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LINCOLN HIGHER EDUCATION
RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Lincoln Equality of Attainment Project

LETSS

Lincoln Education Toolkit
for Student Success

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LETSS Begin

Purpose: Why We Need This Toolkit

Within all higher education institutions, there is strong evidence of a differential outcome between white students and BAME (Black Asian and Minority Ethnic) students achieving ‘good honours’ degrees at graduation (2:1 and above). This is known across the sector as the BAME attainment gap. The University of Lincoln (UoL) has a strong strategic commitment to creating a culturally diverse community where different ideas, values and beliefs are acknowledged, valued and respected equally and embedded into all of its core business. The Lincoln Equality of Attainment Project (LEAP) embodies this position within the institution’s mission and strives to help the university better understand its own context-specific reasons why differential student outcomes exist and persist. A common observation across research into attainment gaps and differential student outcomes has shown that there is no single reason why this gap exists and persists. This toolkit aims to address differential student outcomes from an educational and pedagogical perspective to help improve BAME student experiences and support their achievement and success at the University of Lincoln.

While the University as a whole, and individual Colleges or Schools, may have low numbers of BAME students overall, this can lead to the mistaken idea that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in teaching, learning and assessment is of little importance. Nothing could be further from the truth. Embedding EDI is part of good practice that not only benefits BAME students and staff but all students and staff as it enables open mindedness and diversity.

The *Lincoln Education Toolkit for Student Success (LETSS)* provides a resource of activities and advice for staff to facilitate the application and promotion of EDI in their practice. *LETSS* also aims to raise staff awareness of BAME issues at local level and incorporates bespoke activities and support that will help to streamline the variety of pedagogies available. This seeks to help address attainment gaps or differential outcomes by ethnicity and improve BAME students’ academic experience. This is a dynamic, evolving and collaborative process engaging colleagues and students across the institution to share best practice in supporting student success.

Using This Toolkit

Imagine this toolkit as a menu. As with any menu, you may occasionally want to substitute ingredients to suit your needs. Here, you can adjust any *LETSS* activity to meet the needs of your local context and disciplinary discourse, or feedback from students and colleagues. *LETSS* is not a blueprint on how equality should be addressed within teaching and learning, however, it is designed to assist staff through a sometimes difficult and complex journey of understanding, reflecting, embedding and promoting EDI into their day to day and longer term work.

Within the toolkit, LETSS activities are divided into three main sections:

- **LETSS Engage**
- **LETSS Reflect**
- **LETSS Act**

As an evolving toolkit, if you have something you feel could be included please do get in touch by contacting Xiaotong Zhu xzhu@lincoln.ac.uk and Rhianne Sterling-Morris rsterlingmorris@lincoln.ac.uk.

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LETSS Get Back to Basics

CORE
ACTIVITY

In order to best support your students, you need to understand the basics of the terminology relevant to the BAME attainment gap, race equality and other relevant areas in order to develop a shared understanding with your team. Basics also include understanding different data sets regarding student attainment, the diversity of your students and Office for Students (OfS) requirements.

1. What does 'BAME' mean in the University and AdvanceHE definition?

BAME stands for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic. Sometimes BME standing for Black and Minority Ethnic is used interchangeably.

Although it is generally perceived that these terms refer only to non-white people and do not consider white minority ethnic groups, they do include people who are white minorities.

We should be mindful of the limitations in terminology. For example, here it is implied that BME/BAME individuals are a homogeneous group. Labels can be perceived as convenient and placed on minority ethnic groups of people, rather than identities with which people have chosen to identify. Feedback from some BAME UoL students suggests referring to them by specific groups e.g. black or Chinese, or if you need to categorise a large group of non-white students, they prefer the use of 'people/person of colour (POC)'.

2. What is the 'attainment gap'?

The attainment gap is commonly referred to as the degree attainment gap. It is the difference in 'top degrees' – a First or 2:1 classification – awarded to different groups of students. In general, the student attainment data used and monitored by the sector measures degree outcomes of UK-domiciled graduating students at the first-degree level.

The biggest differences are found by ethnicity. As AdvanceHE notes, 'while overall proportions receiving a First or 2:1 have increased over the past decade, there continues to be a considerable gap between the proportion of white British students receiving these degree classifications compared to UK-domiciled students from minority ethnic groups.

Feedback from some BAME UoL students suggests using 'differential outcomes' instead of 'attainment gap' is better as the term 'differential outcomes' does not fall into the trap of problematising students with a student deficit model that focuses negatively on BAME.

3. What is UoL's target in relation to the BAME attainment gap?

The Lincoln Equality of Attainment Project (LEAP) is working together towards the targets set in the University's Access and Participation Plan (APP) in relation to the 'success' stage of the student lifecycle. With regard to the success of BAME students, the institutional target is as set out below:

'Taking our lead from the OfS KPM4 Success measure, by 2024-25 Lincoln aims to eliminate the absolute gap in degree outcomes between BAME and White students.'

4. What is the absolute gap?

The absolute gap in degree outcomes is caused both by structural and unexplained factors. Office for Students notes that 'some of the factors that contribute to the non-continuation and attainment

gaps are structural, such as entry qualification, subject of study or age of students [and that] once such structural factors are taken into account, there remain significant unexplained differences which are referred to as unexplained gaps'.

5. What is LEAP's focus?

While the LEAP project seeks to understand and address attainment gaps in relation to a range of protected characteristics, its immediate priority is the attainment gap by ethnicity at UoL. We aim to achieve this by raising staff awareness of BAME issues at a local level and providing bespoke support.

Further Reading

Advance HE (2020) *Degree attainment gaps*. Advance HE. Available from <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/guidance/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/student-recruitment-retention-and-attainment/degree-attainment-gaps> [accessed 28 October 2020]

Office for Students (2020) *Access and participation glossary*. Office for Students. Available from <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/access-and-participation-glossary/> [accessed 23 October 2020]

LETSS Explore Context



In order to support BAME student success and reduce differential outcomes by ethnicity, it is critical to explore your context at local level (e.g. School, Department, Programme) to better understand context specific issues.

How many BAME students are in your School/Department/Programme?
What is the BAME attainment gap in your School/Department/Programme?
How has it changed from the previous years?
Which programme has the largest BAME attainment gap and which programme/s have the smallest?
Is it different from previous years, and how has it changed?
Based on local data and feedback from BAME students (including but not limited to e.g. NSS, module evaluations, Speak Week), what are their perceived barriers to learning?
What has been done in your School/Department/Programme to mitigate these perceived barriers to learning?
How have BAME students been involved with these mitigation initiatives?
Have any of these activities made an impact on engaging and supporting BAME students and is there any evidence to support this impact?

LETSS Communicate Expectations

Student expectations and values play an important role in how the quality of education is perceived. This activity* aims to provide an opportunity for you and your students to have open and mutual conversations around expectations, and what might be expected of each other in a teaching and learning environment. Ideally, it should be conducted in a safe environment (e.g., tutorial sessions). Students from various backgrounds (e.g. ethnicity, age, gender) in all years can be engaged for different purposes, for example, to help new entrants get more familiar with higher education and also to help continuing students to review and manage changes in expectations each year.

Using the prompts in the boxes below, curate a list of expectations. This activity should engage teaching staff and tutors and all students. This can be done 1-2-1 with students (which is particularly advised for students from the access and participation groups e.g., BAME students) or it can be done in a group tutorial setting. Staff and students will both need to engage with this activity which can enable discussions around each others expectations to help avoid miscommunication at an early stage.

For staff, once you have had mutual communications with your students on expectations, you need to reflect on those conversations and take into account their expectations in your teaching and learning practices

For staff

What do I expect of my students? (Prompts: Engagement, independent learning, assessment, external commitments e.g., work, caring responsibilities)	What should my students expect of me? (Prompts: Communication, feedback and student support)
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For Students

What do I expect of my tutors/lecturers? (Prompts: Communication, feedback and student support)	What should my tutors/lecturers expect of me? (Prompts: Engagement, independent learning, assessment, external commitments e.g., work, caring responsibilities)
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*Adapted from University of Derby PReSS (Practical Recipes for Student Success) – [Professional Behaviour in the Classroom](#)

Further Reading

Dicker, R., Garcia, M., Kelly, A., Modabber, P., O'Farrell, A., Pond, A., Pond, N. and Mulrooney, H.M. (2017). Student perceptions of quality in higher education: effect of year of study, gender and ethnicity. *New Directions in the Teaching of Physical Sciences*, 12(1), 2051 – 3615.

Kleen, H. and Glock, S. (2018). A further look into ethnicity: The impact of stereotypical expectations on teachers' judgments of female ethnic minority students. *Social Psychology of Education*, 21(4), 759-773.

LETSS Get to Know our Students: Initial Reflections

Getting to know your students is a fundamental way to understand their student experience. This can be done through acknowledging and responding to individual variation including the diversity of background, previous experiences, pre-existing subject knowledge and skills, the strengths they bring with them to the course, and academic challenges they face during their studies. Berger and Wilder (2017, p.30) found that students from the BAME backgrounds “remain at risk of receiving a substandard educational experience while at university, and a substandard chance of being employed once they have graduated” because of a lack of understanding.

This activity* encourages colleagues to take a step further and regard these variations as an asset to draw on for the provision of a more inclusive teaching environment where all students have equal access to learning and participation, and feel valued and supported. For this activity, in safe environment (e.g., personal tutoring sessions) students should answer the questions below so staff can gain a deeper insight into their students. It is best to engage with this activity at an early stage in the students academic journey and can be reviewed each year as students experiences, ambitions, skills and knowledge may change.

1. Why did you decide to embark upon this course?
2. Why did you choose to study at the University of Lincoln?
3a. Describe an achievement or experience in your education so far that you are proud of.
3b. What did you do / which skills did you use that helped make it a success?
4a. Describe an area of your education that hasn't gone as well as you'd hoped.
4b. Is there anything that you could have done differently that may have increased your chances of success?
4c. Are there any skills specific knowledge and expertise that you would like to develop that you feel would increase your chances of success?
5. Which areas of your course do you feel most confident in (e.g. referencing, evaluation, essay writing, practical activities)?
6a. Which areas of your course do you feel least confident in (e.g. referencing, evaluation, essay writing, practical activities)?
6b. What can your tutor/course/school do to help you feel more confident in the areas stated in question 6a?

*Adapted from the University of Lincoln's Science Foundation Centre 'Initial Reflections Getting Started' activity

Further Reading

Berger, D. and Wild, C. (2017). 'Forgotten Lore': Can the Socratic Method of teaching be used to reduce the attainment gap of black, Asian and minority ethnic students? *Higher Education Review*, 49(2), 29-55.

LETSS Talk About Race: Tips and Strategies

The '*LETSS Talk About Race*' series within this toolkit is designed to facilitate an environment for staff to have effective conversations about race. As part of the series, this current activity* contains both ineffective and effective strategies that are commonly used in conversations.

This is not an extensive list of tips and strategies but a great place to start in helping to facilitate conversations about race.

Ineffective Strategies

- 1. Doing nothing** - In scenarios where difficult conversations about race occur it is common for some staff to be silent due to discomfort or the fear of appearing inept on the issue. Silence and inaction suggest that conversations about race are not important.
- 2. Side-tracking the conversation** - This is an avoidance tactic which diverts the conversation. This could include comments and statements such as 'what about white working-class males?'. While these are important questions and need to be addressed, it side-tracks the purpose and focus of the original conversation and does not enable effective conversations about race to continue.
- 3. Appease the participants** - Some people avoid deep discussions of race by keeping the focus on maintaining a harmonious environment. People can be sensitive to how these conversations may be received by students, colleagues and the institution. This can negate deeper explorations about race and racism themselves.
- 4. Terminate the discussion** - When conversations around race threaten to get out of control, a common strategy is to try to end the conversation rather than managing the dynamics. This suggests that these issues are not worth further discussions and just too troublesome.
- 5. Become defensive** - It is common for people to become defensive when engaging with conversations about race. To deflect from the discomfort of the topic, the content of the conversation can come under attack either directly or indirectly. This can derail the conversation which could result in a negative outcome.

Effective Strategies

- 1. Understand own racial/cultural identity** – It can be difficult to have these conversations if staff leading them are unaware of their own worldview — their values, biases, prejudices and assumptions about human behaviour. *LETSS Be Culturally Competent* is an activity designed to help staff understand their racial/cultural identity.
- 2. Acknowledge and be open to admitting your own racial biases** – When engaging in difficult conversations on race, people are not always honest in acknowledging personal biases. With facilitators modelling openness and honesty, it helps to build a safe environment that encourages colleagues and students to do the same.
- 3. Validate and facilitate discussion of feelings** – Validating people's feelings is an important part in talking about race. These conversations should be held in an environment where feelings can be discussed freely. By having the freedom of expressing feelings, it helps people be more open and honest.
- 4. Control the process, not the content of the conversation** – Conversations on race can get heated and end up getting derailed by participants focusing more on controlling the content rather than the conversation dynamics. Handling the situation in this way will result in the conversation being side-tracked, diminished or even ignored. It is important to understand and manage statements from both content *and* dynamics perspectives.
- 5. Validate, encourage, and appreciate participants who speak out** – Both staff and students can feel threatened when engaging in conversations about race. Those facilitating the conversation should express appreciation to those who take a risk and demonstrate courage, openness and willingness to participate difficult dialogues.

*Adapted from the University of Colorado- [Facilitating Difficult Race Conversations](#)

Further Reading

Wareing, S. (2019). *The white elephant in the room: ideas for reducing racial inequalities in higher education. Talking about race in Higher Education*. HEPI Report 120. Higher Education Policy Institute.

LETSS Create an Inclusive Curriculum: Myth-Busting Inclusive Teaching

This activity is part of the *LETSS Create an Inclusive Curriculum* series which explores areas where inclusivity can be embedded and promoted within teaching and learning. An inclusive curriculum aims to improve the experience, skills and attainment of all students, including those in protected characteristic groups, by ensuring that all student groups, regardless of background, are able to participate fully and maximise their potential (Hockings, 2010; UNESCO, 2008). This current activity* looks at and discusses some of the common myths around inclusion and inclusive teaching that commonly exists among Higher Education practitioners. Such myths or misconceptions about inclusive teaching continue to impede progress towards implementing and enhancing inclusive practices in Higher Education.

Myth 1 – “I treat all students the same, therefore, I have an inclusive classroom”

Equality is not the same as equity. Equality assumes that everyone will receive the same benefit from the same supports whereas equity is where individuals are given appropriate supports to make it possible for everyone to have equal opportunities (The Education Trust, 2018). For example, you cannot treat and teach a blind student the exact same way as a sighted student. Specific support should be available for blind students to enable them to access education the same as a sighted person. The same applies to students of different races and other protected characteristics.

Myth 2 – “My classroom is inclusive because my students are demographically diverse including nationality, race, gender, age, etc”

Simply having a demographically diverse students within the classroom does not mean it is inclusive. What you have is a representative cohort of students from different walks of life but that does not intrinsically mean inclusive. To be inclusive you need to understand all your students and learn what their needs are and to meet those needs.

Myth 3 – “I teach in the STEM fields so discussions of inclusion aren’t relevant to my courses”

Inclusion is important in all fields and subjects within higher education. In most STEM subjects the common reason people believe that inclusion is not needed is due to these fields being rooted in science and facts. However, there are various ways to be inclusive without deviating from the science. Inclusion does not just refer to what you teach but also how you teach, such as diversifying reading lists, having accessible assessment and inviting guest speakers from different backgrounds.

Myth 4 – “Inclusivity is just a phase in Higher Education”

Striving for equality, equity, and inclusion in higher education is not and should not be a phase. Inclusion in higher education is a continuous process to remove the barriers that impede students from different backgrounds from accessing and engaging with quality education. Sapon-Shevin (2003 p. 28) stated that “Inclusion is about social justice...by embracing inclusion as a model of social justice we can create a world fit for all of us”.

Myth 5 – “Inclusion only benefits those from minority backgrounds”

Inclusive teaching should not set boundaries around particular groups of learners. It needs to be viewed as a process to reduce barriers to learning and to ensure all students, regardless of individual differences and backgrounds, to have equal opportunities in achieving their potential.

*Adapted from [Washington University Center for teaching and learning](#) and [The RAND blog](#)

Further Reading

Hockings, C. (2010). *Inclusive learning and teaching in higher education: A synthesis of research*. York: Higher Education Academy. Available from http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/teachingandlearning/inclusion/alldisplay?type=resources&newid=ourwork/inclusion/Inclusion_Research_Syntheses_Main_Page&site=york [accessed 27 May 2021]

Sapon-Shevin, M. (2003) Inclusion: A matter of social justice. *Educational Leadership*, 61(2) 25-28.

The Education Trust (2014). Equity and equality are not equal. Washington: The Education Trust. Available from <https://edtrust.org/the-equity-line/equity-and-equality-are-not-equal/> [accessed 28 May 2021]

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (2008). Inclusive education: The way of the future. In: *International conference on education*, Geneva, 25-28 November 2008. Geneva. 3-39. Available from http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Policy_Dialogue/48th_ICE/CONFINTED_48-3_English.pdf [accessed 27 May 2021]

LETSS Enhance Assessment Feedback Practices: Student Perspective

The purpose of this activity* is to provide students with an opportunity to map their experiences and engagement with assessment practices that will enable them and staff to see what areas may need enhancement to improve assessments. The Equity, Agency, and Transparency (EAT) framework presented in this activity and developed by Evans (2016; 2018) focuses on three interconnected areas of assessment: assessment literacy (AL), assessment feedback (AF) and assessment design (AD).

In the first part of the activity, students are enabled to engage with the matrix below. In the second part, staff engage with a similar matrix shown in 'LETSS Enhance Assessment Feedback Practices: Practitioner Perspective'. Students can then overlay their assessment experiences within a course or programme with that of the lecturers to identify points of agreement and difference for discussion (Figure 1). For each of the 3 assessment areas and the 12 subsections of the EAT framework, individuals should score their own contribution (1 = do very little to 5 = do as much as possible) and then 'join the dots' to identify their own 'EAT profile' or 'footprint'.

To effectively utilise the framework, Evans (2020, p.27) provided the following guidance:

*"The Framework can be used with individuals (students and lecturers) and with teams. As a **diagnostic tool** to evaluate strengths and weaknesses at individual and team/ organisational levels. As a **design tool** to hone in on the development of one area of practice e.g., feedback and consider what needs to happen in all 12 areas of practice. As a **predictive tool** to explore relationships between student engagement and outcomes. As an **evaluative tool** to evaluate the relative effectiveness of assessment feedback practices. As a **training tool** to support student and lecturer skills' development."*

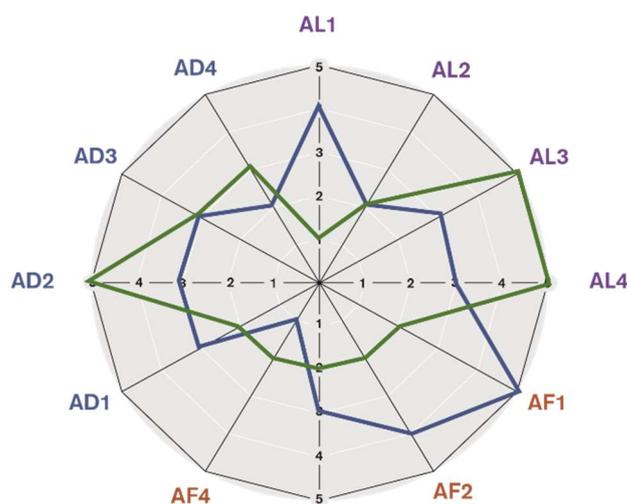


Figure 1 Students and staff assessment mapping example

*Adapted from the [EAT Framework](#)

(1 = do very little to 5 = do as much as possible)

Assessment Design

AD 4: Supporting the development of the course. I give constructive feedback on how the course could be improved. I have contributed to the development of resources through my engagement with the course

AD 3: Making the best use if resources I know how to use the learning environment well to support my needs (e.g accessing resources, getting support, knowing who can best help me, developing string networks)

AD 2: Meaningful work I do my best to understand the fundamental ideas and concepts so I can apply them effectively and adapt them to new contexts. I am keen to advance knowledge within my discipline

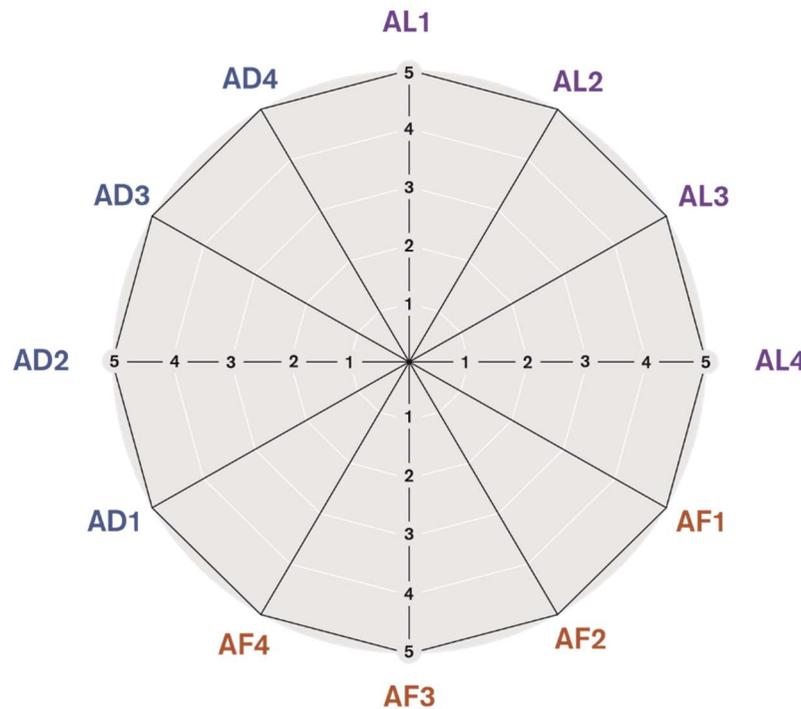
AD 1: Do I have a good understanding of HE assessment processes and regulations?

AF 4: Self-evaluation. I am able to accurately judge the quality of my own work. I am able to monitor my progress against my goals and change my strategies as necessary

AF 3: Have I done the necessary preparation to participate fully in peer dialogue? I make sure I have done the essential preparation work so I can contribute fully to discussions, give effective support to my peers, and receive and act on feedback from my peers

AF 2: Using formative feedback opportunities. I value regular opportunities to test my knowledge, understanding and skills in class and one

AF 1: Ensuring I know how to improve? I know how to ask for feedback and use feedback effectively to enhance the quality of my work



Assessment Feedback

Assessment Literacy

AL1: What constitutes good? I have a good understanding of the assessment requirements, and how to do well.

AL 2: How assessment elements fit together. I have a good understanding of how the assessment tasks I am doing now relate to the rest of my programme

AL 3: Student and Staff entitlement. I am clear about my role in assessment and how I can contribute and what support I'm entitled to

AL 4: Am I clear about the requirements of the discipline? I am aware of the key concepts I need to know, the main ways of working and thinking in my discipline and feel a strong connection to my discipline

Further Reading

Evans, C. (2016, 2020). *Enhancing Assessment Feedback Practice in Higher Education: The EAT Framework*. Creative Media: University of Birmingham

Evans, C. (2021). The EAT Framework. ERASMUS EAT (©Evans, 2021) Version 4 of EAT

LETSS Enhance Assessment Feedback Practices: Practitioner Perspective

The purpose of this activity* is to provide staff with the opportunity to map their assessment practices and experiences in order to enable them to see what areas may need enhancement to improve the quality of assessment for learning with students. The Equity, Agency, and Transparency (EAT) framework presented in this activity was developed by Evans (2016; 2018). This focuses on three interconnected areas of assessment: assessment literacy (AL), assessment feedback (AF) and assessment design (AD).

In the first part of the activity, staff are enabled to engage with the matrix below. In the second part, students engage with a similar matrix shown in 'LETSS Enhance Assessment Feedback Practices: Student Perspective'. Staff can then overlay their 'EAT profile' or 'footprint' with others to identify strengths and areas for enhancement for assessment. Staff can also overlay their footprints with students to identify points of agreement and difference for discussion (Figure 1).

For each of the 3 assessment areas and the 12 subsections of the EAT framework, individuals should score their own contribution (1 = do very little to 5 = do as much as possible). It is then possible to identify each individuals' own 'EAT footprint' as indicated.

To effectively utilise this framework, Evans (2020, p.27) provided the following guidance:

*“The Framework can be used with individuals (students and lecturers) and with teams. As a **diagnostic tool** to evaluate strengths and weaknesses at individual and team/ organisational levels. As a **design tool** to hone in on the development of one area of practice e.g., feedback and consider what needs to happen in all 12 areas of practice. As a **predictive tool** to explore relationships between student engagement and outcomes. As an **evaluative tool** to evaluate the relative effectiveness of assessment feedback practices. As a **training tool** to support student and lecturer skills' development.”*

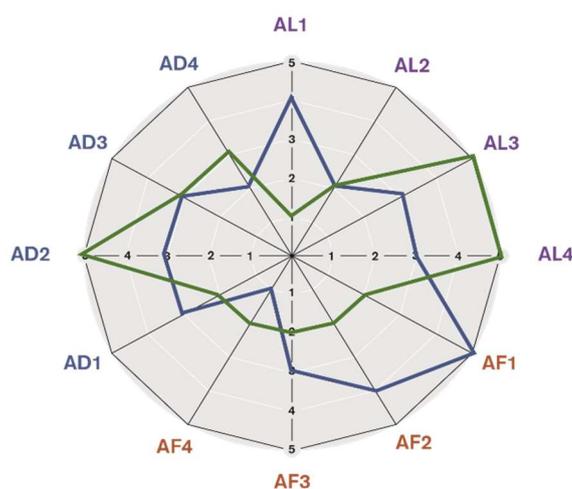


Figure 2 Staff and student assessment mapping example

*Adapted from the [EATframework](#)

(1 = do very little to 5 = do as much as possible)

Assessment Design

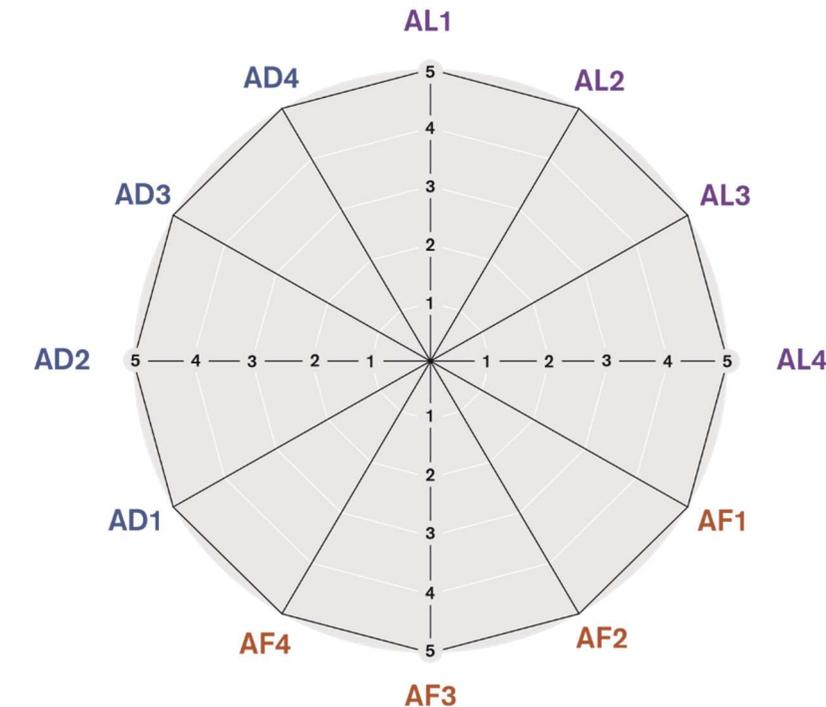
AD 4: Build opportunities to gather student feedback in teaching sessions.

AD 3: Ensure access and equal opportunities. Adopt universal design approaches so all have equally access. Train staff in effective use of data

AD 2: Promote meaningful and focused assessment. Place emphasis on authentic assessment tasks that require student ownership, and have potential to benefit others

AD 1: Ensure robust and transparent processes and procedures: QA literacy Train students and staff to ensure shared understanding

AF 4: Promote development of students' self-evaluation skills. Build self-assessment activities throughout a course/programme. Enable students to mark and moderate work without criteria, and then with criteria



Assessment Feedback

AF 3: Prepare students for meaning dialogue/peer engagement Embed peer learning opportunities. Train students how to give, use and seek feedback

AF 2: Provide early opportunities for students to act on feedback. Ensure regular opportunities for students to test their understanding using tests, quizzes, and student generated questions

AF 1: Provide accessible feedback. Ensure feedback is focused on what was good, what let you down, and how to improve. Check student interpretation of feedback. Ensure consistency across teams

Assessment Literacy

AL 1: Clarify what constitutes good. Making the rationale underpinning assessment clear. Making assessment criteria accessible to all.

AL 2: Clarify how assessment tasks fit together in courses and programmes

AL 3: Clarify student & staff entitlement. Clarify what support the student will receive and what contribution the student is expected to make as a partner in assessment

AL 4: Clarify the requirements of the discipline. Highlight the core and threshold concepts. Clarify what a deep approach looks like

Further Reading

Evans, C. (2016, 2020). *Enhancing Assessment Feedback Practice in Higher Education: The EAT Framework*. Creative Media: University of Birmingham

Evans, C. (2021). The EAT Framework. ERASMUS EAT (©Evans, 2021) Version 4 of EAT

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LETSS Talk about Microaggressions in Teaching and Learning

This activity could be conducted among colleagues and also with students in a comfortable and practical environment (e.g. personal tutor sessions).

What is microaggression?

Microaggression is a term used for verbal, behavioural, or environmental occurrences whether intentional or unintentional that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative prejudicial slights and insults toward any group, particularly culturally marginalized groups. The videos below give further details around microaggressions and how they can be presented in daily life and in teaching and learning.

[Why not be respectful](#) and [Microaggressions in the classroom](#)

Discussing microaggressions

- What did you learn from these videos?
- Can you give examples of microaggressions in a teaching and learning environment that you are familiar with – these can be examples that individuals have personally experienced or observed.
- How might you address and mitigate microaggressions and their effects in teaching and learning?

Understanding microaggressions categories

How do the examples discussed earlier fall into the following five categories of microaggressions:

- **Alien in one's own land:** When people look different or are named differently from the dominant culture are assumed to be foreign-born
- **Ascription of intelligence:** Assigning intelligence to a person of colour based on his/her race
- **Colour blindness:** Statements that indicate that a white person does not want to or need to acknowledge race.
- **Pathologizing cultural values/communication styles:** The notion that the values and communication styles of the dominant/white culture are ideal/ "normal".
- **Second class citizen:** Occurs when a target group member receives differential treatment from the power group; for example, being given preferential treatment as a consumer over a person of colour.

Practical tips to address microaggressions in teaching and learning

1. Avoid placing blame on either party involved
2. Recognising and acknowledging the moment and immediately take the lead in addressing the situation (slow down or stop the conversation).
3. Hold everyone accountable for their actions and ask for clarification. Explain why the incident is problematic. Support students in critical reflection on the situation.
4. Acknowledge the emotions in the room, both visible and invisible.
5. While acknowledging the impact, make sure to validate and support those who have been targeted
6. Follow up as needed (e.g. revisit in next class or see individuals after class. Identify other people as sources of support)

Further Reading

Sue, D.W. (2010). *Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender, and sexual orientation*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

LETSS Reflect on your Teaching Practices

This activity* provides prompts to help you reflect on your teaching practices from the perspective of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). Staff should make note about their practices from this checklist using the key below. It will assist you to assess and monitor the areas in your teaching where additional attention and resources may be needed to better support your students. LETSS contains resources to help you engage with areas of the checklist where support may be needed.

√ = I always use this in my teaching ~ = I sometimes use this in my teaching
X = I never use this in my teaching ☆ = I would like to try this, though I may need more help or resources

Content

- Choose readings that reflect the true diversity of contributors to the field.
- Use visuals that do not reinforce stereotypes and include diverse people or alternative cultural perspectives.
- Avoid references that are likely to be unfamiliar to some students based on their backgrounds
- Emphasize the range of identities and backgrounds of experts who have contributed to a given field.
- Use varied names and socio-cultural contexts in test questions, assignments, and case studies.
- Teach the conflicts of the field to incorporate diverse perspectives.
- Deliberately choose course materials with a range of student physical abilities in mind.
- Deliberately choose course materials with students' range of financial resources in mind.
- To help emphasize diversity, include authors' full names, not just initials, in citations.

Instructional Practices

- Assess students' prior knowledge about the field and topics so I can align instruction with their needs.
- Vary teaching methods and modalities (verbal, visual, interactive) rather than employ just one method.
- Avoid giving only verbal instructions (multiple modes can be helpful to students with processing disabilities as well as non-native English speakers).
- Clearly communicate the expectations and grading/marking scheme for each assignment.
- Dedicate time in class for students to discuss and ask questions about assignments.
- Carefully frame objectives when raising potentially sensitive or uncomfortable topics.
- Structure discussions to include a range of voices.
- Use brief in-class writing activities to get feedback on what students are learning and thinking.

Instructor- Student Interactions

- Learn and use students' names including what they choose to be called and how they pronounce it.
- Early in the term, learn about students' experiences with the course topics, their educational background, their professional ambitions, and their general interests.
- Avoid making generalisations about students.
- Refrain from asking individual students to speak for a social identity group.
- Model productive disagreement, showing how to critique a statement or idea rather than the speaker.
- Elicit formative feedback from students about their learning experiences in the course (e.g. at suitable points in the course or at Mid-Semester Feedback).
- Establish guidelines, ground rules, or community agreements for class participation.

*Adapted from the University of Michigan, [Center for Research on Learning & Teaching \(CRLT\)](#)

LETSS Be Culturally Competent

Cultural competence is the ability to understand, communicate and effectively interact with people across different cultures and subcultures (Gopalkrishnan, 2019). This is important in teaching and learning as you will be engaging with diverse groups of students every day, including students from backgrounds potentially very different to your own (e.g. on the basis of gender, ethnicity, nationality and religion). Cultural competence is a continuous and developmental journey (Palmer and Carter, 2014) with a key aspect being cultural awareness. Becoming more culturally aware can be the first step towards having culturally positive conversations and interactions with students (Campinha-Bacote, 2011).

This activity contains an individual and shared task. A key part of becoming culturally aware is first being aware of oneself. Thus, the first part of this activity requires individual reflection and introspection about who you are and your professional practices. Being introspective can be difficult but it will help enable you to see many components of yourself and to reflect on how those components may interact with each other and affect your teaching practices and your interactions with others. Once complete, the second part of the activity requires you to work in pairs or small groups to share your reflective accounts from the boxes below. This includes discussing differences and similarities from the 'who you are' reflection and how to work together more effectively towards supporting student learning and success.

Who are you?

Make note about who you are and about your professional values, beliefs, norms, customs and traditions. If possible comment on your biases, stereotypes and behaviours.

How do you think who you are might impact (positively and negatively) on your interactions with students within a teaching and learning environment?

What could you do/change about your professional practice to ensure that students from different backgrounds feel more at ease in your teaching and learning settings?

Further Reading

Campinha-Bacote, J. (2011). Delivering patient-centered care in the midst of a cultural conflict: The role of cultural competence. *The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, 16(2), manuscript 5.

Gopalkrishnan, N. (2019). Cultural competence and beyond: Working across cultures in culturally dynamic partnerships. *The International Journal of Community and Social Development*, 1(1), 28-41.

Palmer, J. and Carter, J. (2014). Working in the border zone: Developing cultural competence in higher education for a globalized world. *Knowledge Cultures*, 2(4), 25-48.

LETSS Talk About Race: Self-Assessment

The '*LETSS Talk About Race*' series within this toolkit is designed to facilitate an environment for staff to have effective conversations on topics which many might find challenging. As part of the series, this current activity* provides a self-assessment tool for colleagues to reflect on their own experiences before having these conversations with other staff and students.

It is never too late to engage with anti-racism work, but with topics as complex and 'heavy' as race, where and how do we start? One approach is to begin with ourselves through self-reflection which can help with understanding of our own positions. The more your work around anti-racism is grounded in self-reflection, the more comfortable and confident you will become in having these conversations with others (Columbus Museum of Art, 2020).

This individual activity for staff is comprised of three parts:

Part 1: Consider the following statements and select the one that best describes how you feel when engaging with students

- I would rather not talk about race/racism.
- I am very uncomfortable talking about race/racism.
- I am usually uncomfortable talking about race/racism.
- I am sometimes uncomfortable talking about race/racism.
- I am usually comfortable talking about race/racism.
- I am very comfortable talking about race/racism.

Part 2: Complete these sentences below using the sentence-stem

- The hard part of talking about race/racism with my students is _____.
- The hard part of talking about race/racism with colleagues is _____.
- The beneficial part of talking about race/racism with my students is _____.
- The beneficial part of talking about race/racism with colleagues is _____.

Part 3: Note your vulnerabilities, strengths and needs when having conversations about race in the table below

My Vulnerabilities	My Strengths	My Needs (e.g. self-education and further support)
Examples: I don't know enough about the issues described here; Am I 'allowed' to lead a classroom discussion about race while I am still learning about this topic?	Examples: I have good rapport with my students; I use a wide range of resources to support my conversations with students.	Examples: I need to learn more about anti-racism; I need clearer ground rules for class discussions on race.

*Adapted from Learning for Justice – [Let's Talk: Discussing race, racism and other difficult topics with students](#)

Further Reading

Columbus Museum of Art (2020) *Talking to Kids About Racism: Self Reflection and Self Education About Race*. Ohio: Columbus Museum of Art. Available from <https://www.columbusmuseum.org/blog/2020/07/06/talking-to-kids-about-racism-self-reflection-and-self-education-about-race/> [accessed 12 April 2021].

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LETSS Set Actions based on Context

The College of Social Science has embedded the following action plan within each School which feeds into various College committees with a focus on the overall institutional LEAP objectives. This template will help develop and coordinate the contextualised actions your School is planning to undertake based on the core activities *LETSS Explore the Context* and *LETSS Get Back to Basics* to support BAME student experience and success.

School/Department (Differential Attainment) ACTION FOCUS

School/Department: _____ Student Success Champion: _____

Overall institutional LEAP Objectives:

1. To raise staff awareness of differential learning outcomes and enhance their understanding of the BAME student experience and local attainment data
2. To develop context-specific action plans at College and School level in order to better support BAME student success in an innovative and effective manner
3. To collectively develop, disseminate and embed the *Lincoln Education Toolkit for Student Success (LETSS)* with a significant contribution from students (BAME students in particular)
4. To promote student engagement and obtain positive student feedback
5. To develop a set of educational resources to raise understanding of anti-racism and improve cultural competency across the campus

Summary of differential attainment within the School (with reference to specific protected characteristics and extent of difference)

Proposed Activity	Relevant LEAP Objective	Target Group (e.g., BAME students, all students, specific modules)	Outcome Measure of Success	Key School Leads	Timeline (When activity will be completed)
To engage with LETSS activities	1, 2 & 3			Student Success Champion	
To demonstrate where the outcomes from the toolkit have been successfully used/applied within the school	3, 4 & 5			Student Success Champion	

LETSS Create an Inclusive Curriculum: Content

This activity is part of the *LETSS Create an Inclusive Curriculum* series which explores areas where inclusivity can be embedded and promoted within teaching and learning. Inclusive curriculum aims to improve the experience, skill set and attainment of all students, including those in protected characteristic groups, by ensuring that all student groups, regardless of background, are able to participate fully and maximise their potential. This current activity* specifically focuses on curriculum content. Student feedback from various forums including the University of Lincoln Race Equality Student Advisory Group (RESA) indicated that having diverse representation within the content of curriculum is beneficial for supporting BAME student success.

This activity requires staff to reflect on the content within their programmes and provide evidence and justification for its inclusion or absence. Where the criteria are not met or partially met, staff need to consider and create further actions to address these areas.

To what extent does the content of your programme curriculum ...	Programme meets all criteria	Programme meets some criteria	No evidence on our programme	Please give a brief statement explaining how this is being met or what actions can be taken to address the 'gap'
Create opportunities to discuss different perspectives within and outside the UK related to diversity including ethnicity, nationality and gender				
Use material that explores different data, models and theories related to diversity				
Have reading lists and resources that contain a diverse range of authors including those from different backgrounds and cultures				
Develop students' critical thinking and awareness of different perspectives on issues relating to diversity in ethnicity, culture, nationality and other protected characteristics				
Allow students to gain an understanding of how different factors (e.g. social, economic and ethnicity) influence outcomes and perspectives				

*Adapted from UCL inclusive curriculum health check https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching-learning/files/ucl_inclusive_curriculum_healthcheck_2018.pdf

Further Reading

McDuff, N., Hughes, A., Tatam, J., Morrow, E. and Ross, F. (2020). Improving equality of opportunity in Higher Education through the adoption of an inclusive curriculum framework. *Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning*, 22(2), 83-121.

Nasri, N., Mohamad Nasri, N. and Abd Talib, M.A. (2021) online. Developing an inclusive curriculum: Understanding co-creation through cultural lens. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 1-12.

Nunan, T., George, R. and McCausland, H. (2000). Inclusive education in universities: why it is important and how it might be achieved. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 4(1), 63-88

Pridham, B., Martin, D., Walker, K., Rosengren, R. and Wadley, D. (2015). Culturally inclusive curriculum in higher education. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 44(1), 94-105.

LETSS Create an Inclusive Curriculum: Assessment

This activity is part of the *LETSS Create an Inclusive Curriculum* series which explores areas where inclusivity can be embedded and promoted within teaching and learning. Inclusive curriculum aims to improve the experience, skill set and attainment of all students, including those in protected characteristic groups, by ensuring that all student groups, regardless of background, are able to participate fully and maximise their potential. This current activity* specifically focuses on assessment. Student feedback from different forums including focus groups LEAP conducted with BAME students indicated that inclusive assessment which promote accessibility, agency, diversity and flexibility is beneficial for supporting BAME student success.

This activity requires staff to reflect on the assessment of content within their programmes, assess how much the criteria below are met, and provide evidence and justification for its inclusion or absence. Where the criteria are not met or partially met, staff need to consider further actions to address these areas.

To what extent does your programme curriculum ...	Programme meets all criteria	Programme meets some criteria	No evidence on our programme	Please give a brief statement explaining how this is being met or what actions will be taken to address the 'gap'
Offer formative assessments before all summative assessments ensuring that all students have the chance to practise and learn				
Offer assessments where language is free from unnecessary technical vocabulary and jargon				
Offer a variety of feedback methods to ensure inclusivity (i.e. delivered in more than one way)?				
Offer tutorials to students to help clarify the nature of their feedback or grades if requested				
Provide innovative and diverse opportunities for students from various backgrounds to best demonstrate their achievement of intended learning outcomes				
Provide timely assessment to avoid excessive workloads at key times				
Offer choice of assessment methods when appropriate, to promote autonomy and to allow students from different backgrounds or with different learning styles to perform to the best of their potential				

*Adapted from UCL inclusive curriculum health check https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/sites/teaching-learning/files/ucl_inclusive_curriculum_healthcheck_2018.pdf, LIBS inclusive curriculum toolkit - Enabling Accessibility, Autonomy and Authenticity (A3) and [LEAP Inclusive Assessment 'Checklist': Informed by 2019/20 \(Y0\) Data \(Appendix A\)](#)

Further Reading

Boud, D. and Dochy, F. (2010). University of Technology, Sydney. Australian Learning and Teaching Council. *Assessment 2020: Seven propositions for assessment reform in higher education*. Available from https://ltr.edu.au/resources/Assessment%202020_final.pdf

Bryan, C. and Clegg, K. (2019). *Innovative assessment in higher education: A handbook for academic practitioners*. London: Routledge.

Kaur, A., Noman, M. and Nordin, H. (2017). Inclusive assessment for linguistically diverse learners in higher education. *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 42(5), 756-771.

Morris, C., Milton, E. and Goldstone, R. (2019). Case study: suggesting choice: Inclusive assessment processes. *Higher Education Pedagogies*, 4(1), 435-447.

LETSS Talk About Race: Preparing for Difficult Conversations

The '*LETSS Talk About Race*' series within this toolkit is designed to facilitate an environment for staff to have effective conversations on race. As part of the series, this current activity* provides a non-exclusive set of questions for staff to consider and respond to as a starting point in preparation for having difficult conversations with students or staff.

Careful preparation for difficult conversations in advance is key in ensuring how effective a conversation will be. This includes consideration of some important aspects below:

- Trying to remain emotionally neutral throughout the conversation
- Choosing the time and place for the conversation carefully
- Clearly restating what has been discussed and agreed at the end of the conversation
- Not labelling individuals, but labelling behaviours

Other things to take into account are covered in the '*LETSS Talk About Race: Tips and Strategies*' activity within this toolkit.

Who will this conversation involve? (e.g. staff or students)
Why do you think this will be a difficult conversation and for whom?
What, if anything, have you done so far to prepare for this difficult conversation?
What is the end goal of the conversation?
How will this conversation happen? (e.g. one-to-one, informal group setting or formal meeting)
What impact do you want this conversation to have most? (e.g. student engagement, teaching practices or teaching materials)
What issues do you think may occur when having this conversation and how will you attempt rectify it?
What will you do with the information provided during the conversation (e.g. group learning experience)?
How will the conversation feed into the student experience?
What follow-up there will be (e.g. what further action will be taken if necessary)?

*Adapted from the University of Lincoln Active Bystander Training