

# Interventions to close the Degree Award Gap

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## What is the issue?

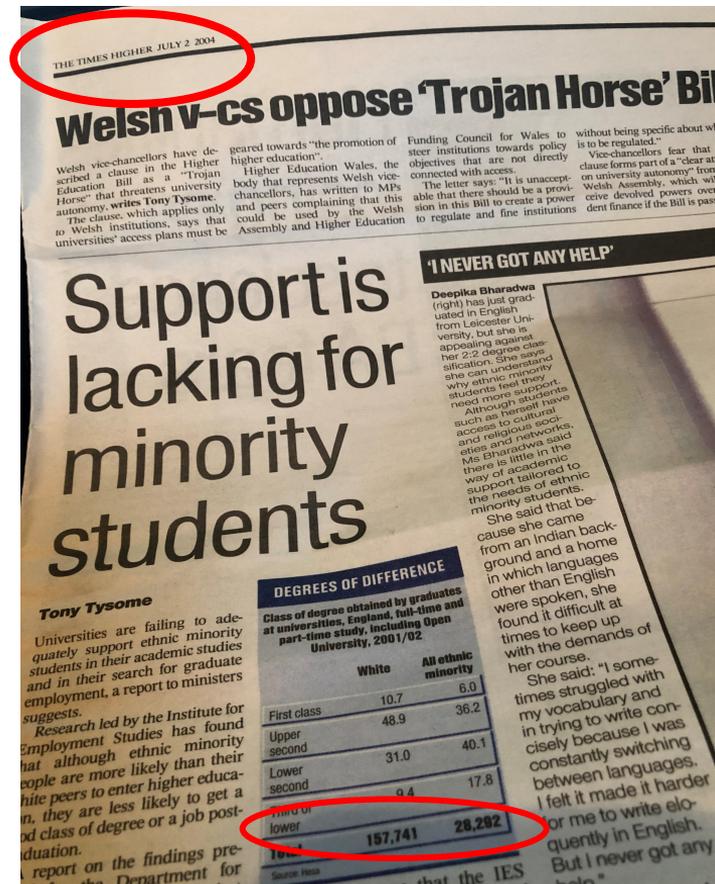
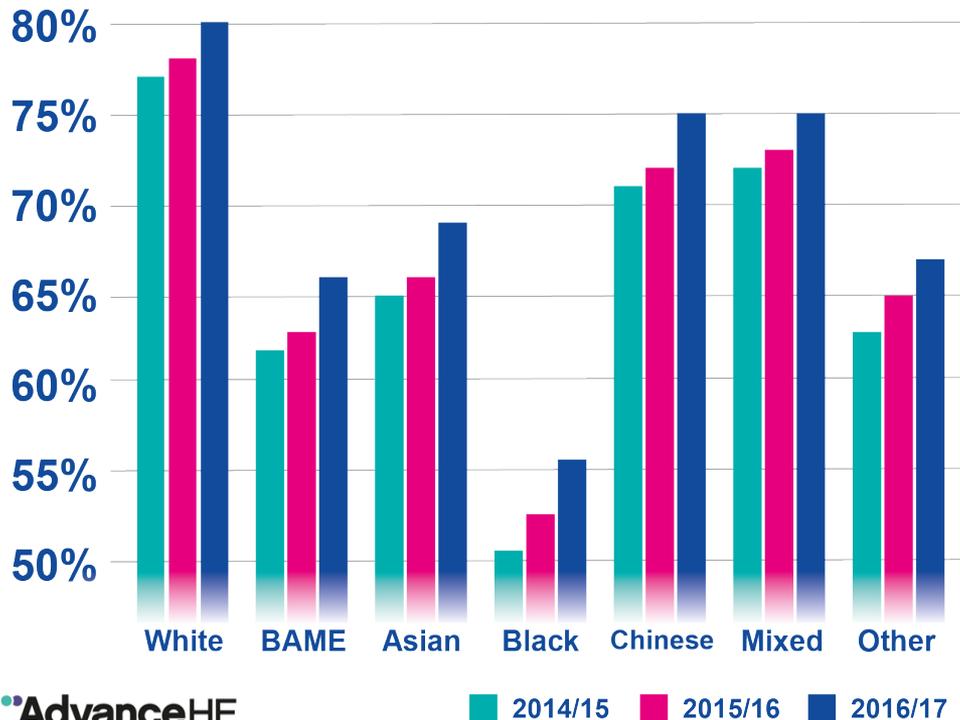
The **Degree Award Gap** is the difference in percentage points in good honours (1<sup>st</sup> / 2:1) between students from different ethnicities.



**The national  
Degree Award  
Gap is 13.3%**  
(2018/19)

*It is sector wide and progress is slow*

UK domiciled first degree undergraduate qualifiers receiving a first or 2:1 degree over time by ethnic group



## Degree award gaps...

### Rate of change

The white – black gap has changed by **0.3%** between 2003/04 and 2018/19

if we continue at the same rate, the gap won't close until **2085/86**

Gap most pronounced between

**black males**  
(54.5% were awarded 1<sup>st</sup> / 2:1)

and

**white females**  
(82.9% were awarded 1<sup>st</sup> / 2:1)

a gap of **28.4%**

Even when variables such as class, entry qualifications are controlled, there is still a degree award gap by ethnicity

## Lack of progress over the years – Why?

- **Lack of understanding** regarding the causes of the degree award gap (previously called ‘attainment gap’)
- **Blaming the student** – first gen, lacking in academic skills, complex lifestyles, lack of attendance, etc
- **Prioritising reputation** over this issue
- **No desire to explore other causes** or look at the institution as a space the perpetuates inequalities
- **Constantly requesting more data** / derailing constructive conversations
- **Important because impacts progressing onto PG study** - often requires a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2:1 degree – impacts the job market

## TEF rating / Degree Award Gap (2015/16)

### Black attainment gap for first class honours degrees

Provider name	TEF award	White 1st class honours	Black 1st class honours	Difference
The University of Buckingham	Gold	36%	0%	-36%
The University of Oxford	Gold	34%	0%	-34%
The University of Bradford	Silver	45%	12%	-33%
The School of Oriental and Afric..	Bronze	35%	5%	-30%
University for the Creative Arts	Silver	36%	8%	-28%
University College Birmingham	Silver	37%	10%	-27%
Staffordshire University	Silver	32%	6%	-26%
The University of Warwick	Silver	35%	9%	-26%
The University of Exeter	Gold	26%	0%	-26%
The University of Huddersfield	Gold	38%	13%	-26%
The University of West London	Silver	40%	15%	-25%
University of Hertfordshire	Silver	33%	9%	-24%
The University of Surrey	Gold	53%	30%	-23%
Birkbeck College	Silver	29%	7%	-22%
Coventry University	Gold	34%	12%	-22%
Goldsmiths College	Bronze	24%	2%	-22%
Anglia Ruskin University	Silver	34%	13%	-22%
London School of Economics an..	Bronze	30%	9%	-22%
City, University of London	Silver	34%	12%	-22%
University of Nottingham	Gold	33%	12%	-21%

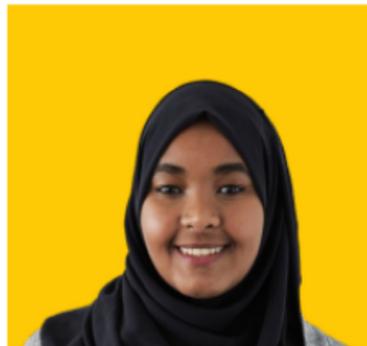
“

**Over 25%**  
of institutions with the  
**worst degree award gaps**  
have been rated  
**gold.**

”

(Buckley-Irvine, 2017)

## BLACK, ASIAN AND MINORITY ETHNIC STUDENT ATTAINMENT AT UK UNIVERSITIES: #CLOSINGTHEGAP



## #CLOSINGTHEGAP

1. Strong leadership
2. Having conversations about race, racism and changing the culture
3. Developing racial diverse and inclusive environments
4. Getting the evidence and analysing the data
5. Understanding what works

## Curricula and learning, including teaching and assessment practices:

- Different student groups indicate varying degrees of satisfaction with the HE curricula (Bhopal, 2018; NUS report, 2011).
- Unconscious bias in assessment practices (NUS report - mark my words, not my name)

## Psychosocial and identity factors:

- Teacher expectations of student capability / academic achievement
- The extent to which students feel supported and encouraged in their daily interactions within their institutions and with staff members.
- Such interactions can both facilitate and limit students' learning and attainment.



## Causes of the degree awarding gap

## Relationships between staff and students and among students:

- Importance of social interaction (Schneider & Preckel, 2017)
- A sense of 'belonging' emerged as a key determinant of student outcomes, especially early on in the learner journey

## Social, cultural and economic capital:

- Importance of mentoring, social networks, external support impact on how different students experience HE

## • Institution-wide approach

- Senior management commitment to prioritise closing the degree award gap
  - Publication of institution gaps as part of KIS data?
  - Hold staff management accountable
  - Financial implications – progression, retention, reputational damage
- Mandatory staff training and raising awareness
  - Lecturer expectations & perception of student capability
  - Developing anti-racist praxis
- Developing anti-racist curriculums
  - Diverse, inclusive, anti-racist content & supporting materials
  - L&T delivery – who gets to deliver the lectures / seminars? How diverse is the staff team - is the student reflected in the staffing team?

## • Institution-wide approach

- Monitoring of the gaps in progression, retention, degree outcomes (Analytics)
  - Know where the gaps are across the institution
  - Monitor and commit as a team to be proactive in changing the experience for Black and Brown students
- Raising awareness among our students / co-create projects
  - Work with all students on relevant projects
- School and professional service events
  - Raise the profile of this work and share good practice
- Continue the conversation...

# THANK YOU



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