

## EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



### The Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (B.A.M.E) Degree Awarding Gap

It is important to begin this section by explaining that the degree awarding gap does not result from a 'lack of skills' or 'academic acumen' in students, but from institutional factors. This is explained in reports created by the Office for Students, Advance HE and academic researchers, and through the value-added (VA) score below. Of all the disparities that exist within higher education, the degree awarding gap is the starkest and has proved to be both persistent and prevalent in the higher education sector. In 2017/18 more than two-thirds of UK universities had an awarding gap above 10pp, and 29 per cent of institutions had an awarding gap of between 10pp and 15pp (Universities UK (2019), page 13).

#### **What is the degree awarding gap?**

The degree awarding gap is the percentage point (pp) difference between the proportion of UK-domiciled Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students and White students awarded a 1st or 2:1 degree classification upon graduation.

Overall in the UK in 2019, 81.4 per cent of white students received a 1st/2:1 compared with 68.0 per cent of BAME students, representing a BAME degree awarding gap of 13.3 percentage points.

There is a variation in the awarding gap across the broad ethnic groups, with the gap between White and Black African students the largest, and between White and Chinese students the smallest. This contrasts with the picture in compulsory schooling where many ethnic minorities outperform White pupils.

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#### **What has been the sector's response?**

Key sector bodies including QAA, Universities UK and Advance HE have encouraged institutions to take the awarding gap seriously. The regulatory body, the Office for Students (OfS), has set a sector-wide key performance measure on the awarding gap between White and Black students with two targets: 1) to: 'eliminate the unexplained gap in degree outcomes (firsts or 2:1s) between White students and Black students by 2024–25, and 2) to eliminate the absolute gap (the gap caused by both structural and unexplained factors) by 2030–31.' (OfS, 2018b, page 4)

#### **The awarding gap at Solent?**

In 2019/20 the degree awarding gap at Solent University stood at x percentage points, with x of our UK-domiciled Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students receiving a first/2:1 degree classification compared to y per cent of White students.

#### **Working towards a Zero Awarding Gap**

We want to eliminate the awarding gap and so our approach is at an institutional, course and individual level. In order to systematically change the culture at Solent we have created a plan which includes:

1. a Board-level KPI – to ensure everyone is working to create a zero awarding gap
2. the Value Added Metric (link to page) – to enable us to focus resources where they are most needed
3. Solent's Inclusive Curriculum Framework (link to page) – to build inclusivity from concept to review
4. Student Curriculum Consultants (link to page) – to ensure we co-create our work and to value students as producers of knowledge
5. development and training in inclusivity – to create a culture where staff and students are aware of the behaviours we expect at Solent University.