



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Towards Doctoral Equity

a Whole-Institution Approach

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&

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Structure of this presentation

- Where we are (on paper)
- Where we are (the evidence)
- How did we get there?
- Risks to the approach and mitigation
- Is such an approach necessary?

Where we are (on paper)

- International/home *and* minority ethnic targets are **institutional KPIs**
- Work on doctoral equity is supported by **4 FTE professional service colleagues** (educational engagement) who work in partnership with PS colleagues in
 - Operations
 - Support
 - Admissions
 - Scholarships
 - AND
 - Academic colleagues
 - Dean and Heads of Graduate Schools, Directors PGR Studies
 - Heads of Academic Schools
 - Mentors etc
- We are (co)leading/contributing to national projects on doctoral/PG equity
- Work on doctoral equity is **the responsibility of Graduate Board, but directed by an overarching Access and Student Success Strategy** which is across all cohorts and stages in the student/graduate journey
- Doctoral Equity is **one of three priorities** in the Strategic Vision for PGR
- All this **integrates with the Research and Innovation and Student Education plans (!)**

Where we are (the evidence)

Evidence of success

- Appetite and acceptance of need for change in PS communities
- Engagement of Graduate Board and Faculties/Executive
- Some School level enthusiasm
- Changes in our recruitment data
- Responses to 2023 PRES

Remaining challenges

- Some resistance and lack of engagement from supervisors and School leadership
- Confusion about home/international diversity versus equity
- Some resistance from non-minoritised PGRs (PRES and anecdotal)
- Lack of attention to differential progression and completion data to probe any attainment gaps
- Remaining gaps to target for offer-making
- Patchy performance/engagement
 - by subject area
 - by protected group (BAME overall good but Asian and Black disappointing)
- Attention to BAME has drawn resource from areas which benefit all PGRs?

How did we get there?

- 2020 – agreement between incoming Dean of the Doctoral College and Director of Educational Engagement to **include PGR in the Access and Student Success Strategy** and make it a priority for the institution
- 2020/21 – agreement to co-fund YCEDE and Generation Delta (RE/OfS bids) with **specialist PS staffing** to advise on change to systems, processes and culture *as well* as funds for positive action scholarships
- Political work to ensure **support from VC and DVC level colleagues**
 - Funding
 - Opportunity Costs
 - Embedding in strategic plans

Risks to the approach and mitigation

Risks

- The approach rests on the sponsorship of key (senior) individuals
- Funding associated with external projects may be short term
- May feel top down

Mitigations

- Embedding in strategy, planning, monitoring and process at all levels!
- Transition to BAU
- Careful attention to financial planning
- Workshops and outreach to normalise equity work

Is such an approach necessary?

- This approach has taken huge effort and focus
- Could we succeed without it?

Maybe yes?

But:

Equity work fails (and is immoral) where it relies on voluntary unpaid labour
Equity work fails without buy-in of non-minoritised colleagues and PGRs
Equity work fails where it is seen as specialist rather than integrated
Equity work needs sponsorship at the highest levels of leadership

See e.g., [Ahmed \(2012: 131\)](#) which is still a current take on how to be authentic AND effective in this space.

Conclusion: your mileage may vary

- We are still on a journey
- Do many institutions not yet have leadership buy-in?
- Many institutions are cash-starved
- Enthusiasm is low...
- ??