

# **Coaching for Equity in Higher Education: Reflections from a Coach on the University of Manchester Grow Beyond Limits Coaching Programme**

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# Why This Matters

- Persistent awarding gaps across UK HE (Office for Students)
- Students of Black Heritage – White peer awarding gap rose from 11.6% (2017/18) to 12.5% (2021/22) — and remains unchanged.
- Students of South Asian Heritage and White peers currently 9.3%
- Structural inequities impact confidence, continuation & attainment

Attainment Rates of Full-Time Undergraduates at The University of Manchester: Students of Black Heritage and White Peers (2017/18)

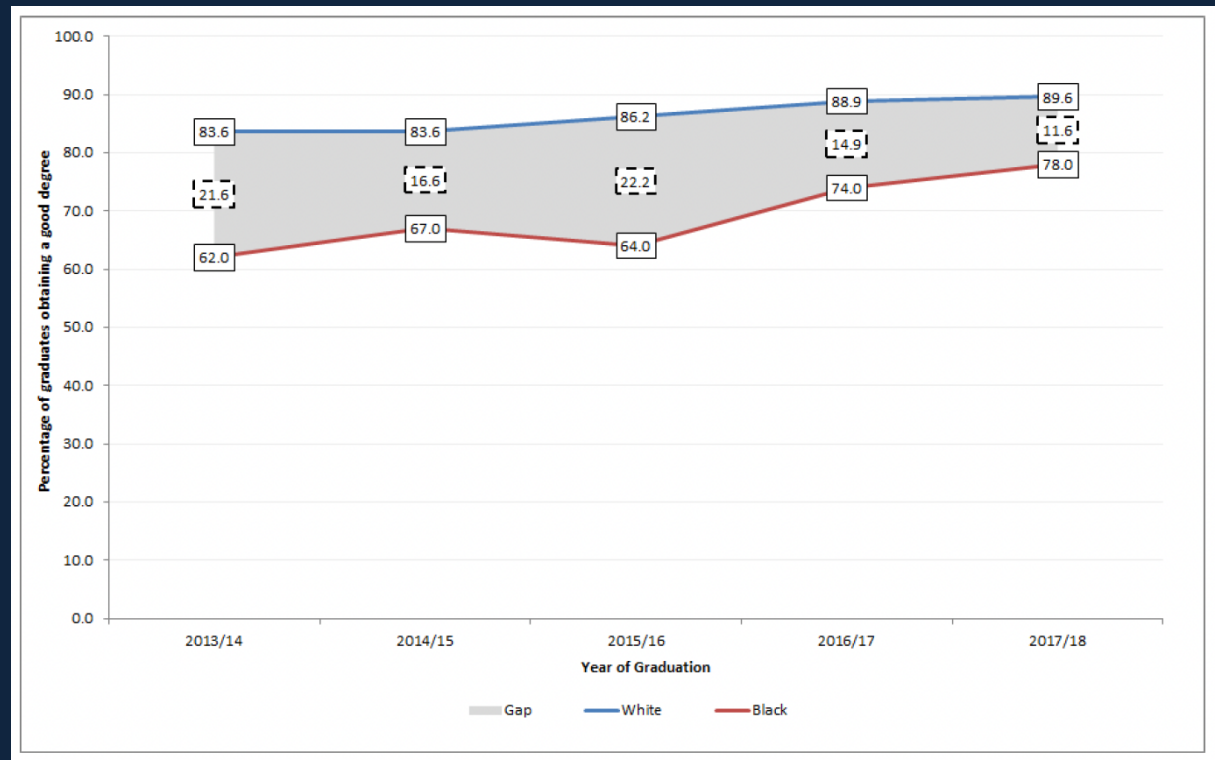
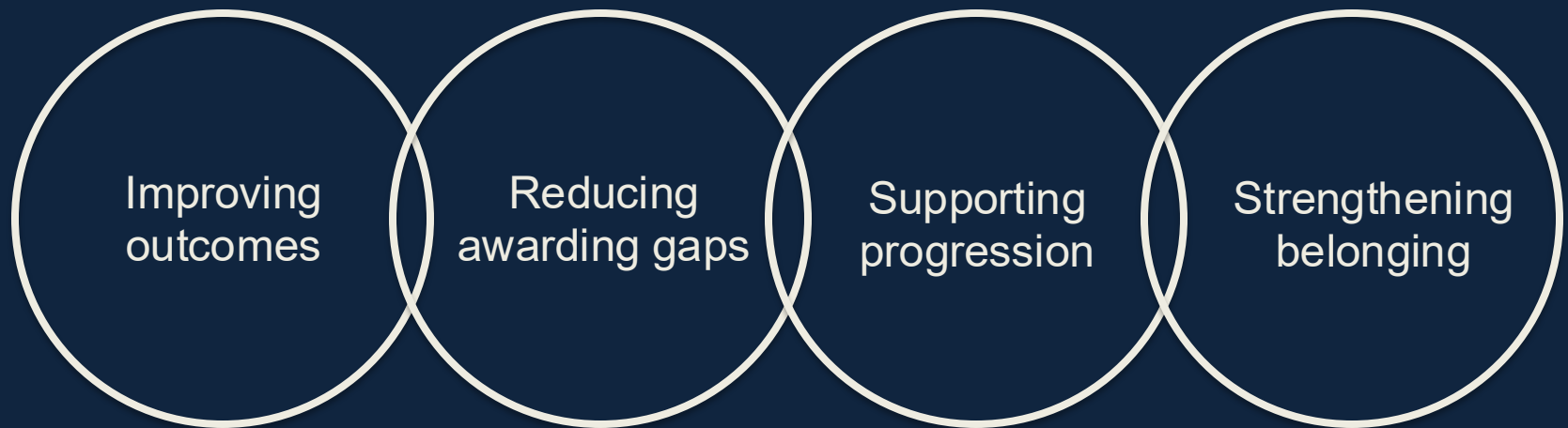


Figure 1: University of Manchester (2020) Access and participation plan 2020/21 to 2024/25

# Grow Beyond Limits

- Piloted in 2023/24: Students of Black Heritage Coaching Programme
- Now includes Students of South Asian Heritage
- Focus:



*Figure 2: Author's own*

*Grow Beyond Limits aims to drive equity through belonging and academic support*

# My Role As A Coach

- Coached 2 students over average of 8 sessions
- Entered thinking: mentoring / advising
- Learned: coaching is about listening, reflection, ownership



Figure 3: iStock by Getty Images

# Theoretical Lens

- **Bandura (1997):** Self-efficacy builds belief in one's abilities
- **Mezirow (1991):** Transformative learning through critical reflection
- Coaching = space for reflection, identity, growth

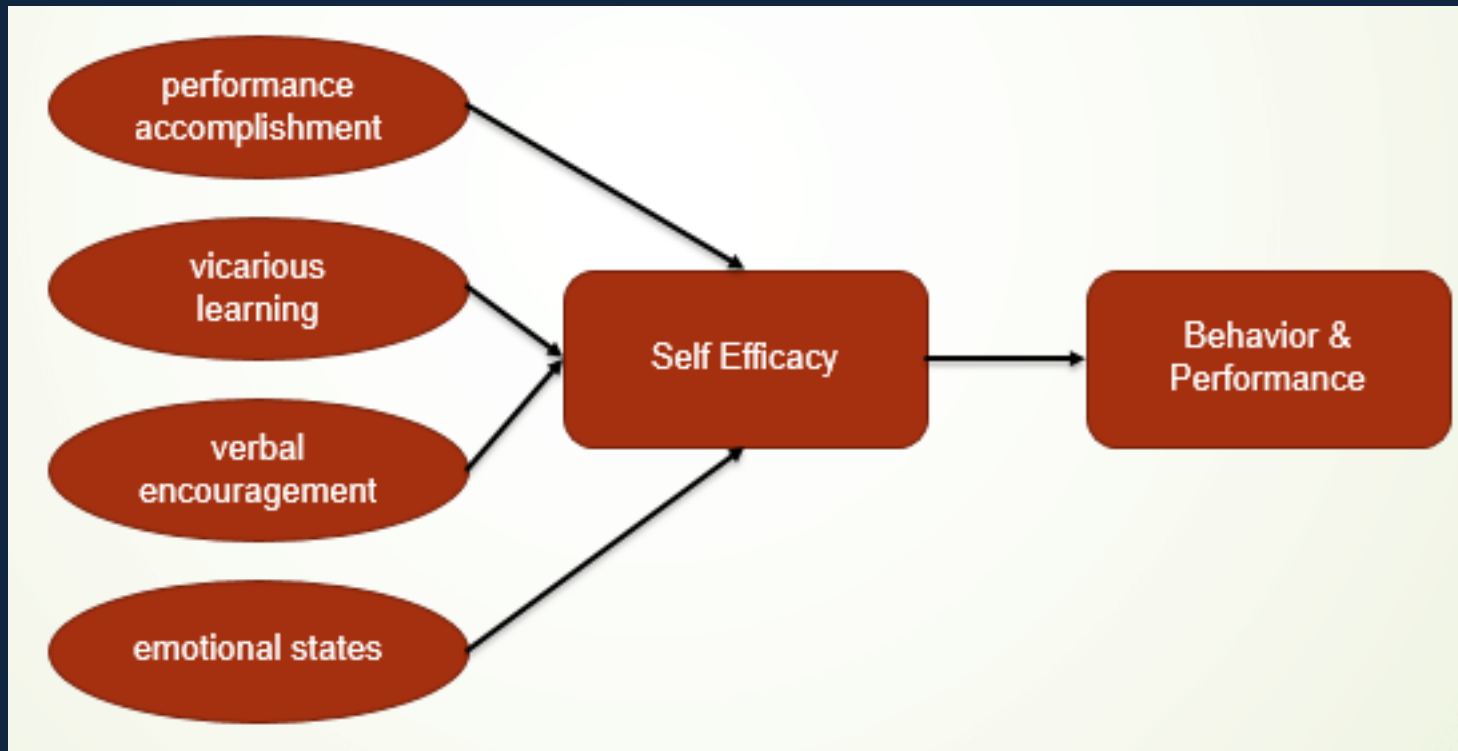


Figure 4: Bandura (1997) Self Efficacy Theory

# What Students Gained

- Self-motivation increased from 40% to 75%
- Student feedback: 'Your advice made a huge impact.'
- Students gained:



*Figure 5: Author's own*

# Challenges

- Fluctuating engagement: Only 57% of students completed 3+ sessions
- Barriers: rigid structure, academic pressures
- Emotional labour and confronting unconscious bias
- Continuous reflection needed to ensure I was delivering what my students needed



Figure 6: iStock by Getty Images

# Personal Reflections

- Coaching was emotionally rewarding but also demanding
- Balancing it alongside academic workload was challenging
- GRIT training shifted my mindset: from “fixing” to empowering
- Coaching reshaped my teaching: more inclusive, student-centred, relational

*Reflection on impact of the GRIT coaching training workshops*



Figure 7: YouTube: Grit Breakthrough Programmes (2024). "Eight months on, Kevin reflects about the impact of the Grit coaching workshop."



# Where Next?

- Coaching ≠ solution alone
- Needs sustainable embedding
- Aligns with SDG 4: Quality Education
- Invest in student-centred structures



*Figure 8: UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Quality Education*

# References

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# Thank You – Let's Talk

- Scholarship interest – Embedding equity, diversity and inclusion into teaching and learning
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