher Education. EN has over 8000 members, and has worked with over 30 organisations in the private and public sector to provide employment opportunities and training for young people. EN is run by a core team of 7 with over 70 student and graduate volunteers across the UK. Kofo Sanusi was the chief author on the report with support provided by Paul MacDonald, Hana Mosavie & Kanika Mayi.

EN aims to bridge the gap between under-represented groups and employers, helping young people to become more competitive in the labour market. They work with all young people under 25, but specialize in engaging groups that particularly find barriers into employment. This includes: young women; Black and Minority Ethnic groups; students from universities outside of the Russell Group; young people who have engaged with the criminal justice system; and young people with disabilities and/or learning difficulties. EN helps to build confidence and employment skills whilst providing a fun and innovative experience.

Publisher

The Bow Group is a leading think tank based in London. It is the oldest centre-right think tank in the United Kingdom. It has no corporate view. Founded in 1951 by a group of Conservative-leaning graduates including Lord (Geoffrey) Howe and Lord (Norman) St. John, its past Chairmen have included Sir Christopher Bland, Lord (Michael) Howard and Lord (Norman) Lamont.

Since its foundation, the Bow Group has been a significant source of policy ideas and many of its papers have had a direct influence on Government policy and the life of the nation. Many of the Bow Group's alumni currently sit in Parliament, including five former officers who were elected at the 2010 General Election. The Bow Group Council is presided over by Lord Howe and Lord Howard and Chaired by Ben Harris-Quinney. The current Research Secretary is Richard Mabey.

Key Sponsor

Deloitte are one of the world's leading financial services firms, operating across continents. Deloitte believes that their firm must reflect the communities within which it operates and must be attractive to the most diverse groups of people as potential recruits in order to be sure of being able to attract the best talent available. The firm's Multicultural Network is for their culturally-diverse community. Participation is not confined to one or two ethnic groups but is an open forum for all to come and share, learn and network - enhancing cultural diversity. With over 600 members, the Network's focus is 3-Dimensional: (i) *Diverse* - harness an eclectic culture and community with a resourceful talent pool; (ii) *Develop* - encourage our members to develop personally and professionally; and (iii) *Deliver*: engage our members to deliver the firm's diversity & inclusion agenda, whilst connecting with our clients and communities.

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Introduction

1.1 Background

In 2010, Elevation Networks commissioned a series of in-depth studies into the experiences of different groups in Higher Education entitled 'Getting Socially Mobile'. The first in this series looks specifically at the experiences of Black students within Higher Education, and explores possible reasons for poorer employment outcomes when compared to students from other ethnic groups. Unless otherwise stated, the term 'Black' in this report refers exclusively to those of African and/or Caribbean heritage.

Research demonstrates the importance of Higher Education in overcoming poverty and enabling people to move up the social ladder. As a result, a consensus is established that improving access to universities for Black and Ethnic Minority (BME)[1] groups and enhancing their experience as students at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is an instrumental part of promoting equality of opportunity and facilitating social mobility. Despite this, existing research and statistical data has shown that the experience of Black people differs in terms of education. BME groups are overrepresented in higher education compared to their UK population share[2], but if one looks beyond the headline statistics, which often combine the BME student cohort into one single figure, black Caribbean men are significantly underrepresented. In degree attainment, all BME students are less likely to obtain a first class degree than White students.

In 2010 the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) found that unemployment among BME groups rose by 10 per cent[3]. Whilst the term BME is used to incorporate a range of minority communities living in the United Kingdom, closer inspection of the published statistics shows significant differences between minority ethnic groups. Young Black people are reported to have seen the biggest increase in unemployment with over 48% unemployed compared to 33% of Asians.

As such, it is important that any in-depth study of the BME population recognises that they should not be treated as a homogenous group. This research report therefore works from the foundation that different ethnic communities often have different experiences and must often be looked at separately for accurate analysis.

1.2 Objective of the research

The primary aim of this research report is to explore in detail the experience of Black students in HEIs and the impact this has on their outlook towards employment.

In our initial consultation, which took place in 2010, we established that Black students in HEIs often share similar experiences at university. This research is consequently based on the premise that meaningful conclusions can be drawn from analysing the experiences of Black students as an ethnic group. In this vein, the research sought to hear and document the experience of students from Black backgrounds within a higher education context.

The research also explores the employment expectations of Black students and the extent to which these expectations correlate with the reality of their employment prospects. It seeks to provide a reference point for policy makers' decisions about Black students' experiences in Higher Education, building on existing knowledge and information about the student community in order to

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[1] Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) refers to people who do not define themselves as being White using the 2001 Census definitions.
[2] Universities UK (2005)
[3] Youth employment and the recession IPPR Briefing January 2010
http://www.ippr.org/uploadedFiles/events/Youth%20unemployment%20and%20recession%20technical%20briefing.pdf

provide a reference point for future research in the area.

1.3 Research methods and limitations

The research team adopted a mixed methods approach, using a combination of research tools to ensure richness in the overall report. This paper is the outcome of information generated from qualitative and quantitative research carried out across the United Kingdom between January 2010 and December 2011. Research methods included: an in-depth literature review, an online survey of over 500 students, a nationwide consultation of over 2000 students, focus groups, and interviews. We targeted two categories of respondents for the research: current students (including undergraduates and postgraduates) and recent graduates (those who had completed a Higher Education qualification within the past three years).

The quantitative research consisted of an online survey which was distributed to universities across the United Kingdom, Elevation Networks database of student members and made available on the website. The online survey was conducted between April 2010 and December 2010, and a total of 563 students from over 70 Higher Education institutions took part. The survey was open to all students regardless of gender, ethnicity, and level of study, to allow an accurate representation of the various experiences of students as a whole. This way we were able to identify if and where experiences differed between students from different backgrounds, as well as where similar generic experiences were found.

The qualitative research took place in several stages to ensure that we had as in depth a study as possible. One of the key aims of the research is to present the most accurate portrayal of Black students in Higher Education. To ensure that the voices of the Black student community had a direct input into this research, a nationwide consultation was held, which engaged with over 1600 Black students across the UK (see Annex 1 for the full list of universities). The consultation shed light on the overall experience of Black students in Higher Education and revealed the degree of shared experiences. Prior to this we held a pilot consultation with close to 800 students, from 16 universities in October and November 2010 (see Annex 2). Combining these two consultations, this report draws on the experiences of nearly 2400 students across the UK.

The consultation was followed up with 2 focus groups held in December 2011. The focus group discussions were based on the findings from the online survey. The participants were asked whether the results of the survey reflected their experiences and were given the opportunity to provide a more detailed description of those experiences. Additionally, the focus group participants were able to provide reasons and suggested recommendations to combat the problems raised. Lastly, the focus groups were complemented by a set of structured interviews, which helped to form the case studies used in this report.

1.4 Structure of the report

CHAPTER 2 examines student experiences in HEIs and highlights the existing body of literature which speaks on this topic. It highlights the limitations of assuming that all students or groups share the same experience and sets the groundings for the research, pointing out commonalities between Black students as discovered in our student consultation.

CHAPTER 3 expands the issue by painting a comprehensive picture of the current makeup of students in HEIs and graduate employment outcomes at those HEIs. It includes information on UK undergraduate and postgraduate students and then highlights particular data by focusing on the ethnic makeup of higher education students within the UK.

CHAPTER 4 presents the survey results and the findings from our student consultation that was carried out across UK universities. Where necessary, it provides a comparative analysis of the

findings, and looks at how the experiences and expectations of different ethnic groups differ.

CHAPTER 5 presents our conclusions and offers specific recommendations for the issues raised in this report.

1.5 Who is this report for?

As well as shedding light on the experience of Black students, we also asked them for solutions on the issues which they raised. We suggest that the recommendations of the students should be taken into account by HEIs who seek to further enhance the experiences of all students within their respective places of study.

We encourage leaders at HEIs and Government Ministers to consider the findings of this report when devising policy that is connected to Education. Employers may also wish to consider the findings of the report when shaping their various diversity and attraction initiatives.

Understanding the issue

2.1 The Student Experience

Higher Education in the United Kingdom has expanded in the past decade with a 28% increase in the number of students from all domiciles[4]. This expansion is partly the result of a greater number of students from ethnic backgrounds going to university. The diversity of students means that a wider range of student experiences can be seen. If students experiences were the same, then assumingly their employment outcomes would also be similar, however current figures suggest otherwise. For example, 1 in 4 of all students studying at the University of East London (UEL) remains in unemployed in the long term upon leaving university. This contrasts wit only 1 in 20 at Cambridge and Oxford. Furthermore, there are more Black students at the UEL than in the whole of the top 20 HEIs in the UK, thus contributing to disproportionate employment outcomes.

Why is there such disproportionality in the number of Black students at UEL compared to the top 20 HEIs? Why is it that at face value, it seems that UEL appeals to Black students compared to top institutions such as Oxford and/or Cambridge? Is this disproportionality solely linked to academic results or is there a link to the student experience?

A variety of student 'experiences' can be found across the spectrum of HEIs. University is no longer the sole preserve of 18-21 year olds studying full time courses; today, the student community is represented by school leavers, mature students, international students, and all other types of student. As a broad trend, each of these groups have varying expectations of what they hope to achieve from their time within any respective institution. Moreover, the various modes of study and increasing variety of university courses available also contribute to the subjective meaning of what it means to have a 'good' student experience. For some this could mean being able to balance study with parenthood, the option to balance study with part-time or full-time work, and/or the personal development opportunity. As a result, universities now face a bigger challenge of catering to the growing expectations of an increasingly diverse student population.

In the attempt to define what is meant by 'student experience', we looked at extensive literature and found that there is no set definition that is commonly used. The annual National Student Survey (NSS) provides extensive data on students' perceptions on their learning experiences. However, the 'experience' we wish to look at goes beyond the learning aspects and into the other areas of university life. For the sake of this report, we have highlighted a set of components that play a key part in shaping the Students Experience.

KEY COMPONENTS OF STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Academic Services	• Quality and quantity of teaching • Assessment and feedback • Learning resources and facilities
Student Personal Development	• Student welfare services • Personal tutor support • Career and professional services
Student Social Experience	• Non-academic activities • Extra-curriculum activities
Overall Satisfaction	

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[4] Universities UK (2011; 3)

How student experience differs?

We examined the NSS[5] report which looked at trends in the survey findings from 2006-2009. In particular we looked at the difference in satisfaction, and found that the level of satisfaction varied significantly depending on students' ethnic background. For example, the survey report noted that the differences in satisfaction score for Teaching and Learning were significantly different for White and BME students. Only White students[6] showed an overall positive satisfaction with their teaching and learning experience at university and all other minority ethnic groups[7] showed a negative level of satisfaction.[8] In terms of personal development, Black and Asian students reflected the highest level of satisfaction compared to the other race categories, however in measuring overall satisfaction by all students surveyed, everyone except for White students showed an overall negative level of satisfaction. These findings suggest that different groups have different university experiences and also support the findings of our initial student consultation where it was suggested that students of minority ethnic backgrounds share similar and less positive experiences.

2.2 Our research justification: the issue with the BME grouping

Ethnicity is far more than a static concept and definitions of what constitutes an ethnic group or an ethnic minority are subject to much discussion. A reflection of the changing and complex nature of these debates can be seen in the evolving terms used within British census. The *2001 Census of Population* provides the most common framework on the classification of ethnicity in the United Kingdom. More recently, the *2011 Census of Population* includes the recognition of "Arab" under "Other ethnic group". Whilst racial categorising is useful for assigning data and as a basis of measurement, it often limits the reader's ability to compare a range of categories and can be seen to neglect factors such as religion, culture and/or language. These other facets of an individual's identity can play a major role in understanding experiences.

Table 1: ONS Categorisations of Race

Level 1	Level 2
White	English
	Welsh
	Scottish
	Northern Irish
	British
	Irish
	Gypsy or Irish Traveller
	Any other White background
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	White and Black Caribbean
	White and Black African
	White and Asian
	Any other mixed/multiple background
Asian / Asian British	Indian
	Pakistani
	Bangladeshi
	Chinese
	Any other Asian background

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[5] Higher Education Funding Council for England (2010) National Student Survey: Finding and trends 2006 - 2009

[6] White students were defined as using the general UK classification: White; White - British; White - Irish; White - Scottish; Irish Traveller; Other White background.

[7] Other groups in this context are defined to be students from Asian, Black, Chinese, Mixed or Other ethnic backgrounds.

[8] Higher Education Funding Council for England (2010) National Student Survey: Finding and trends 2006 - 2009

Black / Black British	African
	Caribbean
	Any other Black/African/Caribbean background
Other ethnic group	Arab
	Any other ethnic group

Source: Office of National Statistics ethnic classification (2011 Census of the UK Population)

Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) is an umbrella term that is used to incorporate a range of minority communities living in the UK. Though people from the BME categories can share similar experiences, this common categorisation overlooks the statistical differences within ethnic groups and portrays a homogenous experience. A whole range of socio-economic, cultural, and personal experiences may skew the outcomes of different BME groups. Lack of understanding about the particular experience and circumstances facing a group, makes it more difficult to identify a solution. This report therefore focuses on the Black (namely those of African & Caribbean) student population. It is worth noting that even within the 'Black' category there are differences that are influenced by factors such as culture, and religion. Consequently, where possible, the research will also highlight the differences between those of African heritage and those originating from the Caribbean.

As we will later demonstrate (in chapter 3), BME students do not participate in education and employment in a uniform way. The umbrella term is thus unhelpful in painting an accurate picture in this instance. Moreover, these students do not necessarily share the same beliefs, values or attitudes towards education. It is important that generalisations are not simplistic and that the groups are treated independently for a stronger analysis. Future research will explore the diversity within the BME classification by looking at the experience of other groups i.e. Asian students.

Our definition of Black

For the purpose of this report the term Black will be used to refer to two main categories of students. The first will be used to describe Black pupils also known respectively as African and Caribbean; the former being Black students whose parents or themselves directly come from Africa and the latter are of Caribbean origin. The second category dual/mixed heritage most typically describes individuals of both Black and White heritages.

Table 1: Defining Black

Black / Black British	African
	Caribbean
	Other backgrounds linked to the above nations of origin
Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	White and Black Caribbean
	White and Black African
	Black African and other ethnic groups
	Black Caribbean and other ethnic group

2.3 Finding common ground: defining Black Identity

The idea of a 'Black identity' is particularly important to this study, however agreeing on what Black identity is proved a challenge. To suggest that there is a need to separate the language used amongst researchers, academics, policy writers, and the government, in discussions relating to BME groups requires an alternative definition.

In our consultation, when we asked students what it meant to be Black, the consensus was that black identity could be defined in as far as the commonalities that were identified and shared. Put simply, it was said that "only the historical experiences of Black people should be used to construct any identity commonality". Anything outside of this is described as a manifestation of individual perspective and experiences.

The findings from our consultations are very clear; a large majority of Black students who we spoke to believed that that there was no single, agreeable definition of 'Black identity' that was reflective of the entire community. On this basis, Black identity finds no easy objective definition and can mean many different things. Students recognised that identity can be influenced by a number of factors and placed emphasis on cultural upbringing and socio-economic background, stating that this plays a more significant role than race in helping to shape one's identity.

One of the recurring issues across our consultation is what was seen and described as the damaging portrayal of the idea of a Black identity. Much emphasis was placed on the lack of a diverse portrayal of Black culture and identity beyond music and sports in public representation. This image was described as 'unhelpful' and was said to 'pigeonhole' those who do not necessarily fit this construct. Just as there is no singular "white identity", similarly black identity should not be portrayed as one homogenous image. This is an important point but we will not develop it further in this paper.

If black identity is a myth, do Black students share similar experiences?

The consensus from the majority of students who took part in consultation was that they considered 'Black identity' as a myth. However, the students also stressed the need to acknowledge the commonalities and uniform experiences of Black individuals today. This belief was reinforced with reference to the disproportionate representation of Blacks in certain UK areas (namely London), the overrepresentation of Black people in the criminal justice system as well as statistics relating to education and employment outcomes. For example, a study conducted by the Institute of Public Policy Research found that almost half (48%) of Black people aged between 16 and 24 are unemployed, compared with 31% of Asian students and 20% of the overall UK population". [9] The students in our consultation stressed the need to acknowledge these particularities in order to identify the reasons as well as possible solutions.

Furthermore, Black people are often overrepresented at all stages of the Criminal Justice System.[10]   Black individuals are seven times more likely to stopped and searched than their white counterparts. Additionally, Black people of all ages are three times more likely to be arrested than White people and are five times more likely to be in prison.[11] Former Prime Minister, Tony Blair commented that the 2007 murders in the Black communities were being caused by a "distinctive Black culture."[12] It should be noted that the causes of the overrepresentation of young black people in the criminal justice system are multiple and complex. A report publication from the House of Commons Home Affairs Committee *'Young Black People and the Criminal Justice System'* (2007) highlighted three key causes of overrepresentation. The report states:

> *"Social exclusion—both historic and current—is the key, primary cause of young black people's overrepresentation. Factors specific to the black community—such as family patterns and cultures amongst young black people themselves—are both fuelled by and compound socio-economic deprivation. Thirdly, the operation of the criminal justice system, including both the reality and perception of discrimination, mean more young black people*

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[9] Institute of Public Policy Research (2010)
[10] Home Affairs Committee (2007)
[11] Jones and Singer (2008:viii)
[12] House of Commons Home (2007)

come into contact, and stay in contact, with the system."[13]

Moreover, there is overwhelming evidence pointing to the poor academic performance of Black pupils, especially in secondary schools. Black Caribbean and Black African groups achieve on average a Key Stage 3[14] (KS3) points score of around 3.0 points less than White British pupils. This is equivalent to around a whole year of progress in terms of National Curriculum levels. Research by the Department of Education also found that Black Caribbean pupils are under-represented in entry to the higher tiers of the KS3 tests. By participating in lower tier tests, they achieve lower academic results because of the grade capping system. Numerous research papers have sought to explain the low academic performance of Black students, as a group. Some findings identified the reasons of the failure of Black pupils being the lack of support from their families or their communities.[15] Some researchers have focused on the students' attitudes themselves as a cause for underachievement,[16] whilst others have suggested that institutional racism plays a role in the lower expectations of teachers, and leading to the exclusion of curricula that leads to lower levels of attainment.[17]

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[13] Ibid

[14] Key Stage 3 is the first three years of secondary school, when they are between the ages of 11 and 14 (i.e. years 7, 8 and 9)

[15] Afridi (2004)

[16] Sewell (1997; 2000)

[17] Gillborn, D. & Youdell, D. (2000) Rationing education: policy, practice, reform, and equity (Buckingham, Open University Press).

Comprehensive Overview

3.1 Students in Higher Education: Key Facts and Figures

Higher education (HE) enrolment and participation has increased in United Kingdom over the last decade with over 2.5 million participating annually[18]. Some of the credit for the widened participation can be attributed to the efforts of the previous Labour Government which pledged to make education its first priority in the 1997 Labour Party Manifesto. The Labour party set out in its manifesto the aspiration of 50% of 18-30 year olds having some experience of Higher Education by 2010. The success of the widening participation policy is evident on the face of it; the number of student participating in higher education has increased by **22%** between 2000/01 and 2010/11.

Table 3: Higher Education Participation (2000 – 2010)
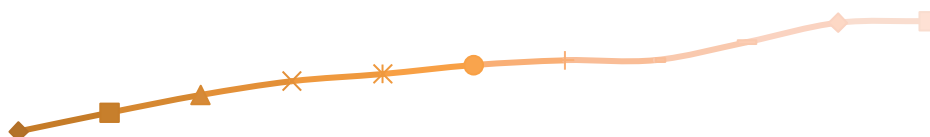
Gender and Higher Education Participation

Table 4: Gender breakdown

Gender	Total no of students
Male	1090200
Female	1411090

Data source: HESA 2010/11

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[18] Universities UK (2011)

The increase in the student population is also helped by the growing participation of women in Higher Education. Historically, women had been under-represented in Higher Education,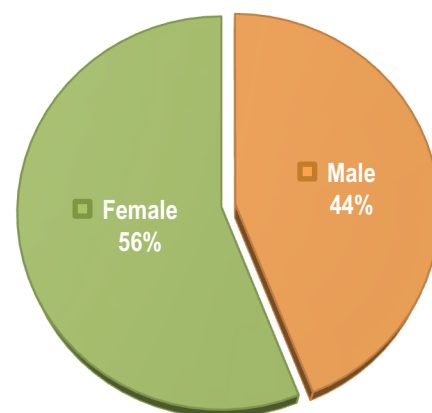 but in 1992-93 the participation rate for women exceeded that for men for the first time.[19] Since then, there has been a gradual increase in the participation of women in Higher Education. To date, women are participating in greater numbers than men. For example, in 2010/11 there were 320,890 more female students in HEIs. This increasing participation can also be linked to the efforts to widen participation, but this trend in gender gap is not unique to Higher Education. In terms of secondary education, girls have become significantly more likely than boys to achieve five or more GCSEs at grades A*-C. For example, in 2007 65% of girls, compared to 55.8% of boys achieved five or more GCSEs at grade A* - C. Furthermore, post-16 participation rates also vary by gender; girls are more likely to stay on in full-time education at age 16 (82% of girls and 72% of boys). These are possible factors that may explain and/or contribute to the new gender gap in higher education.

What are students studying?

There has been a decline in the number of undergraduate students studying subjects allied to medicine, architecture, building and planning, languages, and creative arts and design. The largest percentage increase can be seen in agriculture and related subjects which has seen an 11% increase in the number of undergraduates. Amongst postgraduates, the biggest increase is within mathematical sciences and social studies, whilst the field of computer science has seen a 6% decline from the previous year.

Table 5: Subject Area for student population from 2010/11

Subject Area	Year 2010/11	% Change from 2009/10 Undergraduate	Postgraduate
Medicine & dentistry	66840	1%	3%
Subjects allied to medicine	299800	-3%	3%
Biological sciences	190035	4%	1%
Veterinary science	5540	4%	-1%
Agriculture & related subjects	20790	11%	2%
Physical sciences	93580	3%	2%
Mathematical sciences	41110	5%	8%
Computer science	99025	0%	-6%
Engineering & technology	160885	2%	3%
Architecture, building & planning	62780	-6%	-1%
Social studies	218135	1%	6%
Law	92950	-1%	-3%
Business & administrative studies	358295	2%	-1%
Mass communications & documentation	53680	0%	5%
Languages	134720	-3%	2%
Historical & philosophical studies	96760	0%	3%
Creative arts & design	176700	1%	5%
Education	223730	-5%	4%
Combined	105955		
Total	2501295	0.31%	

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[19] http://www.hepi.ac.uk/files/41Maleandfemaleparticipation.pdf

Table 6: UK-domicile student profile over time by ethnicity

		White	Black	Asian	Chinese	Other Asian	Other	BME
		%	%	%	%	%	%	%
All students								
03/04		85.1	4.4	5.9	0.9	1.2	2.4	14.9
04/05		84.5	4.7	6.1	0.9	1.2	2.5	15.5
05/06		83.9	5.0	6.1	0.9	1.3	2.8	16.1
06/07		83.4	5.2	6.2	0.9	1.3	3.0	16.6
07/08		82.8	5.4	6.2	0.9	1.3	3.3	17.2
08/09		82.2	5.7	6.3	0.9	1.4	3.5	17.8
09/10		81.9	5.9	6.3	0.9	1.4	3.7	18.1

Data source: Equality Challenge Unit: "Equality in higher education: statistical report 2011"

Similar to the increase in the female student population, the participation of students from Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) backgrounds has also steadily increased over the years. Arguably, this increase is reflective of the growing BME population, and it has been predicted that BME groups will make up one fifth of the UK population by the year 2051.[20] There are increasing opportunities for those from diverse backgrounds to access Higher Education, and presently in the UK the increasing number of students from BME groups attending university has been a source of optimism for race equality. There has been an increase from 14.9% (2003/04) to 18.1% (2009/10), in the proportion of UK-domiciled of BME students within Higher Education.[21] This increase clearly reflects the efforts to widen participation amongst non-traditional groups, but it has also been argued that it reflects the increasing level of aspirations amongst different communities. But whilst considerable progress has been made, and as encouraging as these figures may seem, further analysis on ethnic group participation reveals greater complexities, exposing the error in presenting the BME community as a collective, homogeneous group.

Ethnic minorities do not participate in higher education and/or employment in a uniform way. From the rates and patterns of participation, through to the experiences and outcomes, undeniably some ethnic groups are faring far better than others. For this reason, the limitations of the term BME must be acknowledged and the next section looks specifically at the participation and outcomes of people from BME communities in higher education with an intentional focus on the Black groups as the group of particular interest to this report.

3.2 Ethnicity in Focus: BME Students in Higher Education

Current research reveals that in England, students from Black African and Indian backgrounds have the largest Higher Education participation rate whilst students from Bangladeshi and Black Caribbean backgrounds had the lowest participation rates among minority ethnic groups. Among UK-domiciled Black students, there are more Black female than Black male students, however, for all other BME groups, there appear to be more male students than female students. It is worth noting that women of BME backgrounds are not, on average, underrepresented in Higher Education – with Bangladeshi women being the only group with a lower participation rate (39 per cent) than white women. This demonstrates that whilst BME students as a whole may display higher participation rates within Higher Education than white students, the inter-group differences

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[20] Wohland, P., Rees, P., Norman, P., Boden, P., Jasinska, M. (2010)
[21] This proportion varied from 20.4% at institutions in England to 2.2% at institutions in Northern Ireland

vary to such a degree that make a reductive analysis of BME groups unhelpful.

Where do Black students study?

BME students are unequally distributed across the HE sector, and a disproportionate number can be found in London based universities. This is partially explained by the fact that approximately half of the BME population in the UK lives in London[22]. Among UK universities, 11 have BME student populations of 50 per cent or greater, but these universities are all located in the greater London area. Moreover, some Russell Group universities with the highest participation rates for BME students (are London based institutions, such as University College London (UCL), the London School of Economics (LSE), Kings College London (KCL), and Imperial College.

Initiatives such as Aim Higher[23] were created to, and have been successful in widening participation among under-represented groups. Whilst such initiatives have focused intently on the numbers of students entering higher education, insufficient attention has been paid to the disproportionate representation of students from BME backgrounds at certain universities (namely the higher league and Russell Group universities).

Research has shown that BME groups are better represented at 'new' universities than 'old' universities, where around 60 per cent of BME students in England are concentrated. Following the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, the university sector includes 'old universities' which

> *"Forty-six per cent of the black students who came from London stayed there to study for their degrees, compared with just 3% of the white students who grew up in the capital"*
>
> **Higher Education Funding Council for England**

existed pre-1992, and 'new universities' which were polytechnics and colleges of higher education before the 1992 Act. Currently, data shows that 59 per cent of all undergraduates attend new universities compared to the 32 per cent that attend old universities. Of the BME students at these 'new' universities, a significant number are based in London or other large cities. Indeed, the concentration of Black students at London universities is disproportionately high.

By way of example, there are four times more Black Caribbean students at post 1992 universities than at the 'old universities'. Chinese students are the most likely minority group to be found studying at old, pre 1992 universities. Recent publications have noted the high percentage of Black students at universities such as London South Bank University, London Metropolitan University and University of East London. There are more Black students at the University of East London than at all Russell Group universities combined.

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[22] Bhattacharyya et al. (2003: 5)
[23] Aimhigher is the Government's initiative to widen participation in higher education in England through activities that raise the aspirations of young people.

Table 7: Proportion of Students from Ethnic Minorities studying at Russell Group Universities (2007-08)[24]

No	University	% of ethnic minority students
1	London School of Economics and Political Science	41.1%
2	King's College London	40.7%
3	Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine	37.8%
4	University College London	31.5%
5	The University of Birmingham	19.7%
6	The University of Manchester	17.1%
7	The University of Nottingham	14.9%
8	The University of Warwick	14.5%
9	The University of Sheffield	12.5%
10	The University of Leeds	11.3%
11	The University of Oxford	11.1%
12	The University of Liverpool	10.6%
13	The University of Cambridge	10.5%
14	The University of Bristol	10.0%
15	The University of Southampton	9.4%
16	Cardiff University	8.8%
17	The University of Newcastle -upon Tyne	7.6%
18	The University of Edinburgh	6.4%
19	The University of Glasgow	5.2%
20	The Queen's University of Belfast	1.5%

Within the Russell Group, Oxford and Cambridge universities are found to admit the lowest number of students from poor backgrounds[25]. In 2011, both institutions became involved in an argument over diversity when statistics were unveiled concerning their intake. Research by JRF showed that at Cambridge University, 1 in 3 White applicants were successful in comparison to 1 in 6 Black applicants, and at Oxford only 1 in 5 Black applicants were successful.[26]

In response to the Higher Education Performance Indicator and the underrepresentation of certain groups at Russell Group universities, the Director General of the Russell Group, Dr Wendy Piatt, said:

> **"Russell Group universities will continue to do everything they can to increase participation from under-represented groups, but the problems are not ones which they can solve alone. The issues of low aspirations, lack of high quality advice and guidance and, most importantly, under-achievement at school still remain significant barriers to participation**".[27]

But the problem is more complex than the response offered. Research has indicated that the factors affecting educational choices are more diverse than those cited by the Russell Group in their analysis. A desire to **'fit in'** and foster a sense of belonging among peers at university greatly impacts on the choice of institution for many working class and minority ethnic applicants.

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[24] Table taken and amended from Race for Opportunity report 'Race into higher education'
[25] Blair (2006a) & Blair (2006b)
[26] http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-ethnicity-education-full.pdf
[27] http://www.russellgroup.ac.uk/russell-group-latest-news/121-2010/4180-he-performance-indicators-200809/

Subsequently, 'non-traditional' students tend to apply to universities which appear more diverse (namely new universities, or the former polytechnics)[28].

> *"In the 2010 election, 30% of MPs attended Oxbridge (38% of Conservative, 28% of Liberal Democrat and 20% of Labour MPs). Making sure that our elite universities are effective at identifying and nurturing talent of young people from all backgrounds is likely to have a knock on effect on who has the capacity to fulfil future leadership roles. Oxford University must wake up to the way in which it is missing out on the potential of students from Black backgrounds and work to address it. Not just because I would like to be proud of the university from which I graduated, but to justify its position as an elite university for all."*
>
> **Rob Berkeley**
> **Director of Runnymede Trust and Oxford Alumni**

It is important to recognise that proportionally fewer BME students apply to Russell Group institutions, in particular Oxford and Cambridge universities. The entry qualifications for Russell Group universities remain competitive and may exclude a large number of applicants, i.e. students from BME backgrounds are more likely than their White counterparts to possess vocational qualifications rather than academic entry requirements which in turn limit their choice of university. However, students enrolled in these universities benefit from high-calibre teaching, extensive resources and thus overall a very high quality of education. Oxford and Cambridge universities are not simply institutions among many, but the elite of our university system[29], and it has been estimated that the combined resources of the colleges in either Oxford or Cambridge overshadow the entire spending of universities elsewhere in the UK[30]

So, what are the implications? Arguably, one is less likely to obtain a graduate job if s/he studies at a university where the quality of overall learning is significantly lower. Universities which have an abundance of available learning resources impact the quality of tuition and therefore the opportunities for self-development and employment. Since students from certain universities are more likely to be employed and, indeed, employed in roles with higher monetary levels of remuneration, given the above information, BME students, as a group, are at a notable disadvantage. Studying at a Russell Group university can boost a graduate's earnings by 3 to 6 per-cent in comparison to studying at a 'new' university[31]. Survey findings have shown that recruiters are inclined to believe that newer institutions produce lower quality graduates. Thus obtaining a 'good' first or upper second class degree from a 'good' university is more likely to increase career prospects. Nonetheless, in spite of the increased Higher Education Initial Participation Rate (HEIPR), **BME graduates are less likely to possess a good degree leaving university, and more than three times as likely to be unemployed after graduation as compared to White UK and Irish students.**

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[28] Read et al. (2003: 261)
[29] Oxford University: A dream too far for Black students? www.obv.org.uk
[30] 28 Bahra, et al. (2002)
[31] Chevalier & Conlon (2003)

What do Black students study?

"20.5% of black students study subjects allied to medicine compared with 13.0% of white students"

Equality Challenge Unit, 2011

Entry routes (e.g. A Levels, vocational courses, mature students etc.) into Higher Education can often impact on the degree choice of students and research has shown a general polarisation of ethnic students (particular Blacks and Asians) towards some degree courses when compared to other groups. In a report by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS, 2009), it was noted that nearly two thirds of Black students (65 per cent) took an alternative route into Higher Education[32]. This is almost twice the average rate for alternative route taken by students from other ethnic groups (35 per cent). This in many ways affects the subject taken by those who enter higher education via the alternative route and there is a skewed distribution towards specific degree courses. A recently published report by the government's senior advisor, Professor Alison Wolf, suggested that during early education **Black pupils are steered by teachers to study what is described as "soft subjects" and not traditional subjects which are regarded highly by "good" universities, in order to boost their academic ranking[33]**. As a result, Black students are limited not only in the university they can successfully get into, but also the degree subjects that they can study.

Subject choice also affects chances of employment. It has been found that students of all ethnicities except Other Asian were more likely to study non-SET subjects in comparison to SET subjects.[34] Nonetheless, 20.5% of black students and 20.9% of other Asian students are said to be studying subjects allied to medicine, compared with just 13.0% of white students. Competitive subjects such as law and medicine appear to be common favourites among Black families and students. Traditionally, Black students do tend to apply for the more oversubscribed subjects, and the majority are geared toward set career plans, with the aim of immediately walking into a job after university[35].This may well be a rational decision given the extent of discrimination in the labour market, where government research has found that having an 'African or Asian sounding name' means that you have to make nearly twice as many applications to even get an interview.[36]

Research conducted by Aim Higher highlights that there is a high concentration of ethnic minority students studying subjects such as Computer Science, Medicine and Dentistry. The report points out that for subjects such as Law and Business Studies, there is twice as high a representation for the BME group. Additionally, a recent report by Race for Opportunity (RFO) states that Black students are more likely than any other groups to study vocational subjects. The report explains that there is a low representation of Blacks and other ethnic minority groups in subjects such as Art, Humanities and/or language courses.

Table 8: Subject studied by Black students		
SET	*Number of Black students studying subject*	*%*

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[32] The BIS report defines 'alternative route' as students accessing Higher Education with no qualifications; with a vocational qualification (e.g. Access qualifications, BTEC National Certificates, NVQ Level 3) and not more than one A Level qualification; or a mature student accessing HE with any entrance qualification;

[33] Wolf, A (2011). "Review of Vocational Education: The Wolf Report" Department for Education. https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/The%20Wolf%20Report.pdf

[34] SET refers to Science, Engineering and Technology subjects.

[35] http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/apr/12/oxford-university-diversity-row-students

[36] Martin Wood, Jon Hales, Susan Purdon, Tanja Sejersen and Oliver Hayllar (2009) A test for racial discrimination in recruitment practice in British cities Department for Work and Pensions London: HMSO

Agriculture and related subjects	240	0.2
Architecture, building and planning	2625	2.2
Biological sciences	8155	6.9
Computer science	6345	5.4
Engineering and technology	6345	5.4
Mathematical sciences	1130	1.0
Medicine and dentistry	1720	1.5
Physical sciences	1620	1.4
Subjects allied to medicine	24310	20.5
Veterinary science	10	0.0
SET total	52580	44.4
Non-SET		
Business and administrative studies	20440	17.3
Combined	3170	2.7
Creative arts design	5735	4.8
Education	7760	6.6
History philosophy	1270	1.1
Languages	2435	2.1
Law	7160	6.1
Mass communications and documentation	2820	2.4
Social studies	14930	12.6
Total Non-SET	*65710*	*55.6*
Data extracted from: Equality Challenge Unit: "Equality in higher education: statistical report 2011		

Black students' attainment in Higher Education

"Black students are more than three times less likely to be awarded a first-class university degree than their white classmates. Only 37% of the black students achieved a first or a 2:1, compared with 62% of the white students. For mature students only 25% of black student's achieved a first or 2:1, compared with 61% of white students."

Higher Education Funding Council for England (Hefce)
http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2010/10 13/10 13.pdf

There are complex issues around the success and attainment of BME students. The degree attainment of students from ethnic backgrounds in the UK does not reflect the high level of participation. The Equality Challenge Unit (2008: 2) reported that **being from a minority ethnic group has a "statistically significant and negative effect on degree attainment".** A research conducted by Broecke & Nicholls stresses that attainment levels vary significantly between ethnic groups, even when the groups have equivalent entry qualifications. Richardson (2002) explains that the odds of a Black student being awarded a "good" grade are a third of a White student being awarded the same. It is worth noting, that whilst BME students achieve a lower class of degree classification that their white counterparts, among BME groups, Black Africans have the higher rate of degree completion.

Table 9: UK-domicile qualifiers by degree class and ethnicity

|	1st		2:1		2:2		3rd	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
All								
White	34960	16.0	113535	51.9	58475	26.7	11750	5.4
Black	605	4.5	4520	33.6	6225	46.3	2105	15.7
Asian	1655	8.4	8190	41.6	7735	39.2	2120	10.8
Chinese	355	12.4	1270	44.5	955	33.5	275	9.7
Other Asian	295	9.3	1300	40.6	1215	37.9	395	12.3
Other	1185	11.8	4895	48.7	3205	31.9	770	7.6
BME	4100	8.3	20175	40.9	19335	39.2	5670	11.5
Total	**39060**	**14.6**	**133715**	**49.9**	**77810**	**29.0**	**17420**	**6.5**
Data source: "Equality in higher education: statistical report 2011								
Equality Challenge Unit:								

3.3 Graduate Employment

As the Higher Education marketplace develops, and the world of graduate employment becomes more competitive, it is important that we are able to have a better understanding of the value of a university education. It has been said that a graduate leaving university should earn an average of £1.6m over a 45-year career compared to £1m for an 18-year-old non graduate over a 48-year career. Despite this optimistic figure, it was recently reported that that nearly 36%, or more than one in three recent graduates are employed in a lower skilled job compared with 26.7% in 2001.[37] The current state of graduate employment in the UK has been largely affected by the recent recession. Prior to 2008, the employment rate for graduates was generally high, however in the first quarter of the recession the employment rate for new graduates fell by almost 4%. Nonetheless, the value of a university degree remains evident. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) reported that in the final quarter of 2011, "86% of graduates were in work compared with 73% of non-graduates" albeit that that one in three are in lower skilled jobs.

Key Facts

- *54.7% of White university leavers were in full-time paid work (including self-employed) six months after leaving, compared with 44.4% of BME leavers.*

- *A higher proportion of BME leavers (15.6%), particularly Chinese leavers (19.6%), were in further study than White leavers (12.6%)*

- *BME leavers (12.6%), particularly Chinese (14.7%) and Black (14.3%) leavers, were more likely to be assumed to be unemployed than white leavers (6.2%)*

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[37] Office of National Statistics (March 2012). Graduates in the labour market – 2012.

Table 10: Employment figures
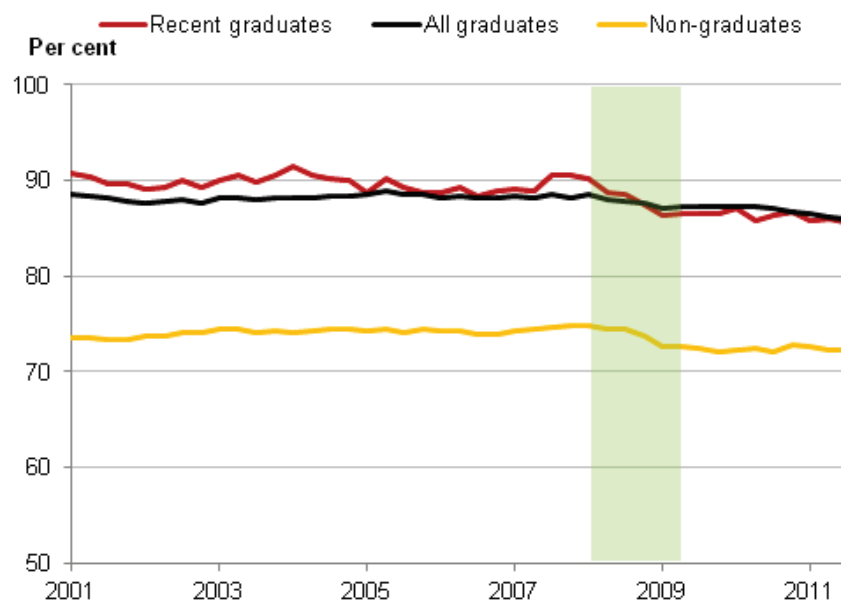
It is worth noting that the risk of unemployment is not borne equally by graduates of all subject disciplines. For example, graduates of arts and humanities subjects are at a significantly higher risk of becoming unemployed than those of medicine and subjects allied to medicine. The ONS research found that broad subject categories mask major differences in the likelihood of unemployment. For example, within STEM subjects (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), graduates in software engineering are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed six months after graduation in comparison to the graduates in chemistry related subjects.

Where do Graduates go to?

Data on the first destinations of graduates are collected by institutions on behalf of Higher Education Statistical Agency.

Table 10: UK domicile first degree leavers by activity

Activity	*2008/09*	*2009/10*
Work only	61.30%	64.50%
Work and further study	8.20%	7.90%
Further study only	16.00%	14.00%
Assumed to be unemployed	9.30%	8.80%
Not available for employment	4.00%	3.50%
Other	1.20%	1.30%

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[38] Ibid

	100.00%	100.00%
Total		

Table 11: UK domicile first degree leavers entering employment* by employment circumstances

Employment circumstances	_2008/09_	_2009/10_
Employed full-time in paid work	71.40%	71.50%
Employed part-time in paid work	21.30%	20.80%
Self-employed/freelance	4.10%	4.40%
Voluntary work/other unpaid work	3.20%	3.20%
Total	100.00%	100.00%

Graduate recruitment and diversity

Research conducted by the Institute for Public Policy Research (2010) found that ethnic minorities have been disproportionately affected by the rise in unemployment. This pattern can also be observed within the graduate market with more BME students unemployed after graduation than White graduates. The IPPR research noted that young Black people in particular have faced the biggest increases in unemployment, and again amongst Black graduates, it is reported that they are three times more likely to be unemployed than white graduates within six months of graduation. What's more, Black graduates are expected to earn up to 9% less for the same work within five years.[39]

Research conducted by RARE[40] was able to show the differences of employment within BME groups and their white counterparts, as well as a comparison of socio-economic groups. The research found that applications from candidates who had studied at a comprehensive school were on average 17% more inclined to be rejected than a candidate that studied at a private school. However, if the candidate was a part of the BME grouping they were then 14% more likely to be rejected than their white counterparts.

Similar findings were observed when analysing the online test stage of recruitment. Candidates from comprehensive schools were rejected at a higher percentage than private school candidates. Additionally, applicants from BME and lower socio-economic backgrounds who attended comprehensive schools were subject to an even higher percentage of rejection at this stage. The research identified two main factors to explain the differences: firstly, it was said that those from private schools would have taken a significant amount of ability tests throughout their school life. As such, when having to repeat somewhat similar skills tests for a graduate job, they are more familiarised with the process, compared to candidates that did not have the same chance. Secondly, families from higher socio-economic groups tend to have a large network of higher

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[39] http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/asset/news/6016/Cuts_Briefing_-_Black_Students.pdf
[40] RARE Recruitment. Class, Race and Graduate Recruitment: Best Practices (December 2011) - http://www.rarerecruitment.co.uk/rare/news.php?c=135

status individuals who can direct them into practising for ability and personality tests, which are generally used as part of the graduate recruitment selection process. As BME groups are likely to be placed in a lower socio-economic groups, this explains some of their hardship within the recruitment process.
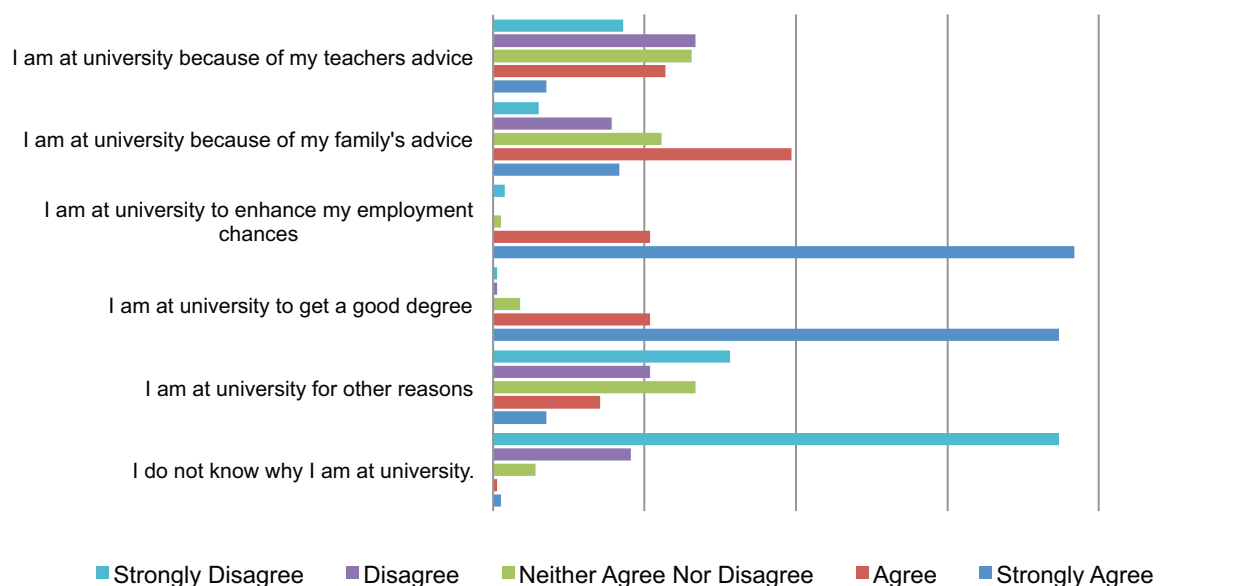
Black Student Experience: Survey & Consultation results

Through the series of consultation groups we conducted to accompany the data collected in the student survey, we have been able to guage more in-depth insight into the responses we have seen in the survey. The results below reflect the response from Black students, which has been combined specifically with the findings from our consultation, focus groups and interviews to give a detailed account of our findings.

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1. Going to University – Key Influences & Choice

Key Points:

- Our focus group and nationwide consultation observed that teachers and parents played a crucial role in the decision making process. The influence of teachers was acknowledged both positively and negatively. Black African respondents pointed to the stress placed on a university degree by their parents.

- One of the key factors listed by respondents is the desire to get a good degree which they believed would assist their career prospects and help them to secure a more highly paid employment compared to a non-graduate.

- There appears to be no single overriding factor that determines HE entry by Black students. The factors identified are similar to those shown in previous research and to students of other backgrounds who participated in the survey

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Reasons for going to university

Legend: ■ Strongly Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Neither Agree Nor Disagree ■ Agree ■ Strongly Agree

Categories:
- I am at university because of my teachers advice
- I am at university because of my family's advice
- I am at university to enhance my employment chances
- I am at university to get a good degree
- I am at university for other reasons
- I do not know why I am at university.

Key Influencing Factors

The participation of Black students in higher education has increased gradually over the past few years and in both the survey and consultation, we found a number of interrelating factors when asking for the reasons behind students' decision to attend university. These reasons were consistent and similar to other ethnic groups. The results indicates that Black students see university as a means to an end. University was described as a way of enhancing their employment prospects and as such the students considered getting a good degree as a key priority. For these students, individual aspiration to be successful was the underlying force and as such it also played a crucial part in their choice. The expectation of economic gain and career advantage resulting from higher education participation motivated students to want to further their education. An interest in the subject was another key factor in choosing to enter HE. Many of the students engaged in the research had intentions of pursuing careers in professional fields that required a university degree as a prerequisite for entry.

For some of them, simply attending higher education was considered an important goal to achieve. Other motivating factors raised by research respondents included: a personal sense of achievement and satisfaction, the experience itself which includes: the opportunity to move away from home, to live independently, to meet new people, and to build new relationships. We found a common theme amongst students, who saw going to university as a way of defying racial stereotypes. These respondents commented on the impact of the media's portrayal of 'blacks' and the importance of not conforming.

> *"I felt that going to university and getting a good degree will help me get ahead in my career field. I've grown up and seen people who didn't go to university and how much they have struggled and had to work their way up from the very bottom. With a university education and a good degree you have a slightly better advantage – for example the graduate starting salary is like £25,000 compared to the starting salary for an entry role when you don't have a degree qualification. I know things are more tough now but I still think it's worth it."*
> **- Black African Female Respondent**

> *"I want to be a lawyer, so it was pretty clear from the start that I needed to get a law qualification and do my LPC."*
> **- Black Caribbean Female Respondent**

> *"My decision to go to university wasn't just based on one thing. The career prospect was probably the most important thing but I also saw this as an opportunity to meet new people, experience different things and get a feel of life for myself – become independent."*
> **- Black Caribbean Female Respondent**

> *"I really hate the portrayal that all Black people are the same. Like we are all aspiring for the same thing and we all want to be rappers or athletes. As much as I decided to further my education for my own personal advancement, I'm also doing it to prove a point to the wider society. I don't want to conform to the stereotype and it's sad to think that I have to prove myself."*
> **- Black African Male Respondent**

Despite the survey results indicating that the employment prospects and social development are the strongest influencing factors, across the focus groups and consultation the two most frequent and important factors raised were advice from teachers and advice and/or pressure from parents**.**

Teachers

The influence of teachers on respondent's decision was mixed although it was generally more negative than positive. Some respondents (mostly males) reported that they had received little or no support from their teachers. These students said that they had encountered stereotypes which they believed was based on their race, and it was the lack of support and negative stereotyping around this which formed a part of their decision. The students placed significant emphasis on the need to defy the negative comments made by their teachers. But a minority of Black students mentioned that their teachers had played a positive role in encouraging them to go to university. Interestingly, participants in the focus groups and at some of the consultations who indicated that they had a Black teachers said that the teachers had pushed them to work extra hard and this played a crucial role in their decisions.

> *"I wanted to prove my teachers wrong as they said I wouldn't be able to get good enough grades to go to university"*
>
> *- Black Caribbean Male Respondent*

> *"I don't want to make this a race thing but, I had a Black teacher and he was really helpful. He pushed me and even when I tried to run away from him, he didn't give up on me. Looking back, I can see that he really wanted me to do well."*
>
> - *Black African Male Respondent*

Parents

In the student survey only a third of Black students indicated that parental influence played a role in their decision to go to university. However, discussions from the consultation and focus groups would initially contradict this as students identified parental expectations at the 'top-of-the-list'. Analysis of all the data would lead us to conclude that whilst many parents did advocate the essential need to attend higher education; their involvement in the key choices within the parameters of deciding to go to university (i.e. where to apply, what course to study, and what order to rank university choices) was largely left to the child without major consultation with parents.

There were varying opinions on how much advice was given to help students decide what subject to study and what type of career to pursue by parents. The participants who acknowledged that their teachers and/or parents played a significant role in their decision to go to university felt that there was a lack of 'other options' given by teachers and parents. By lack of 'other options' students expressed the near-total absence of discussing the merits of university alongside the potential merits of 'non-university' post-18 education, such as apprenticeships.

> *"It's an expectation of friends and family to go to university in order to be successful"*
>
> - *Black African Female Respondent*

On closer inspection of the Black student population, we found that there are significantly larger numbers of Black students of African origin at universities in comparison to Black students of Caribbean origin. Students who participated in the consultation and focus groups were able to shed light on this issue. We found that students of African heritage tended to draw on ideological values linked to their family as a means to which to justify decision-making about university, whereas Caribbean students tended to present themselves as independent decision-makers.

Both groups highlighted that parents were generally supportive, however among the respondents

of African descent, their parent's support was viewed more as a pressure and this played a significant part in their decision to attend university. Those who identified themselves as Caribbean saw their parents influence on their decision to go university as less pressured and what a participant described as an "advising nature". When asked why, it was generally agreed that Caribbean parents differed to African parents in terms of the importance placed on a university degree. African parents were described to be more 'pushy' and African participants described a university degree in their household as a 'must', which therefore meant that there was no consideration for other alternatives. These respondents explained the high value of education in their households and how this had been instilled in them at an early age by their parents. This point was raised across the majority of our consultation where many students commented that for African parents, there is an assumption that a degree brings success. Participants stated that career discussions at home therefore 'over-emphasised' on the need to go to university.

> *"Going to university wasn't really a choice. It was something that my mum and dad expected me to do. Growing up all I heard from my mum was once you finish your secondary school; you will do your A Levels and then go to university. When you finish university you will get a good job."*

- Black African Female – Kings College London

Similarly, students of Caribbean descent felt that university was the best way to get a better job. One respondent commented that in their household they had a saying: *"education is the ticket to the world."* Although this feeling was generally agreed upon, Caribbean students stressed the need to distinguish the sort of influence that their parents had on their choices. These respondents stated that their parents played more of an advisory role. A small minority of Caribbean students did explain that their parents did pressure them; however, the vast majority who engaged in our consultation and focus groups felt that their parents were more lenient. These students felt they were given more of an option to say no, particularly due to the associated debt of going to university. None of the students however felt they did not want to go to university because of their own personal drive.

CASE STUDY 1:

Temi, Black African Female
BSc Mathematics and Economics
2nd Year – Leicester University

I've never considered not going to university, but I would say that about 90% of my decision was influenced by my parents. From secondary school, I was always told that going to university was a good thing and definitely felt a lot of pressure at home. When I was going to pick my GCSE's, I really enjoyed creative subjects like Art and French, but my mum discouraged me from studying Art. I remember her saying "that's not going to bring you a well-paid job". She just didn't get it so I ended up only studying French.

The career advice at College was pretty rubbish, but I was lucky enough to have really good teachers who pushed me to achieve the best. My maths teacher was particularly helpful and she encouraged me to pursue a degree.

I was also motivated by money. I thought if I studied a good degree and got good grades, then I am more likely to get a well-paid job. I don't really have a business mind so I opted for the education route which is what I'm good at.

University Choices –

Research has shown that BME students tended to dominate certain types of university, particularly the post-1992 universities. To shed light on this, we asked students about the factors affecting their choice of university and course as well as the importance of different sources of information in making this choice.

Key Points -

- The selection of a university is a multistage decision-making process affected by a variety of factors. Some of these factors related specifically to the course: such as the entry requirements for that particular course, the perceived quality of teaching on the course, and the reputation of the course.
- Other factors related more generally to the university: such as the position of the university in league tables. However, the importance of some of these factors differed largely amongst students.
- We found that Black students considered factors which extended beyond the university such as the location to have had the greatest influence on their choice. Interestingly, despite parental influence being one of the strongest factors for going to university, their influence on final choice of institution and course was limited.

Factors influencing choice of university

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree Nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree
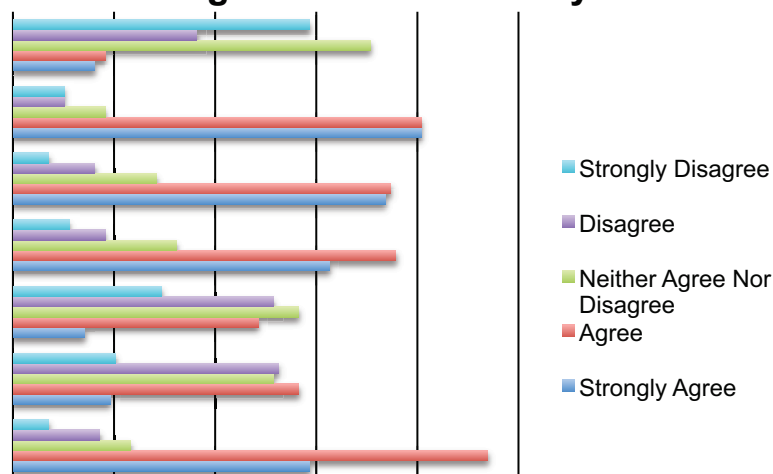
Over half of the students who took part in the survey agreed that the geographical location of the university was one of the most important reasons for choosing the specific institution.

> *"I decided to stay in London because it's close to home which meant that I would save a lot of money. It also helped that I grew up in London so I'm familiar with the area and know what to expect."*
>
> ***- Black Caribbean Female Respondent***

Existing data shows that BME students are more likely to enter into higher education through the UCAS clearing system.[41] When we asked students to what extent they agreed that their grades influenced their choice of university, a disproportionate number (81%) said they agreed/strongly agreed that it played a major factor. Across our focus groups, students pointed to the impact that secondary school and college education had on how prepared they were for academic life in higher education. Respondents commented that they felt that they did not have the same access to a high

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[41] Purcell et el (2008)

standard of early education in comparison to their White peers. When asked to elaborate on what determined a high standard of education, respondents frequently commented on teachers.

Many students pointed to the need to like the 'feel' of the university and when asked to explain what is meant by the 'feel', the response from several students was 'the need for familiarity'. Asked to define what 'familiarity' meant, diversity was an important factor, but students differed on whether a high level of diversity was part of liking a university. On the one hand, some students stated that they didn't want to be the only black person or one of a few black people at a university, for fear of being seen as 'different', or treated differently. One respondent stated that in their first year of university, when staying in student accommodation, they lived with several other white students who tended to treat them as if they had never seen nor spoken to a Black person before, making the respondent feel very uncomfortable.

On the other hand, some students indicated that when they were searching for a 'familiar' university, ethnicity was only one factor that influenced a sense of familiarity. Religion, cultural background and where you came from regionally were also seen to be equally important factors in making someone feel 'comfortable' at a university. However, the focus group participants did stress that a diverse university was not the ultimate determining factor. A participant described university as the "learning ground of what is to come in the workplace". This view was supported by other students who had a clear understanding that they could not determine the diversity of those whom they would work within the future, therefore it was important for them to prepare and learn to relate to other groups.

"Personally, I felt more comfortable staying in London because I've lived here all my life. I didn't want to go somewhere that I didn't know what to expect or know anyone there because I would feel really uncomfortable".

- **Black African Female Respondent**

CASE STUDY 2:

Samson, Black African Male
BA in Politics with Economics
Final year, Goldsmith, University of London

I did really well in my A' Levels and I probably could have gone to better universities, but I applied mainly to universities in London and one in Essex. I didn't want to be far away from home mainly because of my finances.

My older sister went to a university outside London and I saw how much she struggled to cope financially. She did encourage me to go outside of London so that I could experience the whole independent living but I wasn't interested in that aspect of university life. By staying in London, not only am I close to home, but I could also live at home which reduces the financial burden and meant that I had my parents as a safety net if I struggled with anything. I guess the fact that I am more familiar with London also played a key part. I didn't want to live in one of those student accommodations with strangers.

When it came to deciding which London University I applied to, I researched into the universities that I was interested in attending and I pretty much based my decision on the culture of the university. I wanted to be at a university that was politically active and Goldsmith's met that criteria. The university's ranking mattered but it wasn't the ultimate determining factor.

2. University Experience

Key Point

- Just over half (51per cent.) reported that they spent more than 10 hours outside of classes studying each week. Around 10 per cent. spend less than 5 hours per week studying.

This section focuses on the student experience in HE, and the factors which affect the progress of Black students. Where possible, we examine the extent to which Black students have different experiences from other ethnic groups, and how much these differences can be associated with their ethnicity or other factors.

Teaching and Learning

There was a positive response from students about the teaching and learning experience at their university. The vast majority of students (77%) rated the quality of the teaching at their university as "good" or "excellent" and 83 per cent rated the quality of the study resources provided by their university as also "good" or "excellent". However, within our student consultation and focus groups, there was a mixed response from students. The students tended to link the quality and quantity of their teaching to the tuition fees that they were paying. These students expressed that the quality and quantity of the teaching was nowhere near enough when compared to the money they were paying to go to university. One respondent said, *"I worked out how much I am paying per lesson. And sometimes our lecturer makes us turn up to a lecture says 'here's a reading list - go and read it' without giving us any lecture material to supplement what we're reading, so no one has any idea what we're meant to be looking out for!"*
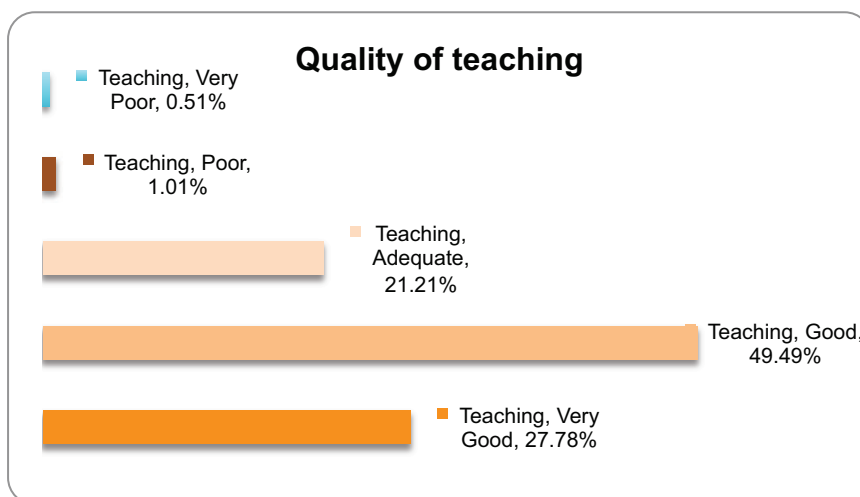
Students spoke about the transition from college to university where the focus was on a more independent style of study. When asked if there was too much emphasis placed on independent learning, the main argument was that it wasn't the independent learning as such that was a worry, rather it was the lack of preparation in College and/or sixth form for the university teaching style. The initial phase of adapting to independent learning from being 'spoon-fed' – as it was described – meant many didn't consider the quality or quantity of the teaching sufficient. One student responded by saying *"college education, particularly in England, doesn't prepare students well enough for university. Comparing my college to my sister who goes to a private school in Scotland, in year 13 she was already experiencing the type of teaching you get at university. In my year 13 pupils were still 'spoon-fed' knowledge simply to pass their exams. It's the way the teachers want to teach you and if you try to move away from being 'spoon-fed' you cannot."*

Whilst the majority (60 per cent) of students who participated in the survey considered the feedback they received on assignments to be 'good' or 'very good', in the focus group and consultation, participating students commented that the quality of the feedback they received was often inadequate to help their academic improvement. Some respondents said the feedback they received only addressed whether their coursework met a certain criteria or not, but did not inform them of how to improve. These students called for universities to give more student guidance on how to improve grades by introducing an optional meeting for feedback.
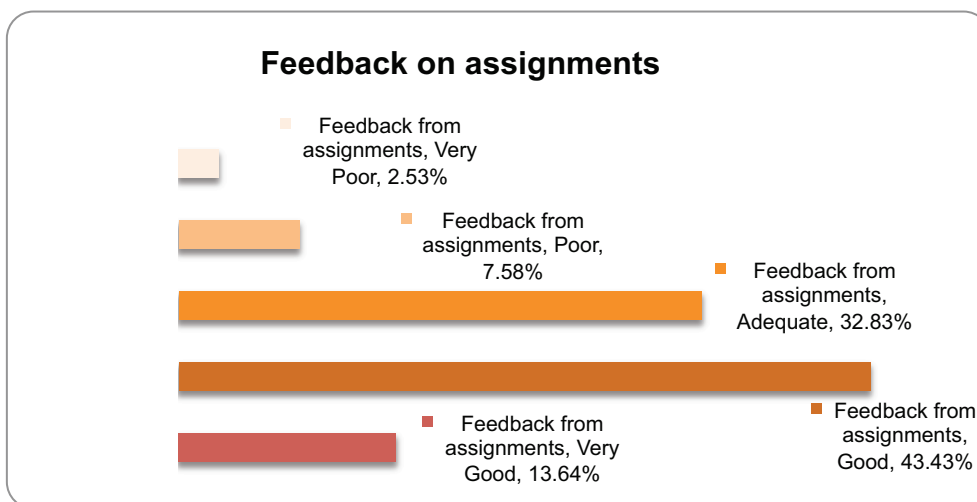
Quality of teaching

"I guess the quality of teaching is okay. But if I was asked to judge the quality of teaching based on how much I'm paying then I would say it's just not good enough"

- Black African, Female

Teaching, Very Poor, 0.51%

Teaching, Poor, 1.01%

Teaching, Adequate, 21.21%

Teaching, Good, 49.49%

Teaching, Very Good, 27.78%
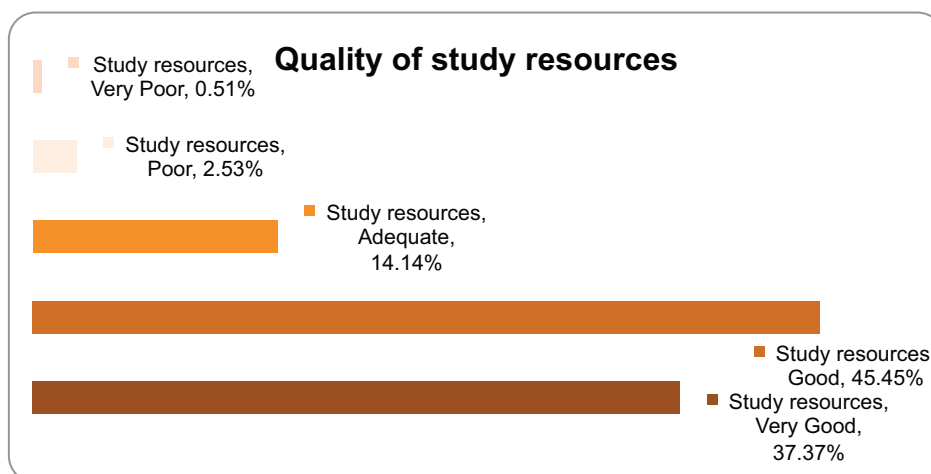
Feedback on assignments

"The feedback is okay but there are times that I feel that lecturers should meet with students and give face – to –face feedback. One or two sentences on a piece of paper is not going to improve a person's grade drastically"

- Black Caribbean, Male

Feedback from assignments, Very Poor, 2.53%

Feedback from assignments, Poor, 7.58%

Feedback from assignments, Adequate, 32.83%

Feedback from assignments, Good, 43.43%

Feedback from assignments, Very Good, 13.64%

Quality of study resources

"The books and study resources provided are excellent. I think that university – well my university anyway has spent a lot of money to make sure that students have what we need."

- Black African, Female

Study resources, Very Poor, 0.51%

Study resources, Poor, 2.53%

Study resources, Adequate, 14.14%

Study resources, Good, 45.45%

Study resources, Very Good, 37.37%

Student Support

From the survey data, the majority of students said they had met with their personal tutor more than once throughout the academic year, yet there was a split between feelings of whether they had received adequate support from their personal tutor. Through the consultation process the view that was generally expressed was that the support a student would receive depended more

on themselves than the actual tutor. The opinion was expressed that tutors have a 'give only when asked' attitude. Whilst some felt that this was fine, others expressed disappointment. The majority of those who expressed disappointment were first year students. These students explained that there was a huge transition from Further Education, where you received a significantly higher level of support from teachers and other staff members, to Higher Education which is more independent, and the level of support received is very much what one sought after.

Almost half of all students felt they had not received sufficient advice and support from their personal tutor. Some students felt that personal tutors were not helpful because the timing of appointments was inflexible. There was also a feeling that there did need to be a little more effort on the part of personal tutors to make students aware of their existence, which would then make it easier for the student to go to them when needed.

There was no noted link between the level of advice and support received from the tutors and race. One response was that *"self-motivation is more important at university and you get out of it what you put in. University tutors give you what you ask for, so if you want their help then ask for it, and your enthusiasm will affect the tutor response."*

How often have you met with your personal tutor throughout your time at university?

Series1, I have not met with my personal tutor, 18.18%

Series1, More than twice per academic year, 35.35%

Series1, Twice per academic year, 21.21%

Series1, Once per academic year, 19.19%

Series1, Other, please specify: View, 6.06%

Do you feel that you receive sufficient advice and support with your studies from your personal tutor?

Series1, No, 48.99%, 49%

Series1, Yes, 51.01%, 51%
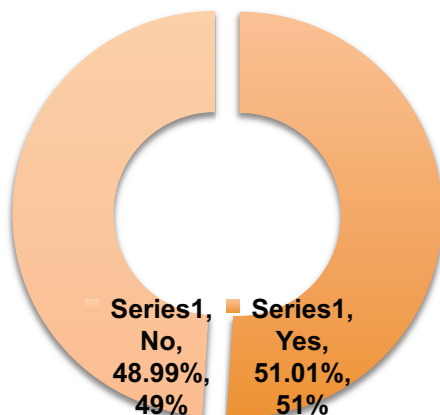
Student Engagement

In the NUS *Race for Equality* survey of 900 African Caribbean students which questioned students about their social experience, it was stated that 'black students felt left out by white cliques'. This point was re-iterated in our consultation when we asked if there was a greater likelihood that they would be drawn to people of the same ethnicity or those who are very 'similar'. The responses to this question were similar to those given when we asked if a university's diversity had influenced their decision to attend there. One student's response was *"of course it's natural to gravitate toward people of your own race. Although university is a time to mix social groups - perhaps for the first time - there is still a natural tendency for people to stay in their 'comfort zone' of people of the same ethnicity. Associating with people who speak, think, and act the same way as you is something you are going to look out for in any new place."*
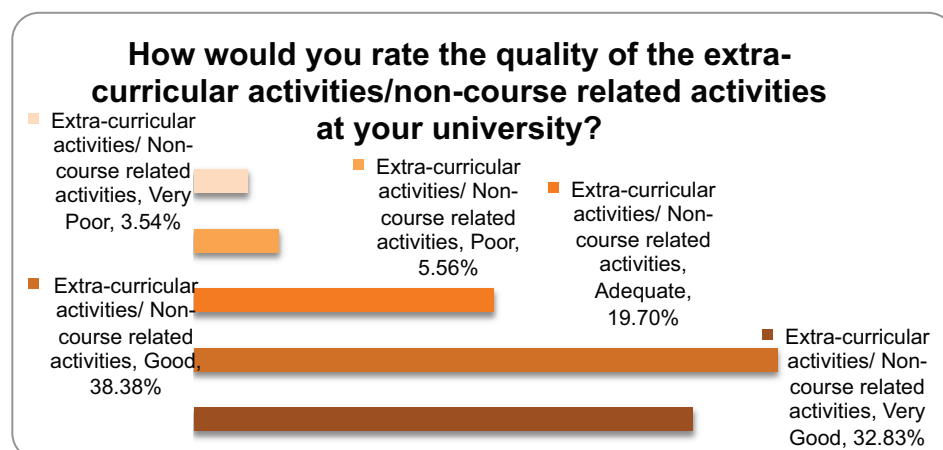
- **Black African Male Respondent**

In response to this, another student stated that *"the reality ahead of you is something completely different. When in employment you are going to have to mix with people different from you. University is its own bubble where you can still mix with people like yourself"* But there is a danger in wanting to be in your comfort zone because the 'real world' isn't like that"
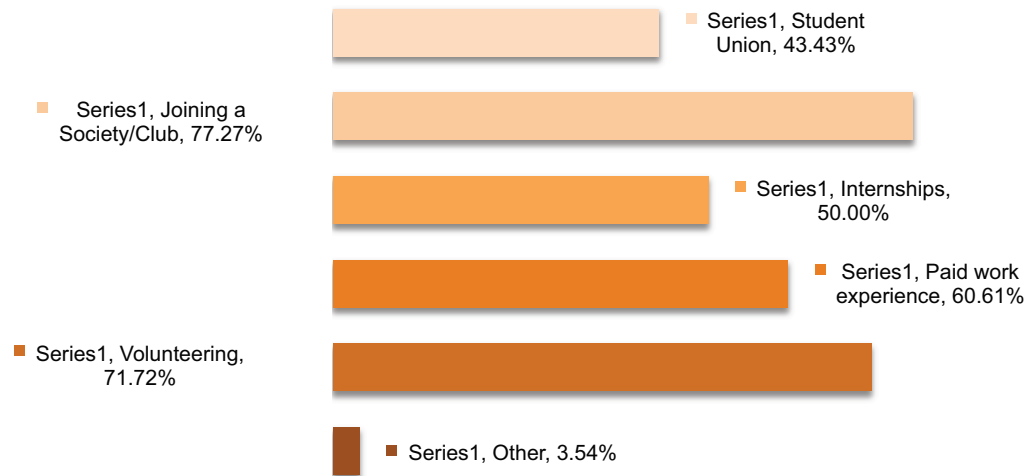
- *Black Caribbean Female Respondent*

Students did agree that there was a danger to become 'too comfortable' at university in your own social groups, but also highlighted the need to feel comfortable at university. Another issue that was raised during this discussion was the idea that the presence of a Black and Ethnic Minority (BME) Officer in university Students Union's could be seen as both a good thing and sometimes a bad thing. Students felt that a BME officer would be helpful to go to get advice on issues such as racism in university or potentially in the workplace. However, students also felt that having a BME officer could also lead to a segregationist feeling among other students, with non-BME students feeling that without a specific Student Union officer their needs were not considered as important, or that they didn't need the same level of support. But despite these worries, the majority of students felt that the overall experience of black students at university was not considerably different to any other social or ethnic group.

Existing research shows that Black-African and Black-Other backgrounds report a higher level of volunteering compared to White students.[42] We wanted to know how well Black students engaged with the extracurricular activities/ non course related activities provided at their university. The following tables show the responses to the questions asked.

How would you rate the quality of the extra-curricular activities/non-course related activities at your university?

Extra-curricular activities/ Non-course related activities, Very Poor, 3.54%

Extra-curricular activities/ Non-course related activities, Poor, 5.56%

Extra-curricular activities/ Non-course related activities, Adequate, 19.70%

Extra-curricular activities/ Non-course related activities, Good, 38.38%

Extra-curricular activities/ Non-course related activities, Very Good, 32.83%

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42 http://www.hecsu.ac.uk/assets/assets/documents/futuretrack/Student_Volunteers_-_A_National_Profile.pdf

Which of the following have you or are you likely to participate in whilst you have been at university?

Series1, Student Union, 43.43%

Series1, Joining a Society/Club, 77.27%

Series1, Internships, 50.00%

Series1, Paid work experience, 60.61%

Series1, Volunteering, 71.72%

Series1, Other, 3.54%

Are you currently involved with any clubs and/ or societies at your university?

Series1, No, 35.35%, 35%

Series1, Yes, 64.65%, 65%
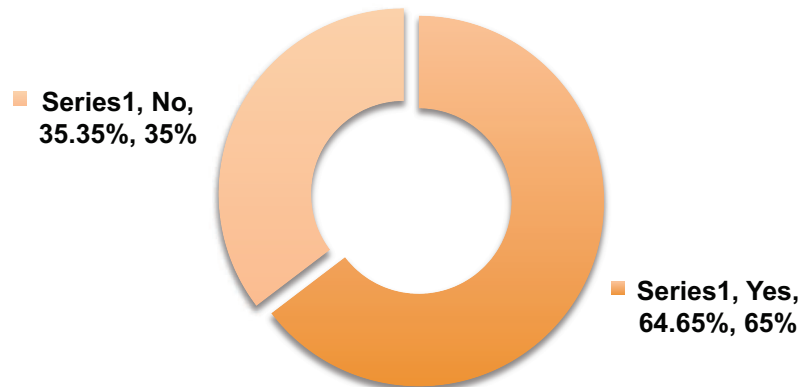
Black student's outlook on employment

Key Points

- A large number (46 per cent) of Black students would like to go into full time employment after graduating. They are least likely to take a gap year.

- 60% did not expect to be in work within 6 months of graduating.

- 68% of Black students expect to be earning less than £25,000 in their first graduate role.

- The majority of the students (60 per cent) had had some form of contact with their university career services. Of this group, 63 per cent considered the quality of the service received from their career services to be 'good' or 'very good'.

The final section the survey and consultation centred on the transition of Black graduates to the labour market. We focused our discussion on students' outlook on employment and the workplace.

As previously established in this paper, many Black students came to HE to enhance their career opportunities; therefore the extent to which students felt that they were prepared and equipped for employment was an important issue. We have already seen in this report that BME graduates are more likely to be unemployed than their white counterparts. Moreover, recent research has found that young Black people are more likely to be unemployed amongst the BME grouping. But how does the reality of being a Black student and graduate correlate with their expectations.

The survey response showed mixture of positive and negative outlook towards employment amongst participating students. However, in our consultation and focus group, we found that Black students are particularly positive and optimistic about the future, despite their awareness of the statistics and the reality ahead. We observed their concerns and documented some case studies which shed light on the extent to which the reality ties in with the expectation of those who have completed their degrees and are in employment.

Feeling prepared: Career Support

How would you rate the quality of the career development service provided at your university?

- Career development, Very Poor, 4.55%
- Career development, Poor, 7.58%
- Career development, Adequate, 25.76%
- Career development, Good, 32.83%
- Career development, Very Good, 29.29%

Have you ever used the placement and career services at your university?

- No 40%
- Yes 60%
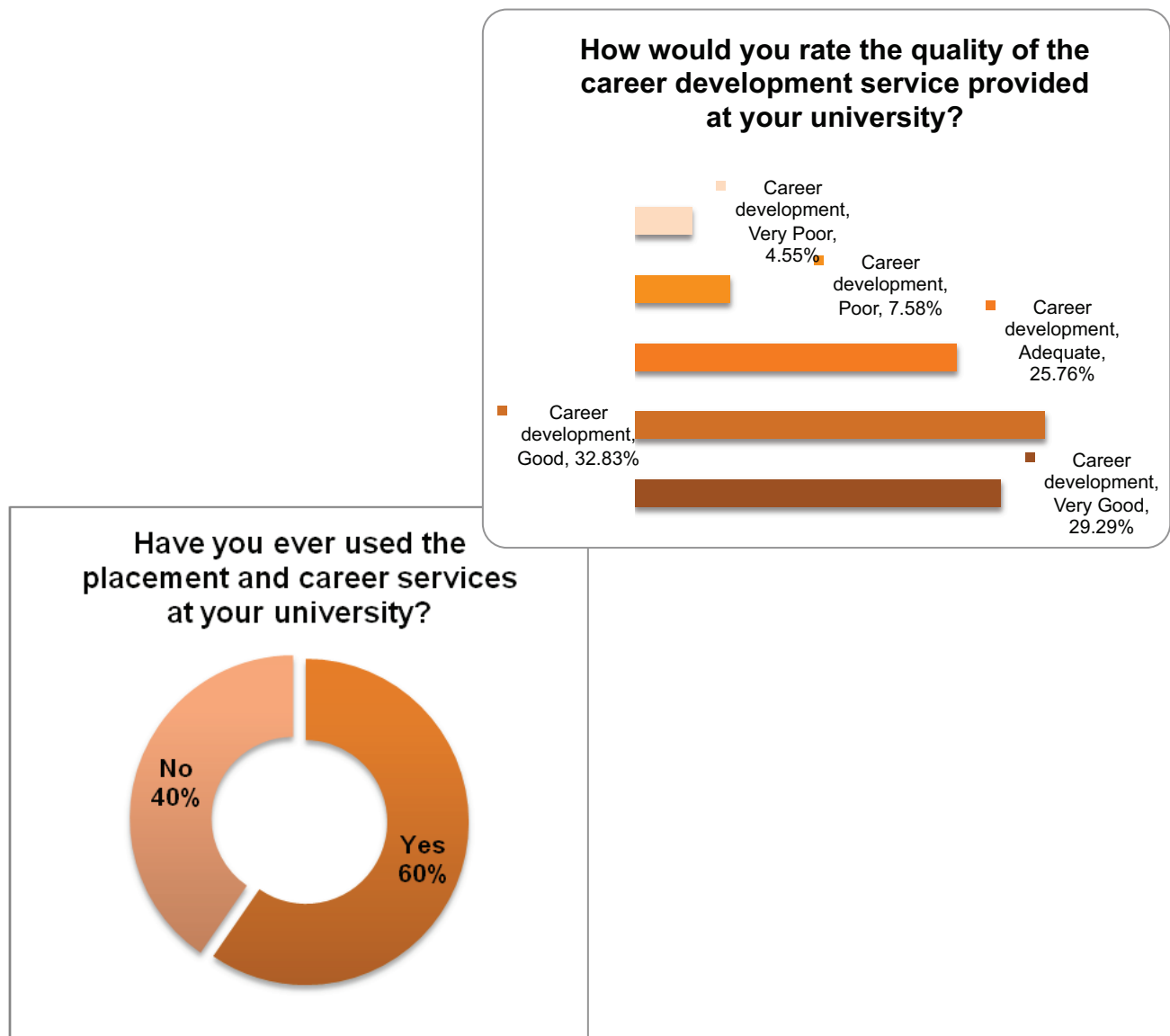
CASE STUDY 3

Sheila, Black African Female
BA in English Literature
2nd Year – University of Surrey

The support that I've received from my university has been all academically linked. In terms of career preparation the support has been minimal, but personally I think it is the responsibility of the individual to decide their career path and prepare themselves for the world of work.

I have used my career services in the past and would give them 6 out of 10 for the level of support but one of my biggest issue with the career services is that I feel that they lack dedication. For example, as part of my course, I will be doing a placement year and was allocated a tutor to help me find a suitable placement. I will be starting my placement in September but the career services have been terrible in terms of helping in the search for a placement. I've pretty much done all the work myself and had to use my personal networks to help me secure a placement.

I think they should provide more networking opportunity and maintain regular contact with students.

CASE STUDY 4 –

Dwaine, Black Caribbean Male
BA Hons in Marketing
Final Year – London South Bank University

I'm very optimistic for the future and I have really high expectations of the things I expect to achieve after university. As well as the knowledge that I have acquired in my three years, my university has been very helpful in providing opportunities to the students through the range of extra curriculum activities available. I'm ready for the work and I believe that I can add value based on the knowledge, skills and experience that I have gained since being at university.

I've been applying mainly for internships – paid and unpaid – but not actual graduate jobs. I've decided to focus on internships for the moment so that I can gain experience. My plan is to set up my own company and I've already started the work for that so really I'm more concerned about learning from the best and applying it to myself.

But I haven't completely ruled out paid work. When I do decide to apply, I expect to be in full-time paid work within 6 months and earning anywhere between £20,000 and £24,000. I'm aware that's slightly optimistic but I think you have to aim high. I don't have any concerns about my race affecting my chances of getting employment. I'm a competent young man, and well equipped in terms of skills and experience – that what matters above all else! There is always the possibility that I may face discrimination but if I put myself across the right way and apply for the jobs that match my skillset then I should get the job.

Case Study 5 –

Kelly, Black Caribbean Female
Graduate – working as a behavioural manager in a secondary school
BA Hons in Social Policy – Obtained 2:1
University of Kent

I didn't have a lot of expectations leaving university because I wasn't too sure about the career field I wanted to work in. But I did hope to get a job within three to six months of graduating. I graduated at the peak of the recession so I only expected to be earning a minimum of £15,000.

I was very lucky to get a job immediately after my graduation. I say lucky because I applied for a student programme called the Student Associate Scheme which I just about qualified for and it was the school where I did my placement that offered me a role as a teaching assistant, but the salary was below what I expected.
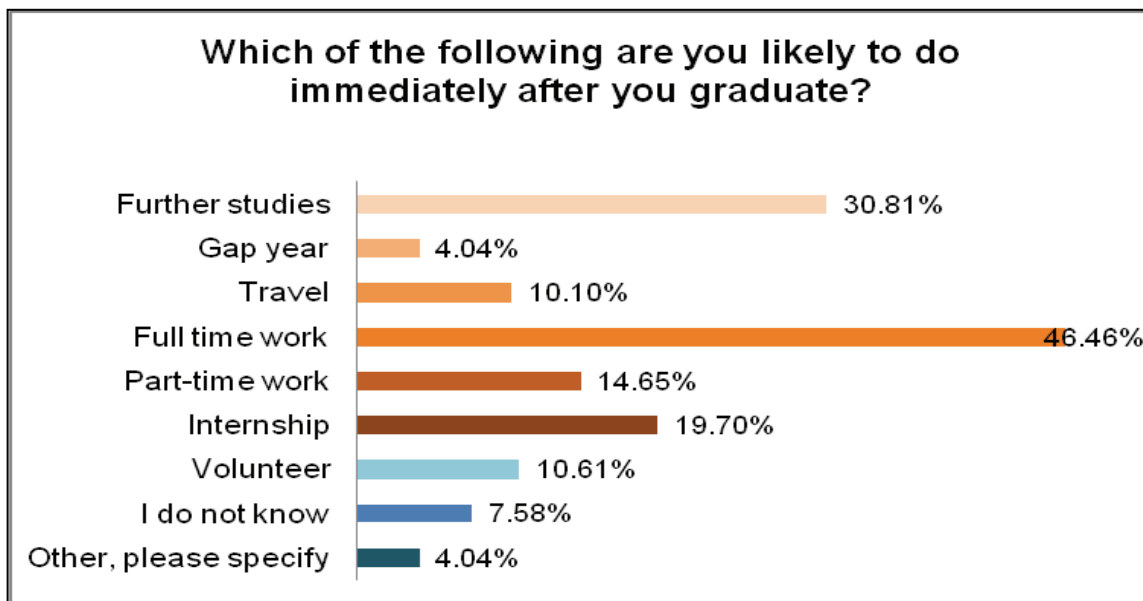
In terms of preparing me for work, I would say that my university helped in as far as providing me with the academic knowledge that I needed and some skills such as research and essay writing, but I don't think they made me employable. There was no preparing for interviews or graduate CV writing that I knew about. My first two years in employment weren't as I expected though. It wasn't challenging for me. My role as a teaching assistant didn't really require a degree.

But my university experience has definitely helped in terms of my ability to interact with people of different backgrounds and positions. It gave me the confidence to speak boldly in a professional setting and I feel justified in my position as a result of my degree.
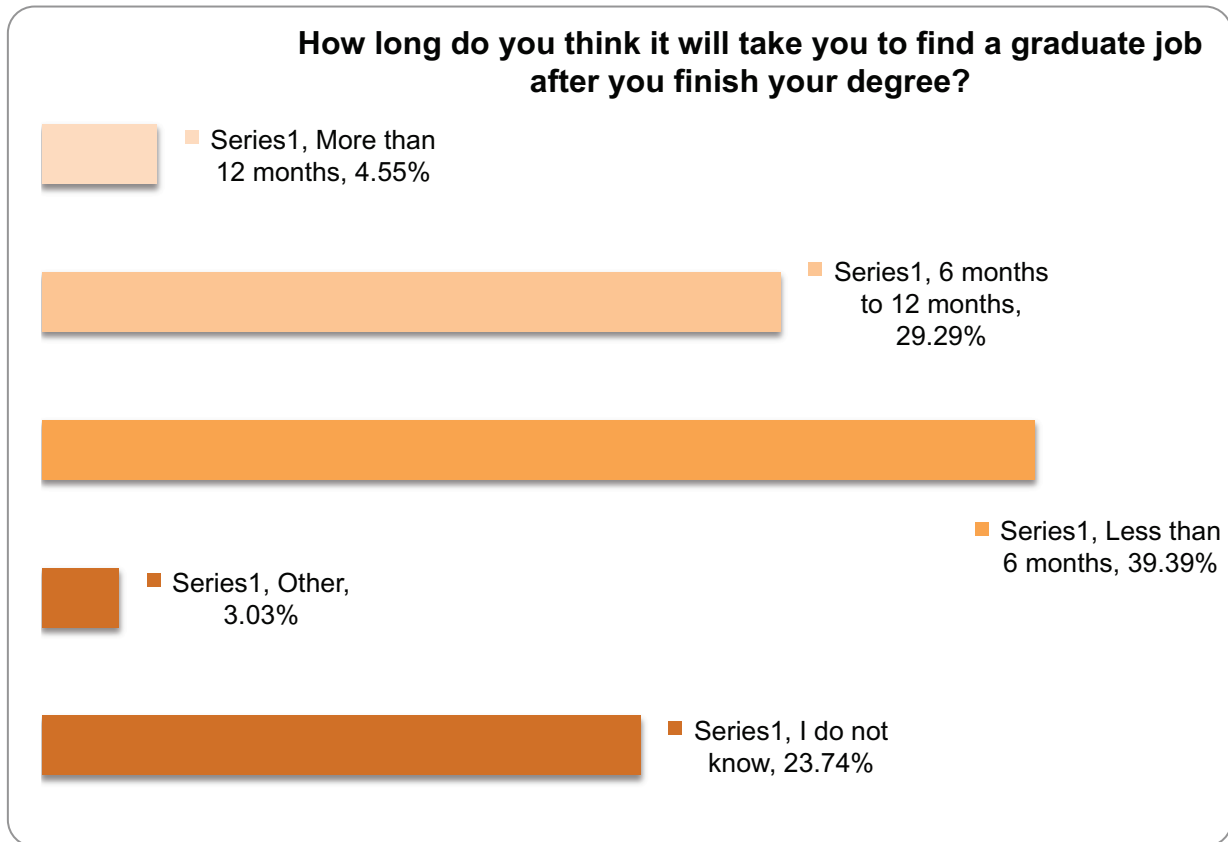
Future plans -

Our first step in observing student's outlook towards employment was to ask students about their intentions after completing their degree. Unsurprisingly, the largest proportion of students (46 per cent) envisioned entering into full time paid work. This very much relates back to the initial motivation for going to university, where a disproportionately high number had said that they decided to go to university to improve their employment prospects. A relatively high number (31 per cent) hoped to go into further studies, but very few (10 per cent) were willingly to travel or volunteer. Some of those who planned to further their studies explained that a higher level of qualification was a requirement for their field of work, whilst some considered it as a means of "increasing their employment prospects and economic gains". A few thought it was "the best thing to do considering the financial climate and decline in employment".
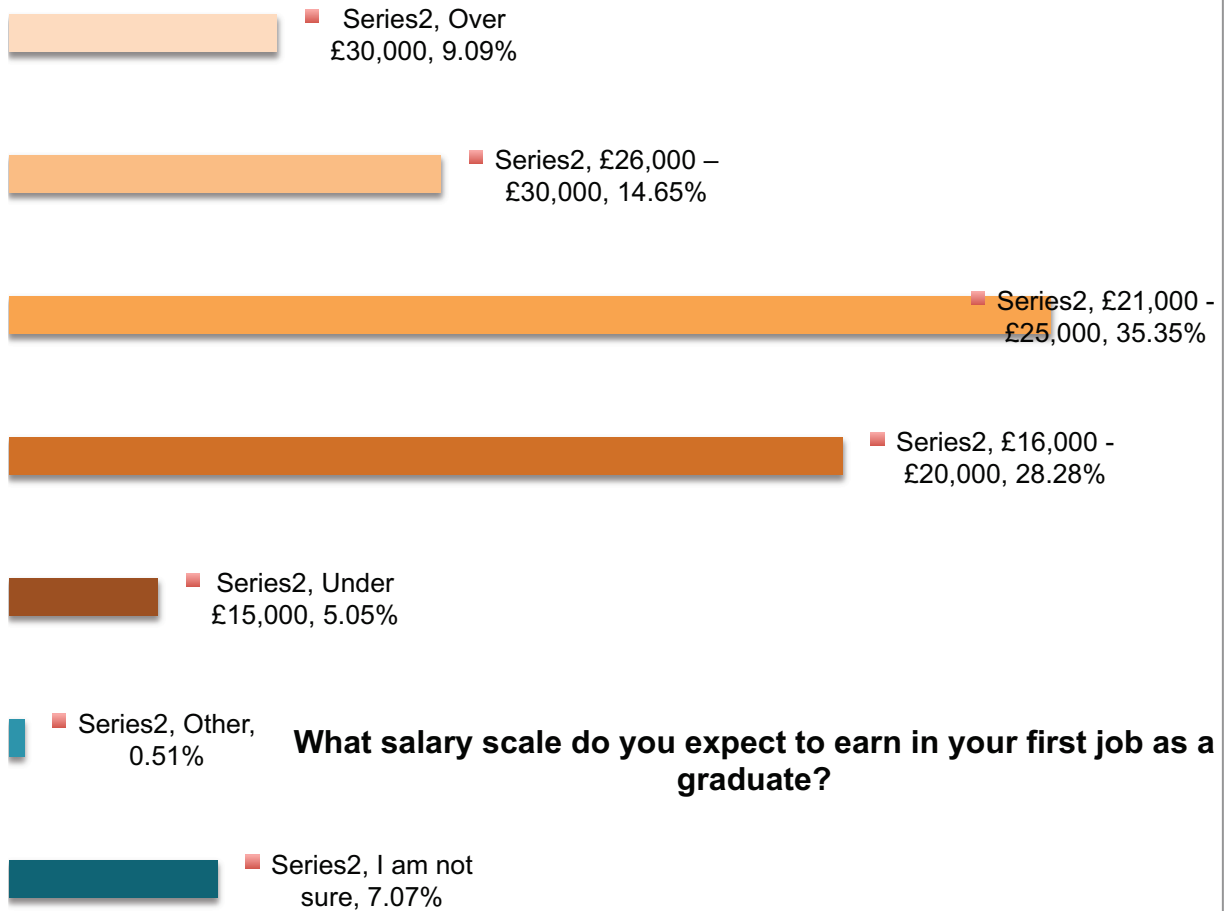
The vast majority of students, who opted for 'other intentions,' stated that they planned to start their own business/enterprise. Starting a business was a common theme across our focus groups and consultations and when asked why, the majority of students referred to the pride of 'doing something yourself' successfully. Owning a business was said to be a way of showing that "they can work hard and achieve their desired outcomes". Successfully setting up your own business was also seen as a chance to get recognised for your own work and "shake-off" any stereotypes people may still have of Black people. Additionally, money was a major factor in going into the business and enterprise sector as earning a significant amount of money was tied to the feeling of being seen as a success. Therefore setting up your own business was seen as a way to earn a significant amount of money in a fairly short space of time (despite initial start-up costs). For these reasons many students did not want to volunteer or take unpaid internships before being able to start a career, despite studies finding that a third of graduates who go straight into employment get employed by companies they have previously interned or worked for.

Which of the following are you likely to do immediately after you graduate?

Category	Percentage
Further studies	30.81%
Gap year	4.04%
Travel	10.10%
Full time work	46.46%
Part-time work	14.65%
Internship	19.70%
Volunteer	10.61%
I do not know	7.58%
Other, please specify	4.04%

Job Search & Salary expectation

How long do you think it will take you to find a graduate job after you finish your degree?

Series1, More than 12 months, 4.55%

Series1, 6 months to 12 months, 29.29%

Series1, Less than 6 months, 39.39%

Series1, Other, 3.03%

Series1, I do not know, 23.74%

Over half of Black students who engaged in the survey (59 per cent) have high expectations of the salaries they hope to earn after graduation. The students who we spoke to in our survey and consultation explained that their salary expectation was based on the career field they intended to pursue.

Series2, Over £30,000, 9.09%

Series2, £26,000 – £30,000, 14.65%

Series2, £21,000 - £25,000, 35.35%

Series2, £16,000 - £20,000, 28.28%

Series2, Under £15,000, 5.05%

Series2, Other, 0.51%

What salary scale do you expect to earn in your first job as a graduate?

Series2, I am not sure, 7.07%

Where would you like to be located and/or work upon leaving university?

Location	%
London	80.30%
Europe	22.73%
Africa	17.68%
Other	15.66%
Midlands	13.13%
South East England	12.12%
Caribbean	3.54%
Other UK	2.53%
South West England	2.02%

Concerns about graduate employment

The majority of Black students who participated in the survey expected to encounter some form of racial discrimination in the workplace, but it is worth noting that a relatively high number of students did not foresee any form of racial discrimination. When we asked students to elaborate on this point, the shared consensus was that racism still exists but some students were reluctant to anticipate racial discrimination in their particular line of work.

Yes, I anticipate discrimination because of my gender — 23.23%
Yes, I anticipate discrimination because of my race — 42.42%
Yes, I anticipate discrimination because of my disability — 2.53%
No, I do not anticipate discrimination because of my disability — 13.64%
No, I do not anticipate discrimination because of my gender — 32.83%
No, I do not anticipate discrimination because of my race — 37.37%
I don't know — 19.19%

"To be honest we all know that racism is still out there. I'll be silly to think that there are no racist individuals in the workplace because employers only know so much about the person they have hired. But I don't want to be thinking about that or believe that it's going to happen to me. It may happen and it may not. But I'm not going to get into that negative frame of mind."

- **Black Caribbean Female**

"I know for a fact that racism still exists. I'm not talking about the type where they come to your face and tell you they don't like you because you are Black. I'm talking about the subtle racial discrimination which I believe that many of us have experienced. I have a distinctively African first and last name, and I believe that I've been turned down for jobs that I've applied for in the past because of this. They see my name and immediately I'm blacklisted. It sounds funny but it's got to the point where I've considered changing my first name."

- **Black African Male**

Some students felt that they had not given the potential of suffering discrimination – either during the application stage or when in a job – much thought. When we asked those who did not anticipate racial discrimination and/or had not given it much thought, their reasons as to why, the vast majority held the view that "whoever you are and whatever industry you go into there will always be barriers and obstacles you need to overcome." Similarly, it was felt that religious and/or social-economic backgrounds are equally likely to be reasons someone will suffer discrimination. Where discrimination was expected, some of these students felt confident that there were the necessary channels to go through to counteract it, adding it would not deter them from entering an industry because the drive to overcome such obstacles and achieve their aspirations would out-weigh the discrimination.

Discriminative Sectors

Whilst BME's are well represented within the public sector, when we asked students to indicate which sectors they felt would be the most discriminatory, the results showed that almost half (47 per cent) believed that careers within government and policy would be most discriminative. When we asked why, one student replied saying that they felt the government, or certain people in the government, were still institutionally racist.

Top 10 most discriminative

	Sector	% of Black students
1	Government and Policy	46.97%
2	Legal services	37.88%
3	Media	32.32%
4	Fashion	32.32%
5	Accountancy and Finance	31.31%
6	Sports and Leisure	9.60%
7	International Development	9.09%
8	Creative Arts	9.09%
9	Information Technology	8.08%
10	Education and Teaching	8.08%

"Racism in the government goes unchallenged because of the lack of awareness of institutional racism in the mainstream and therefore no decisive action is taken to address it. I also feel that sometimes there is some 'secret backing', and although many politicians don't express racist views, many may still hold them and silence and inaction is condoning any racist comments made."

- **Black African Female**

"A simple glance at the Houses of Parliament and you know that it's just not reflective of the population. I'm not trying to say we should have a Black Prime Minister – in fact, I feel that we are still a few decades away from achieving that. The very few MPs who are Black don't seem to care too much that their place of work isn't reflective. I was once told this expression that Black people are like crabs in a bucket all fighting to get out, and once one gets out they forget the rest. That's exactly what I think of the Black MPs we have now. I don't think they care – they will only address Black issues when it's raised by mainstream media."

- Black Caribbean Male

"I appreciate that there are schemes like the Civil Service FastStream and the diversity strand that they run, but I think it's all part of the cover up to show that they are doing something. Beyond that, what else is there? Another problem is that a lot of the people in this industry have pre-conceptions about Black people. So if you are Black and male, I think you've had it!"

- Black African Male

Another aspect of this perceived institutional racism was what the students described as 'a lack of Black British advocates and role models'. Whereas African Americans can look to Martin Luther King Jr. and Barack Obama for inspiration in the US, students felt there is no equivalent role model in the UK government sector. There was a feeling that "in government there are social groups which are important in furthering your career. But they are very hard to break into. Politics is all about the groups you are in or know and it is very hard for black people to break into those groups." It was added that it would be beneficial for students if black politicians and role models acted as mentors to help people 'lower down' than them to move up or help break down social group barriers preventing them from entering certain industry sectors, particularly in those sectors that are not 'traditionally' sectors Black people enter.

Recommendations

1. The Government should develop a coherent strategy to tackle inequality of opportunity within higher education and graduate employment.

2. By way of increasing transparency, we propose that the Government should add a diversity element to any new State-produced University league table that is published.

3. In such official information, data should be included to show the academic and employment outcomes of students within institutions broken down into different ethnic and gender categories.

4. We call on the Government to support the expansion of an industry-wide and corporate funded diversity mentoring scheme, such as the scheme already piloted by Elevation through organisations including financial services firms Deloitte LLP, Ernst & Young, and banking firm HSBC.

5. We propose that State schools should deliver independent careers advice to students and involve parents in the process of selecting universities and choosing careers paths.

The above recommendations are based on the analysis of evidence obtained through: (1) our secondary research documented in the literature review, and (2) our primary research accumulated through our survey, consultations, focus groups, and interviews.

1. Our final recommendation is for the government to develop a coherent strategy to tackle race inequality within the UK. Our consultations have highlighted that Black students feel that there continues to be a gap in regards to their ability to be involved within the government and policy sector in particular.

2. The research has demonstrated that there is not an equality of outcomes between students of African & Caribbean heritage and many of their counterparts. We propose that the Government should add a diversity element to any new form of university league table that is published. By this, we mean publishing records which shows the breakdown of employment and education outcomes based on ethnicity and gender. This will allow for any disparities amongst gender or ethnic communities to be highlighted. It will also support parents in making more informed decisions in regards to where their children study.

3. Higher Education Institutions are currently ranked within league tables on the basis of a variety of factors including employment outcomes for their graduates. We propose in addition that information is published showing the academic and employment outcomes of students within institutions broken down into different ethnic and gender categories. This would allow students to make better choices as to where they choose study because they will be able to identify places with very large disparities. It will also ensure that institutions are held to account and more proactive in dealing with inequalities.

4. Our research has shown that students feel there is a need for more mentoring to help make them more competitive within the labour market. We call on the Government to support the expansion of an industry-wide, corporate funded diversity mentoring scheme, which Elevation

Networks have already piloted through organisations including financial services firms Deloitte LLP, Ernst & Young, and banking firm HSBC. This would allow students to be able to better make informed choices when attempting to navigate through the many hurdles to secure a career. It will also allow them to build their own network, which is a vital support system for progressing throughout ones career. The mentoring should initially start with Higher Education students and professionals, and eventually expand to university students mentoring the younger generation.

5. Whilst the role of parents was seen to be significant when students chose to go to university, there was a clear lack of involvement amongst parents when it came to the choice of university and diversity of courses available for a student to choose from. Careers advice should be delivered to parents by an organisation independent from schools. This should be piloted in the poorest boroughs in the UK to better help parents advise their children when making choices at various academic stages. This advice should be delivered to parents through online portals and integrated into parent's evenings. Teachers were also seen to sometimes be counterproductive. Whilst some teachers were notably supportive of their pupils, some were more discouraging when giving career advice. There is therefore a need for advice to be independent and objective. Any support from industries and organisations like CBI, and Russell Group universities outside of London, in producing this would be of use.

Conclusion

Whilst the key person that holds ultimate responsibility for any student's employment and academic outcomes will always be the student, we believe that in order to give everyone the best chance possible there must be an even playing field. Geographic locations, standards of teaching, and classroom make up will always contribute to a person's overall outcomes. However our research has found that there are moments when these variables were constant across board but produced very different results for young people from different ethnic backgrounds. Our research has suggested that this is largely because of the difference in attitudes of teachers towards particular students, and is also as a result of a lack of consistency in regards to overall support from parents. A lack of a strong support network for people from underprivileged backgrounds is also something that continues to hinder their ability to reach the top, both academically and in their careers.

As a result, we have proposed that the government supports a range of measures that will help to encourage fairer outcomes for Black students. We've focused on the need to highlight institutions that have very large disparities in regards to outcomes for minority groups, in order to encourage addressing any challenges. This would also help parents and students to make more informed choices when choosing where and what to study. If a parent could see that a secondary school was failing a particular part of the student population; be it based on race or gender, we are sure that they would feel more empowered to send their child to a place that would be better suited. Schools and universities would also appreciate the importance of equality if the government were seen to take an interest in this type of league table, and we would have a better overall strategy as a result. We also appreciate that in the current economic climate there is a need to have solutions that are cost efficient, and where the government can avoid having to add too much to their budget. Because of this, we feel that encouraging the private sector to get more involved in mentoring talented higher education students is the right way forward. In this respect we hope to roll out the mentoring programme that we have been piloting. Our research has shown us that students want and need effective mentors, and corporates are best suited to be this. In addition to this, we hope that the government supports are call for independent carriers advice for parents to account for the sometimes adverse advice given by teachers, and the lack of consistency of support from parents during the decision making process.

This report has highlighted the fact that the BME umbrella term at times has limitations when attempting to analyse academic and employment outcomes. African & Caribbean communities have for many years had unique challenges in society, but we have managed to make progress in highlighting the reasons behind their challenges within Higher Education. To this respect we hope to now be part of possible solutions to ensure better employment results. But as we look to our next report launch, we hope that the current government begins to recognise the role that ethnic communities will continue to play in the UK. Not only will this help to create a fairer society, but within a democracy it will ensure that ethnic communities can see where they can participate with fewer barriers.

Annex 1: Student Consultation - List of participating Universities 2011

The consultation took place through a nationwide tour called 'The Great Debate'. Each debate had a panel consisting of students, graduates and professionals. The topics on the tour were a combination of current affairs, e.g. the UK riots, and topics relevant to student experiences and graduate employment expectations.

The following universities participated in 2011:

De Montfort University
Goldsmith, University of London
Kings College London
London Metropolitan University
London School of Economics
London South Bank University
Loughborough University
Nottingham Trent University
University of Bristol
University of Cambridge
University of Coventry
University of East Anglia
University of Hertfordshire
University of Hull
University of Kent
University of Leeds
University of Leicester
University of Lincoln
University of Oxford
University of Portsmouth
University of Southampton
University of Surrey
University of York

Annex 2: Pilot Consultation: List of participating Universities 2010

The following universities participated in 2010:

Goldsmith, University of London
Kings College London
Lincoln
London School of Economics
London School of Economics
Loughborough University
Queen Mary, University of London
University College London
University of Bradford
University of Cambridge
University of Coventry
University of Hertfordshire
University of Oxford
University of Roehampton
University of Surrey

The pilot consultation for the report was initiated as part of the celebration for Black History Month to engage with Blacks students at a national level. Celebrating the success of Black students as well as highlighting the unique challenges that they face, the debate created a platform for the group to voice their thoughts and opinions. Furthermore, it provided an opportunity to shed light on the "Black experience" in higher education and address the question: "***Do Black students share similar experiences, if so to what extent?"***

We saw a need to go beyond the headlines, statistics and stereotypes and engage with Black students to find out the issues that were really affecting them, their understanding and reactions to current affairs as well as possible solutions. As well as collating their thoughts, the debate tour offered an opportunity to empower and develop Black youths in the UK by addressing the pressing issues that affects this community as it is often reflected in media coverage. Furthermore, the Great Debate Tour sought to explore the extent to which the issues affecting Black students can be described as homogenous. Can we generalise with our findings that the majority of Black students experience similar challenges and/or opportunities.

Annex 3: Student Profile: Participating Universities

Aston University
Brunel University
City University
De Montfort University
Goldsmiths, University of London
Imperial College London
King's College London
Kingston University
London Metropolitan University
London School of Economics
London South Bank University
Loughborough University
Middlesex University
Oxford Brookes University
Queen Mary, University of London
Reading
School of Oriental African Studies
Staffordshire University
University College London
University of Bedfordshire
University of Birmingham
University of Bradford
University of Bristol
University of Coventry
University of Essex
University of Exeter
University of Greenwich
University of Hertfordshire
University of Hull
University of Keele
University of Kent
University of Leicester
University of Lincoln
University of Liverpool
University of Manchester
University of Northampton
University of Nottingham
University of Oxford
University of Southampton
University of Surrey
University of Sussex
University of Swansea
University of the Arts, London
University of Warwick
University of West London

University of Westminster

University of York

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