

BME Attainment and Success: Research and Beyond

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The structure of the session

- KU student voices
- Presentation of the research
- Putting the findings into action
- Faculty perspectives
- Student perspectives

Students were asked for their views on:

- Diversity
- Staff/student relationships
- Assessment and feedback
- Social life and work life balance
- Plagiarism
- Academic skills centres
- Technology
- Careers and employability
- Societies

Interviews with current students

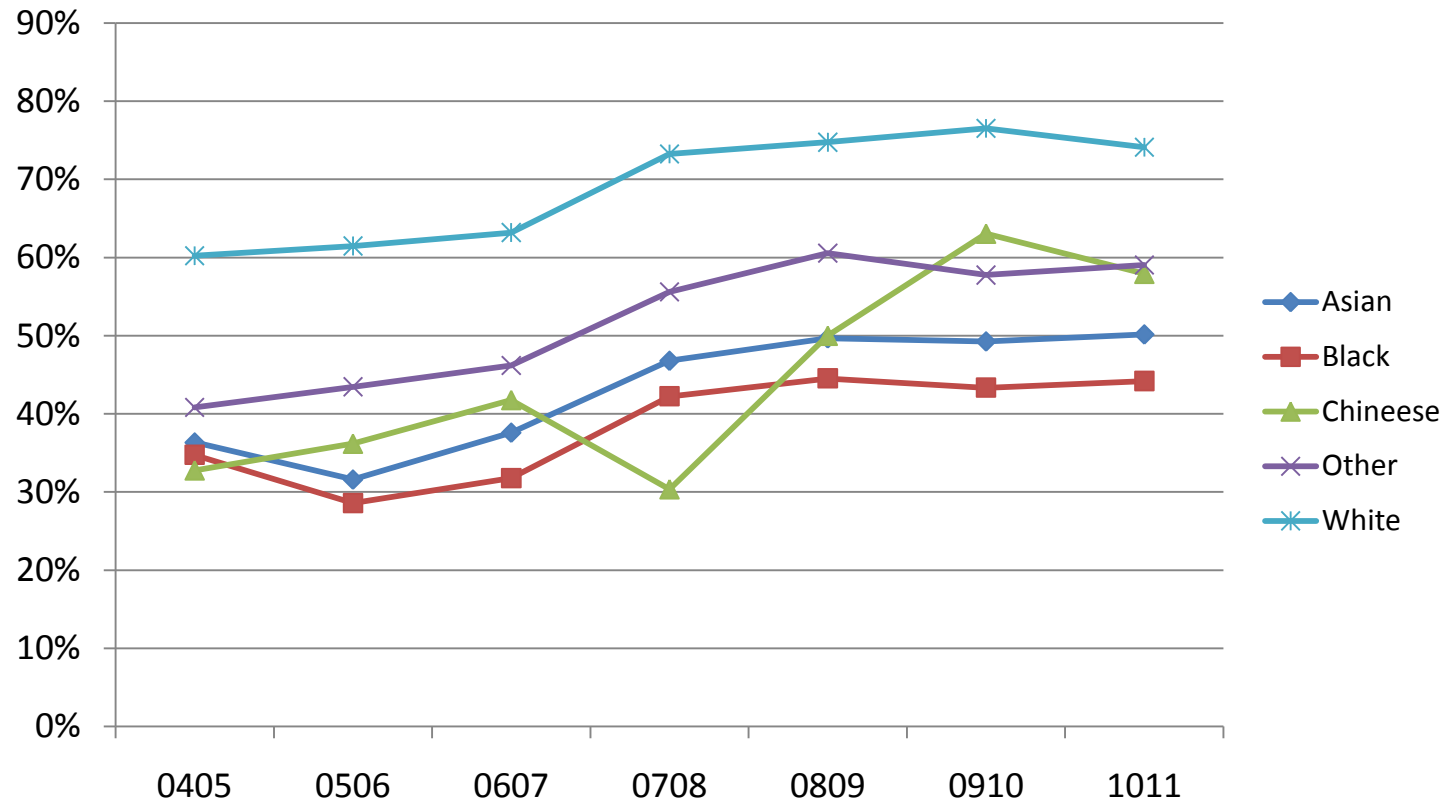
Some issues raised (You Tube links removed):

- Advantages of studying in a diverse student population
- Feedback to support the best work
- The need to be proactive
- Student teacher relationship

Background to the project

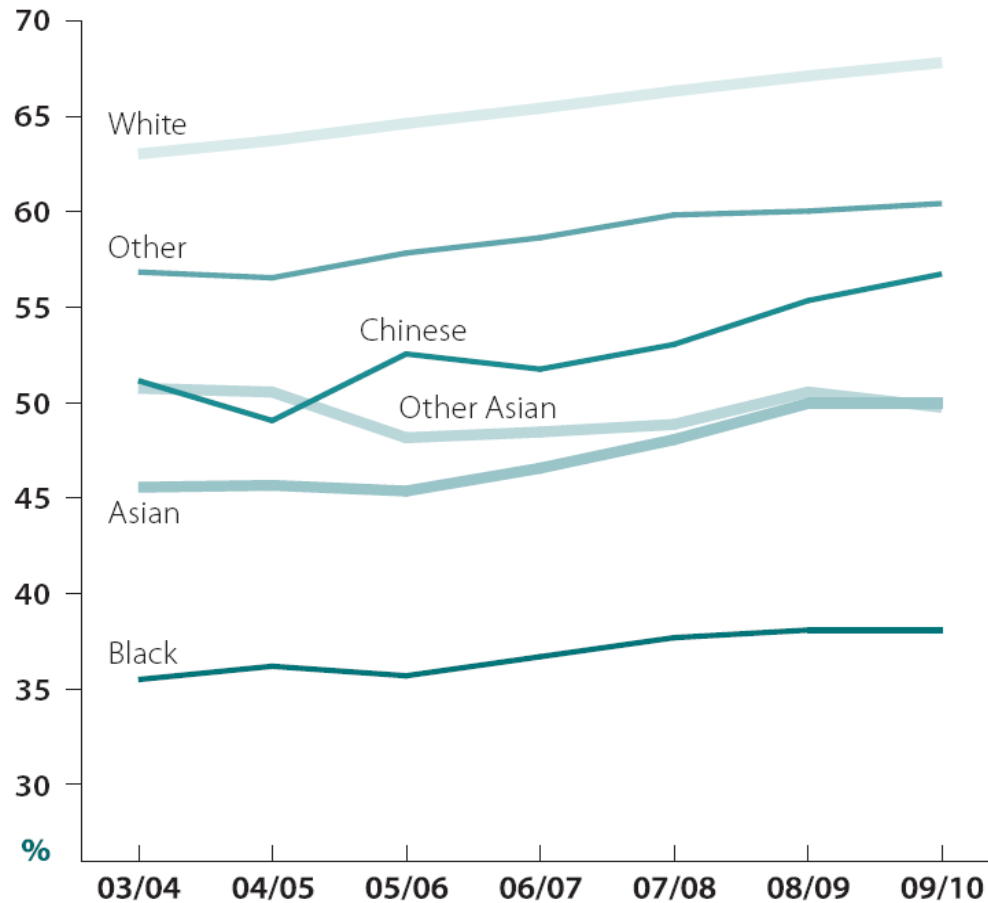
- Attainment of non white ethnic groups, particularly in terms of degree classification, has been an ongoing issue for KU and across the HE sector.
- Sector wide research indicates that being from a minority ethnic group has a significant and negative effect on degree attainment even after controlling for contributory factors including prior attainment and deprivation (Broecke and Nicholls, 2007)
- KU data clearly shows white students outperforming those from ethnic minority background in terms of 1 & 2.1 degrees across subject areas over several years.
- ADC/HEPP project specification produced and put out to tender; IPSE commissioned to carry out the research in 2011 focussing on areas linked to LTAS goals.

KU first degree undergraduate qualifiers obtaining a first or upper second class honours degree by academic year and ethnic group



Source: KU student returns

Sector wide first degree undergraduate qualifiers obtaining a first or upper second class honours degree by academic year and ethnic group



Source: ECU Statistical Report 2011

Summary of the research method

- Analysis of student records – ethnic groups, module attainment and degree classification
- Analysis of second year student survey data – ethnic groups, satisfaction, module attainment
- Course directors interviewed from B&L and Science (to cover a range of programmes and assessment types) about their perceptions and L&T responses to BME students.
- Detailed findings reported to steering group

Summary of key findings (students)

- The attainment gap between **home** BME and white students is significant across all faculties.
- The gap between White and Black students is larger than that between White and Asian students.
- BME students are more disadvantaged by exam assessment than White students.
- Black students appeared to be most satisfied and Asian least satisfied with teaching and assessment & feedback.

Summary of key findings (staff)

- Teaching-staff appeared not to have straightforward access to data linking attainment to ethnicity – largely unaware of the issue
- Staff well aware of the diversity of the student population and challenges they faced.
- Academic writing/communication and student engagement considered the main issues by staff.
- Staff appeared to be more concerned about the attainment of Asian students compared to Black students.
- Most staff did not direct support specifically towards BME students.

Recommendations from the report

- Raise awareness amongst staff of the BME/attainment issue amongst home students.
- Enable teaching staff to easily monitor the attainment of students by ethnic group, separating out home students.
- Encourage debate on equality of student experience vs. equality of outcome.
- Explore assessment processes and BME attainment in more detail.

Some findings from HEA Summit 2012

- Staff drew attention to societal/structural barriers, such as poverty, and institutional barriers, such as perceived racism and/or political correctness
- Most staff recognised the need to change institutional structures and LTA practices.
- Both staff and students felt that reducing the attainment gap required a greater diversity of approaches to LTA practices.
- Staff and students agreed that support should be available to all students not targeted specifically at BME groups

Follow-up actions

- OFFA Access agreement now includes BME interventions to initiate activity in response to issues identified:
- Extended Compact Scheme (1000 students – pre-course summer schools)
- First Year Mentoring Scheme (1000 students – 200 2nd year mentors)
- ADSAP established (student advisory panel)
- ADC/Faculty/student visit to Charlotte
- Faculty specific follow up

Faculty of Science, Engineering and Computing

- SEC faculty adopted an Academic Probation Programme that was based on various activities observed at UNC Charlotte
- Students who have failed more than 30 credits (2 single modules) required to undergo academic probation.
- Required to follow a support programme developed to help improve academic performance

Structure of Academic Probation Programme

- Complete an on-line Academic Self-Assessment and discuss it with Personal Tutor
- Students must make at least one visit to Academic Skills Centre S³
- Required to attend an Academic Success Workshop (ASW) :

Evaluation of APP

- 230 students out of 500 students attended Academic Success Workshop.
- Questionnaire distributed to participants; Focus groups planned.
- Data analysis to see if engagement has a positive impact

Discussion

Comment and questions

References

Leathwood, C., Hutchins M. & Mansaray, A. (2011). *Student diversity and success at Kingston University*, Institute for Policy Studies in Education. Confidential report for Kingston University.

Stevenson, J. (2012). *Black and minority ethnic student degree retention and attainment*, Higher Education Academy Draft Summit report.

Broecke, S. and T. Nicholls (2007). *Ethnicity and Degree Attainment: Research Report Rw92*. London, Department for Education and Skills.