

Ethnicity Degree Awarding Gap

The Academic Development & Diversity team at Sheffield Hallam University works with university staff and students to deliver targeted actions to reduce the gap for ethnically minoritised students, through an institutional wide Race Equality Corporate Action Plan (RECAP). The RECAP has five themes, which are aligned with the recommendations of a 2019 [national report](#) into closing the ethnicity gap:

- 1. Providing strong leadership:** to ensure the provision of appropriate resources, to drive institutional change and to lead by example, enabling implementation at a strategic level through relevant policies and plans.
- 2. Having conversations about race and changing the culture:** opening up conversations between students, staff and university leaders about the issues that lie at the heart of the ethnicity attainment gap.
- 3. Developing racially diverse and inclusive environments:** ensuring ethnically minoritised students have a strong sense of belonging in their university by valuing the experience and backgrounds of all students and staff and working towards a more diverse university community. Reviewing the curriculum with students and developing the racial awareness of staff.
- 4. Getting the evidence and analysing the data:** gathering evidence and scrutinising data to understand the scale and scope of the institutional attainment gap and the lived experiences of ethnically minoritised students while at university.
- 5. Understanding what works:** although there is no simple solution to closing the attainment gap, we need to know what the impact is of the initiatives and interventions that are being developed and applied. Evaluating the work that is being done to address the gap, in partnership with student stakeholders, is therefore essential.

As part of the RECAP, the Academic Development & Diversity team provides support to staff to enable effective and inclusive pedagogic practice. Below are our central initiatives that help to eradicate the degree awarding gap:

A) Supporting Minoritised Student Groups (SMSG)

A crucial factor in helping to eradicate the degree awarding gap is to develop ways that students from ethnically minoritised backgrounds can experience belonging and thrive during their experience at Hallam.

The Academic Development & Diversity team is supporting college departments to develop new or sustain Minoritised Student Groups. This creates communities where ethnically minoritised students do not feel like outsiders, experience discrimination and have a space where peers can support each other so they feel included.

For examples of this work, take a look at [Sheffield Hallam University Nursing and Midwifery Minoritised group: the experiences of black student nurses, past and present](#). Or listen to the [Council of Deans' interview with Hallam's Ifrah Salih](#) (Senior Lecturer with Academic Development and Diversity) who discusses her support programme for students and staff from ethnically minoritised backgrounds.

Asli Kana Garane (Student Co-Lead for Nursing and Midwifery Minoritised) talks about her personal experience:

“I joined the minoritised student group after attending some of the sessions that were run. I found the sessions to be profound and inspiring. I was receiving valuable knowledge from those who had faced challenges while reaching their respective roles. It allowed me to connect with those who are passionate about advocating on my behalf as well as other minoritised students. Most importantly, these sessions run by the minoritised groups educated me and encouraged me to think outside the box.

Once I joined the group as a student co-lead, I found the role manageable as it focused on being student-led. I had support from my peers and I was able to work around my own uni schedule. The role taught me valuable skills, it improved my confidence, so I was able to talk and present to others. I was able to have a safe space to talk about any concerns I had. I learned about organising and advertising our talks and conferences, running sessions with other co-leads and peers, playing an admin role and most importantly making valuable connections with others.

I feel that this role has made a significant impact on my confidence and my abilities. As well as vastly improved my university experience. It has inspired me into thinking of my future career prospects as I have been around empowering people.”

B) Equity Accomplice Programme

76% of our students (2022-23) are identified as being from an underrepresented student group within universities, so it is vital that we work hard to assure that everyone can feel they belong at Sheffield Hallam University. We know that students from an ethnically minoritised community can experience discrimination or made to feel othered and that this can happen on and off campus.

The Equity Accomplice programme of workshops starts the conversation about race equity and inclusion with staff and external stakeholders in order to promote an inclusive learning environment for all students in the university.

Here is some feedback and comments from previous participants:

“The course encourages the participant to reflect on their own behaviours and attitudes around race, white privilege and ethnicity within practice and the work environment. The course then provides practical support and tools to promote and support students and each other in encouraging and enabling anti-racism and challenging inappropriate behaviour.”

“An engaging and insightful series of training, which created awareness and started impactful discussions.”

“This course has opened my eyes to some of the subtle discrimination that can take place in and out of my workplace. Importantly, it has also given me the confidence and knowledge of how best to address it.”

“Thought provoking, dynamic and engaging.”

“I felt that attending this course has deepened my knowledge into the experiences of our minoritised students at SHU.”

“Time well spent discussing matters that are important in terms of where we want to be as an organisation but can be applied so much more broadly in our day-to-life personal lives.”

C) #DecolHallam

The #DecolHallam 2022 project focused on understanding how minoritised learners perceive and experience their curriculum and how these impact on their feelings of belonging. It also explored the implementation of practices to support their engagement with learning. The research was undertaken by a team of student researchers and staff from Academic Development and Diversity (AD&D). The project focussed on four key strands:

1. a pilot study, with the Students Union and the Library, to decolonise online reading lists.
2. an evaluation of course materials from the virtual learning environment 'Blackboard' for their accessibility and inclusivity.
3. the use of the national NERUPI Culturally Sensitive Curriculum Scales (CSCS) survey - a race-focused instrument developed to assess the 'whiteness' of the curriculum as a basis for further inquiry.
4. department-based focus groups, led by student researchers, to understand the lived experience of minoritised and international students.

To read more about the key findings of the project, [click on this dedicated website](#).

Other areas of work

As well as the activities described above, the Academic Development & Diversity Team is implementing the following initiatives:

- Running a network of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Leads at departmental level to support and co-ordinate all the subject area work that is being done to address the awarding gap.
- Working with subject areas to embed principles of inclusive curriculum design into their courses as part of a wider portfolio redevelopment process.

- Designing online non-credit bearing modules for students on aspects of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- Gathering data that reflects the whole student journey at Hallam to find out the experiences of ethnically minoritised students in different contexts at university, including, for example, the use of study skills support or careers and employability advisers,
- Starting a network for staff who are working with students on 'decolonising' or 'diversifying' their courses. This includes initiatives to examine teaching approaches and equity in the classroom as well as revising course content and reading lists.

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