

**BAME RECIPROCAL DI-LAWGUES PROJECT**

Diversity & Inclusion in the Law School Dialogues

**Addressing the Ethnicity Awarding Gap**

2022-24

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The Reciprocal DI-lawgues project is a Reading Law School initiative designed to close the BAME awarding gap and is a part of the University Access and Participation Plan. Reciprocal DI-lawgues is based on mutual, conversation-based, equal partnerships between Law School staff and our BAME students. The aim of the project is to build a rich qualitative dataset on reducing the BAME awarding gap and creating a stronger sense of belonging by nurturing a safe, inclusive space for our BAME students. The dataset is based on the evidence of lived experiences of our 17 students and 9 staff participants, collected using a mix methodology of survey questionnaire, reflective journals, focus group discussions and feedback symposium. This also reflects the key priorities set out in the seminal report[**#ClosingTheGap (NUS, 2019)**](https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/sites/default/files/field/downloads/2021-07/bame-student-attainment.pdf)**which recommends collecting and analysing the data, changing the institution’s culture through conversations about race and developing racially diverse and inclusive environments as key tactics for closing awarding gaps.** Reciprocal DI-lawgues goes beyond the traditional reverse mentoring model and offers a fresh perspective in creating *mutual, conversation-based, equal partnerships* between BAME students and Law School staff.

Our objective is fostering inclusive T&L practices at the Law School generally, with a strong focus on reducing the ethnicity awarding gap. By initiating one-to-one reciprocal dialogues between BAME students & staff, we aim to create a stronger sense of belonging in our BAME students and nurture a safe, inclusive space for conversation on BAME issues.

After the Participants’ Consultation Meeting and training on awarding gap in March 2022, the staff-student partners engaged in three reciprocal dialogues meetings between Oct 2023 to March 2024. They explored lived experiences/concerns of BAME students and staff perceptions (based on pre-supplied questionnaire) on three themes: *Teaching and learning*; *Sense of belonging*; *Employability skills*. All participants were required to complete periodic impact surveys and maintain a reflective e-journal throughout the project.

To address the initial ice-breaking concerns and inhibitions of the participants, we provided all partners with thinking prompts, guidance of values and a list of useful resources to facilitate discussions in their meetings. All participants recorded their experiences and feedback via impact surveys and reflective journals- which are our key resources in writing the final Reciprocal DI-lawgues Impact Evaluation And Recommendations Report.

This project explores innovative practices in tackling the enduring impact of ethnicity awarding gap and inclusivity concerns on student progression throughout their course of study. The initial findings demonstrate a strong co-relation between inclusion, sense of belonging, student engagement, retention and progression. As such the project directly addresses inclusive student experience.

The project staff Shweta Band and Dr. Nowrin Tamanna (EDI leads at Reading Law School) are in the process of writing the final Reciprocal DI-lawgues Impact Evaluation And Recommendations Report and are also developing an Inclusive Teaching staff workshop and toolkit for the Law School. These will be shared on this platform in due course of time.

We are thankful for the funding received from the Law School, T&L Initiatives Funding, T&L Dean Funding and the Student Outcomes Funding*.*