**BAME DI-LAWGUES PROJECT**

**D**iversity & **I**nclusion in the **Law** School Dialo**gues**

**Addressing the Ethcnicity Awarding Gap**

**2020-21**

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When I read the phenomenal [Closing the Gap report](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/sites/default/files/field/downloads/2021-07/bame-student-attainment.pdf) 2019 by UUK/NUS, something in the foreword by Amatey Doku, inspired me to start the BAME DI-lawgues project: *“BAME attainment gap is simply unacceptable and deeply unjust.”*

The BAME DI-Lawgues project is a Reading Law School initiative designed to address the undergraduate BAME awarding gap. The aim of this initiative is to draw on the lived experiences and feedback of BAME students and staff to create a pilot, evidence-based response for improving undergraduate BAME student experiences and outcomes at the School of Law. (The 2016-2019 awarding gap average was 10.4%). The project was implemented in 2021 and the team comprised of 2 staff members (Shweta Band- Lead, Suralini Fernando co-lead) and 7 BAME students. A total of 25 staff and 94 students engaged as participant-volunteers with the project at various stages.

A mix methodology was employed with quantitative and qualitative surveys, focus group discussions and reflective writing by our student partners, the BAME Ambassadors. The questionnaires explored several themes on BAME student experiences in T&L in general, and awarding gap in particular. There is ample research about the value of such qualitative evidence; for e.g. the recommendation in the [NUS Race for Equality Report (2011)](https://nusdigital.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/document/documents/60241/29508cfb5bdc94595c163eb3b1a8faf6/Race_for_Equality.pdf?X-Amz-Expires=10000&X-Amz-Date=20230530T135314Z&X-Amz-Security-Token=IQoJb3JpZ2luX2VjEFUaCWV1LXdlc3QtMSJGMEQCIAp%2B6PH6F%2BMcfz1HbHpjWgFt%2BGvN7EJTHX6KOqLRg2dtAiAfUQmZki6trfQbKHh4n5VGXN9Etww%2B%2B6%2FENhGx5cfzjCqSBAiO%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F%2F8BEAAaDDg3OTIyODM0MDMzOCIMoZMa3%2BJrKDtJAZ4tKuYD9Ods7gVHZEFFk24TM46BQgqYVGRrAT8mKwzMGDvY4R3Uiog3ucGtKiJb0my5ISU5IYYJC%2FPnRp4URVimflI02GWjqOaXLyq5r5qN%2BA7aNTfgd%2BMefAHnYwxw0%2BjtocxWzr%2FlQmx3IcjFaWP4Wyz4EWfRoZ8kVcJPsy5Ag%2Fkh7M5eDwgHG3loiEtSk4hSwAeo%2FapH4swOIXf4G3lBHPzgHHOVaCs8MEggyJ8Zto%2FOGtmlMer2CPFoMNEm3%2B0eDGPEsjN%2F300z4%2B7DjfYkjJweOFoFTpWRxmcCpU%2B2cXhB%2FOtZ4J1aNCHJowqU4suXT91dDVe%2FJvCKYZjwhNTrVr7HJgCGrlg5Dzbeoud7aFw%2Bznt1BiBo9AHGmxPAP2nKdGvbJo3TeKsOiFUgDsB0nrKFCRoKFbT9Yf14TZnjJYHzNWLuoL3nMdAKWCqwGBVCmQFHyTNxd8%2FFRT7ybaOZj5rY1Orm%2FlNbjo8oTtqXoStkJ%2FM1oi0ZjlnF3xRAoY%2Bu86tkr9PWgdyVWcZ7S%2FpzWn6IcoHSxyATLDhlHRXCSbTqSsv0C2tHFbK2si06iEyVYH7ZyxB7i7tPm2F0B0gUZEKoBSiK5do550SQYVW5gnGKJzmXICAm6g6YaM4YClUz9wHOmtYpXQOKMIXo16MGOqYBPQIxgkQ0HO7o5XesfNtZZqng%2BasJovjZglyHLTjJyJw8SZmtYBuewbUwJHl%2BL0bkUsASxI7zAtLZzUcu16shaTiJrJO8Puik3uklP0hNy8%2Bz3XEwM3qNNp1BLyEwTc01nx44C8aPKhJSA4MoWZvMAIHhDAZ7RsuzUA8mE22Kr2wkDoP8xJq3FU1QnY0pNWEOfwIRemYKtqqU2htSgCS3Azys1kNQSQ%3D%3D&X-Amz-Algorithm=AWS4-HMAC-SHA256&X-Amz-Credential=ASIA4ZNQXZBZH476OH23%2F20230530%2Feu-west-1%2Fs3%2Faws4_request&X-Amz-SignedHeaders=host&X-Amz-Signature=25fbc3125ba6128b11873d08dddfc4cad9f64f4923b7d823481fc2cbd81ccaaa)-*“listening to, sharing and acknowledging the lived experiences of BAME students ensures that the effects of racial inequities are at the forefront of D&I discussions, interventions and policies.”*

The most common themes identified as contributory factors and barriers in addressing the BAME awarding gap include unconscious bias, lack of safe spaces for BAME students and staff, lack of staff awareness in understanding awarding gap and lack of institutional mechanism to address racism. The report has used the data to create a series of recommendations for strategies to be implemented for closing the awarding gap.

The prioritized recommendations from the project include creating a safe space for conversations on race and ethnicity and to foster inclusive teaching environment, designated BAME Office function-portfolio within the remit of the Widening Participation Office at the Law School, BAME representation at Careers & Employability events, BAME systematized staff-student mentorship programme, staff training for supporting BAME students and employability/academic skills workshops for BAME students.

The BAME DI-lawgues Project Report has been submitted to the Law School and available here for access. We are thankful for the generous funding received from the Law School and UoR DI Funding 2020-21.

Phase 2 of this project, titled **Reciprocal Di-Lawgues 2023-24** has completed recently in response to the recommendation *‘to promote safe space for conversations about race and ethnicity and encourage dialogue around the BAME student experiences’.* Reciprocal DI-lawgues offers a fresh perspective on reverse mentoring, by creating mutual conversation-based partnerships between Law staff and BAME students as equal partners.