

## AccessHE BAME Forum Meeting

held on

**16 January 2018 (2.00 – 4.00pm)**

at

Senate House, University of London

### MEETING NOTES

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#### Attendees:

Bunmi	Adedeji-Ahove	GSM London
Nikki	Anghileri	St Mary's University
Josie	Dick	University for the Creative Arts
Robyn	Fitzharris	Brunel University London
Mubarik	Ibrahim	St Mary's University
Sophia	Martin	London South Bank University
Iqbal	Miah	Brunel University London
Mohamed	Omar	Union of Brunel Students
Jon	Rainford	Conservatoire for Dance and Drama
Leo	Robertson	GSM London
Becky	Saxby	LSE
Sam	Turner	AccessHE
Renzo	Veschini	London Metropolitan University
James	Ward	Associate Dean
Paul	Wiggins	Partnership Manager
Paulette	Williams	University College London
Amy	York	University College London

#### 1. Welcome and introductions

Amy York (AY) introduced herself and invited others to do the same.

#### 2. Apologies for absence

Rosie Hodgart (LSE), Tariq Patel (University of East London), Sara Griffiths (University of Law).

#### 3. Minutes from the last meeting held on 26 September 2017

AY referred the group to the minutes of the previous meeting and they were passed as accurate.

#### 4. Forum output: web/social media project

AY began by recapping the discussion held at the last meeting and directed the forum towards the 'questions to consider' document circulated prior to the meeting.

The forum agreed that a Twitter/Instagram combination would be the most appropriate platform, although it was acknowledged that this would require a commitment to ensure

consistent content and an agreement on how this would happen. A 'bank' of images and accompanying personal stories would be collected to provide some initial content, and then additional contributions would be required to ensure regular posts afterwards.

James Ward (JW) suggested pinning the launch of the campaign to an event run by a member institution, or potentially hosting a launch event to generate interest behind the project. This was agreed by the forum as desirable course of action. Students and staff from member institutions could be invited to discuss some of the issues and opportunities highlighted by the campaign.

Sophia Martin (SM) proposed a name such as 'Black Education Matters', something which would encourage people to find positive stories and challenge the typical canon associated with educational achievement for black students. Highlighting the difficulties of selecting an inclusive but appropriate name, Sam Turner (ST) referred the forum to the NUS' current consultation on renaming its 'Black Students Campaign' and suggested that the forum should look to student bodies such as the NUS and align itself with the language choices adopted by them.

On the question of project ownership, elected sabbatical officers (particularly those with a remit for supporting BME students) were suggested as the most appropriate candidates to help lead development.

A question was posed around the intended audience of the campaign. PW suggested anchoring to the chosen themes of the forum (changing mindsets, retention or attainment) where possible. Paul Wiggins (PWg) offered that a prospective and transition audience might be most appropriate; an online campaign isn't necessarily going to support issues of retention and attainment, but can be both inspiring and settling to students at a pre-application or transition to HE stage. Mubarik Ibrahim (MI) suggested that posts could be timed to coordinate with where students might be in the UCAS cycle. SM offered a theme of 'if I knew then what I know now' where posts could contain bits of information and advice for learners considering course choices etc. JW suggested linking the campaign with and promoting via freshers' events (e.g. with ACS societies or associated NUS campaigns etc).

Finally, PW highlighted some of the potential dangers around the use of a hashtag which could be adopted online by anyone; the forum wouldn't have control over how this was used outside of the campaign's account. It was noted that institutions need to feel comfortable about what is being said to support, although honest reflections which universities can commit to acting upon would give more impact to the project.

**Actions:**

- ***AccessHE to develop project plan, draft submission page and guidance for submissions, and offer any further member actions ahead of the March meeting.***
- ***Members to help source sabbatical officers or other students to join in developing the project (or to contribute their own stories). Please contact [sam.turner@londonhigher.ac.uk](mailto:sam.turner@londonhigher.ac.uk) to introduce interested students.***

## **5. The Student Success Project at Brunel University London**

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Robyn Fitzharris (RF), Mohamed Omar (MO) and Iqbal Miah (IM) kindly delivered a presentation to the forum on the Brunel [Student Success Project](#), a three year project working to close gaps in attainment between ethnic groups. The forum heard about different initiatives delivered collaboratively between Brunel staff and the Students' Union, including student-led feedback sessions, a Liberated Library campaign, a series of staff meetings to raise awareness and funding for departments to deliver their own activities (including curriculum audits, film screenings and debates, enhanced data analysis, timetabling software etc). Having strong senior support and good data were highlighted as extremely important factors in successful projects.

RF also spoke about the conversations and language choices used when communicating the project within the student body; some students would find it motivating and others would be overwhelmed when confronted with barriers previously unseen. Forum members shared concerns in unintentionally characterising certain student groups as 'destined to fail' and falling into deficit-model language; projects such as these should empower students to use what they've seen and support them in improving the situation.

**Action:**

- **AccessHE to [circulate the slides](#) from the presentation.**

**6. Forum outputs: retention and attainment**

The forum split into two groups to discuss the two forum themes and possible outputs. A summary of each group's discussion after reconvening is noted below.

Retention

PWg reported back on some suggestions around retention outputs:

- Producing a handbook of good practice in student retention activities from the AccessHE membership, using the elements included within Brunel's 'student journey' mapping (see [presentation slides](#)).
- Further research or activity with commuter students – many BAME students live at home and commute. Are there opportunities to collaboratively support London commuter students? ST highlighted shared interest from the [London Higher Planners Group](#) and [Mature and Part-Time Students forum](#) around commuter student experiences.

Attainment

ST explained how the group had spoken about definitions of 'student success', enabling students and teaching staff to learn from each other, the gap between expectation and reality of university teaching styles and assessment/feedback, the use of statistics as both a tool and something used to blame, and the value of oracy in developing student confidence.

Suggestions for outputs included:

- A toolkit or document outlining critical questions which students can ask of their teaching staff/courses: resources to empower students to reflect on inclusive teaching practices, diverse curriculum content and other issues which might affect attainment. (Note: useful ['Questions for Course Teams and Module](#)

*[Leaders: prompts to ensure an inclusive curriculum](#)' already exist as part of Kingston's Inclusive Curriculum Framework).*

- Hands-on training for students in how to engage with those in position of power: communications upskilling for students from BAME backgrounds who want to take action around the issue of attainment gaps and run for leadership positions at their institution or SU. (Note: a related event by Black Impact exists called '[How Black Students Win Elections](#)').

**Action:**

- **Members to comment on the above and offer any additional suggestions by emailing [sam.turner@londonhigher.ac.uk](mailto:sam.turner@londonhigher.ac.uk) and [a.york@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:a.york@ucl.ac.uk).**
- **AccessHE to explore output suggestions above ahead of next March meeting.**

**7. Members' and project updates**

There were no members' or project updates.

**8. Sector/policy news and updates**

ST offered a brief overview of the sector/policy news and updates document circulated ahead of the meeting.

**Action:**

- **ST to circulate [sector/policy news and updates](#) with the minutes.**

**9. Any other business**

ST noted that NHS Blood and Transport had been in touch as they were looking to increase the number of black blood donors, and had sent through some leaflets for forum members to take with them back to their institutions.

ST also highlighted that some of today's forum attendees may be interested in the upcoming AccessHE event: [Enabling success for learners from widening participation backgrounds](#).

**10. Date and time of next meeting**

The provisional date of Tuesday 20 March 2-4pm was confirmed.

The meeting closed at 4.05pm

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