

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER:

Diversity and Inclusion Student Ambassador Programme

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Introduction

The Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Student Ambassador Programme is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council and operated at the University of Manchester, the University of Birmingham and Manchester Metropolitan University to improve outcomes and experiences for Black Asian and Minor-

ity Ethnic (BAME) students. Mixed-method evaluation of the influences and progress of the programme was conducted during my internship, which provided essential information for a report to be sent back to the Office for Students (OfS).

Objectives

The D&I Student Ambassador Programme is designed to improve BAME students' wellbeing and outcomes by:

- Increasing students' sense of belonging and ability to build meaningful relationships with other students and with staff (academic and other) through the development of internal and external networks;
- Creating safe spaces for students to participate in discussions on inclusive learning and teaching environments and wellbeing, as well as academic support and feedback; and by,
- Empowering students to tackle the negative effects of stereotyping and micro-aggressions through active bystander intervention.

The evaluation I participated in was to form a report to the OfS, reflecting on whether the D&I Student Ambassador Programme achieved such proposed aims and the influences that the project had on students and their universities. Not only would this showcase the benefits that the programme has already generated in terms of promoting equality, this would also provide valuable indications for the future development of the programme.

Methods

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were utilised for data collection and analysis during this evaluation. Focus groups with students had already been conducted before my internship, and my task was to perform audio thematic analysis of these. Dr Stephen Ashe (lead researcher of this evaluation and my supervisor) offered me detailed guidelines on how to do this, and though it took time, this analysis successfully revealed in-depth information on students' experiences in the D&I Student Ambassador Programme and their universities.

Interviews were also involved, and I participated in two of them with academic leads of the programme. These had enriched the data by providing first-hand accounts of the programme from different perspectives.

Quantitative methods were utilised to enable generalisation and comparisons. Excel was of main use in cleaning quantitative data of ambassador surveys, sorting out answers of open-ended questions and producing charts. Sami Karamalla-Gaibballa (Data Analyst of the team) instructed me on Excel functions such as Pivot Table and v-lookup throughout this process. After this, students' overall attitudes toward the programme and their university life were revealed. We also employed data from the Access and Participation Dashboard of OfS to gain an overview of the differential attainments endured by BAME undergraduates in the 3 participating universities, which served as contextual information for our evaluation.

Results and Conclusions

Students generally agreed that the D&I Student Ambassador programme had significant positive influences on them, especially considering their sense of

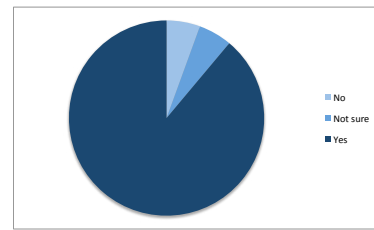


Figure 1 whether or not students felt that the programme increased their sense of belonging to their universities

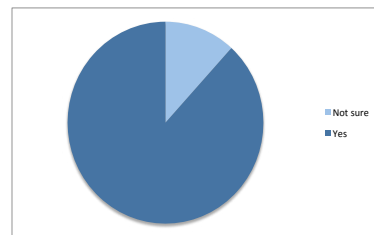


Figure 2 whether or not students felt that the programme empowered them to tackle prejudice and discrimination

belonging and empowerment (as figure 1 and 2 reveal).

Students reflected that through the programme they were able to develop both meaningful internal and external networks.

Students reported that the programme's Active Bystander Training had successfully equipped them a set of practical knowledge and skills to tackle microaggressions and discrimination.

Students showed an overall agreement that the programme successfully provided safe spaces for discussions on inclusive educational environments. However, students also reflected that these safe spaces were limited within the programme and should be expanded across the universities.

Students also reported that the programme had increased their confidence and had equipped them with a set of transferable skills that they could apply in their degree programme and in everyday life.

Key Skills Learned

- Both quantitative and qualitative research skills through my internship
- Qualitative: practical skills of conducting qualitative interviews; useful skills and experiences of thematic analysis, especially audio thematic analysis which I practiced for the first time.
- Quantitative: excel techniques, as I developed from having not many recent experiences of Excel to being now familiar with useful Excel functions such as Pivot Table, Sort, Chart-inserting and the v-lookup formula.
- First-hand experiences of ethical issues.
- Communication and collaboration skills.