

Transforming learning through Scholarship Session Abstract



Great expectations: Practical actions to overcome psycho-social barriers to attainment

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Across the sector, black and minority ethnic (BME) students, male students, and students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds are less likely to attain a good degree than their white, female and non-disadvantaged counterparts (HEFCE, 2013), (Equality Challenge Unit, 2015). Explanations about why these disparities exist, and subsequent strategies to address them, have considered: the role of the institution (institutional racism and unconscious bias for example); the role of the student (such as their self esteem, or sense of belonging); and “the quality of students’ learning and in particular their conceptions of learning”, highlighting the role of effective learning, teaching and assessment strategies (Sanders, 2014, p13).

The two most recent and influential sector reports in the UK that have explored how to address differences in attainment, the [Disparities in Student Attainment \(DiSA\) Project](#) and the HEFCE funded [Causes of Difference in Student Outcomes](#), have focused on four areas: improving relationships; building social and cultural capital; curricular, learning, teaching and assessment; and psycho-social processes (HEFCE 2015), (Cousins and Cureton, 2012). These four key areas form the basis of the curriculum refresh framework that seeks to address differences in attainment between and obstacles to equal access to opportunities across all student groups. This workshop shared research in the UK, and the USA, that seeks to support student transition, and the progression and attainment of all our student groups, and how what has been found can be applied in practice.

References

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Sarah Lawther is a Learning and Teaching Officer in the Centre for Academic Development and Quality. Sarah has extensively researched student transition, retention, and engagement, and is currently involved in research that explores what is working to address disparities in student progression and attainment.