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Exploring BME commuting students' experiences: sharing practice for inclusive curricular change and institutional action

This workshop explores the learning experience of commuting BME students and how participants can change practice, even in a small way, in their own universities. The research underpinning this workshop focussed on the commuting BME students and extended the scope of earlier research which explored wider issues relating to the BME student attainment gap where BME students consistently get fewer good degrees than non BME students. (Smith, 2017).

More and more of all our University students are living in the parental or family home rather than in halls or private rented accommodation. This may be one of the contributing factors influencing student learning experiences. Research has shown that much more must be done "to deepen commuter students' involvement in learning (Jacoby, 2000 & 2004). Indeed, a recent report (Thomas & Jones, 2017) calls for a deeper understanding of the barriers to engagement faced by all commuting students. Interestingly the rate of living in the parental home is even greater for BME students -55% of our female BME students live at home compared to 19% of female, non BME students and 42% of the male BME students live at home compared to 17% of male non BME students. At Leeds Beckett we are above the national average for this.

This workshop focusses on the BME student experience, exploring the findings of staff and student focus groups and how living at home impacted on the students' engagement with learning in a range of ways. The ways students, staff and the University are jointly working in partnership to address the emergent findings through improving inclusive curricular design and wider infrastructural and cultural change will be described and then used as trigger questions for small group discussion. This will encourage participants to discuss their own university's practice and how they engage students in the academic and cultural capital that being "on campus" can provide. It will explore how greater engagement might enhance all students' sense of belonging. The workshop ends with a postcard activity where participants (be they students and staff) commit to "change one thing" in their own workplace to address the challenge of students living at home engaging beyond the classroom.

References

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