

# Closing Our Gap: How a School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work is Improving the Experience of Black, Asian, Mixed Heritage and Minority Ethnic students

CLAIRE THURGATE \*

And

MARY MAKINDE \*

Canterbury Christ University, Canterbury, UK

**Keywords:** access, inclusion, BAME, nursing, midwifery, social work

A joint report by the NUS and Universities UK, highlighted a significant disparity between the degree outcomes of White students and Black, Asian, Mixed Heritage and Minority Ethnic students. The reports highlights that White students are more likely to receive a 1st or 2.1 degree than Black, Asian, Mixed Heritage and Minority Ethnic students. The largest gap is seen between Black students and White students. This disparity is also evident at Canterbury Christ Church University and through the university's strategic commitments to closing our gap, work is underway to improve the experiences of our Black, Asian, Mixed Heritage and Minority Ethnic students, tackle racial inequalities and improve student outcomes.

Through consultations with staff and students the University developed a Closing Our Gap strategic framework. The framework is divided in to three strands outlining the university's commitment to developing:

---

\* Email: [claire.thurgate@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:claire.thurgate@canterbury.ac.uk)

\* Email: [mary.makinde@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:mary.makinde@canterbury.ac.uk)

Curriculum: is diverse and inclusive which is representative and reflective of the staff and student body.

Culture: celebrates diversity in which our core values are reflected.

Community: a friendly, inclusive and professional community that fosters good relationships and a sense of belonging in which everyone is heard and respected.

Black, Asian, Mixed Heritage and Minority Ethnic students account for approximately 32% of the students within the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Social Care and the disparity of degree outcomes between White students and Black, Asian, Mixed Heritage and Minority Ethnic students is a concern. The School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work, working with our student body, has taken steps to gain a deeper understanding, improve the student experience and reduce the attainment gap including:

Reviewing the Mental Health nursing curriculum with Black, Asian, Mixed Heritage and Minority Ethnic students to ensure an inclusive curriculum;

Validating a Nursing and Social Justice module within our adult nursing programmes;

Implementing a student engagement lead role who is working with our Black, Asian, Mixed Heritage and Minority Ethnic students to enhance their experience;

Implementing a Student Council so that the School understands student issues and facilitates an inclusive culture that hears and respects all.

Alongside university learning our students are either undertaking professionally regulated courses involving placements or they are workers and learners engaging in continuing development. There is a need, therefore, to understand how the implementation of curriculum, culture and community within the workplace impacts on the student experience and their degree classification as many Black, Asian, Mixed Heritage and Minority Ethnic students do not report racism for fear of not being believed (Hackett, 2021). To gain this insight the faculty is supporting two Health Education England projects, in collaboration with our Black, Asian, Mixed Heritage and Minority Ethnic students. These projects want to

understand the impact of the Black, Asian, Mixed Heritage and Minority Ethnic students' practice experience. It is hoped that findings will contribute to a toolkit which will facilitate a curriculum, culture and community within practice/the workplace which is inclusive and respects all.

## **Reference**

Hackett, K. (2021). Reporting racism: 'students fear they won't be believed'. *Nursing Standard*, 36 (2): 19-21.