



The Awarding Map



The Awarding Map is designed to provide a holistic view of awarding gaps, making the origins and emergence of gaps more visible and accessible. It also highlights different approaches to narrowing awarding gaps and makes the prospect of eliminating them more manageable.

How to use this resource

The Awarding Map resource captures practical tools, insights and approaches that can support you to address awarding gaps across different levels within your provider.

We have created a route map to make visible various intersecting factors that contribute to awarding gaps across the learner journey and highlight different mechanisms that can be used to enact positive change for the most affected student groups.

This includes black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students,¹ widening access populations and disabled students, although the principles and interventions presented in this resource can be applied to enhance the quality and experience of *all* students.

¹We recognise that the term 'BAME' is problematic as it homogenises otherwise distinct student groups into a shared identity and suggests identical experiences, which is most definitely not the case. We have chosen to apply the term in this context as this is how student ethnicity data is framed within the Office for Students' Access and Participation Data Dashboard. However, we would advocate for student ethnicity data to be disaggregated into smaller groups by providers wherever possible.



The Awarding Map examines four key topic areas:



1. Transitions support



2. Shaping classroom culture



3. Assessment readiness



4. Stepping beyond study



Each topic begins with some reflective questions and insight into its importance as we seek to eliminate gaps. This is supported by a range of relevant sub-themes featuring key resources for staff and students.

The map is designed to be accessible to a wide audience. It is intended to help academic and professional services staff to make targeted interventions in response to available data on awarding gaps in their local context. It can also support conversations, planning and implementation of activity focused on enhancing inclusive practice and the equity of teaching, learning and assessment experiences by colleagues across a provider - including senior leadership, programme leaders, course teams - and students.

Reading the full resource will provide you with a more complete picture of how gaps can form or widen, and also how they can be addressed; but you can also explore any of the topic areas individually if you wish.

Resources highlighted in the Awarding Map include tools and activities produced by QAA Membership, QAA-funded Collaborative Enhancement Projects, sector-wide QAA Enhancement Themes in Scotland, and examples of practice curated from the sector. We use different colours to indicate the area each resource originates.



Awarding Map resource key



Awarding gaps

The degree-awarding gap refers to the difference in awards made to students with different personal characteristics. In the sector, attention predominantly focuses on the proportion of students awarded a 'good' (first or upper-second class) undergraduate degree.

Significant awarding gaps exist and persist for underrepresented groups across UK higher education, primarily impacting students from different ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds (see 'What the data says' below), though gaps can also be present for mature students and/or students with reported disabilities.

The Office for Students (OfS) requires providers in England to complete [Access and Participation Plans](#) (APPs) in which providers are asked to detail how they will work proactively to address degree-awarding gaps in their context, along with how they plan to evaluate the impact of proposed intervention strategies. In Wales, there are [Fee and Access Plans](#) and in Northern Ireland, there are [Widening Access and Participation Plans](#) which ask providers to set out their objectives as they relate to equality of opportunity and increasing the participation and success of underrepresented groups. There is a framework for promoting [Fair Access](#) to higher education in Scotland that links to national targets² and is overseen by the Commissioner for Fair Access.

²The national target for fair access in Scotland, restated in the [Commissioner for Fair Access' sixth annual report \(2024\)](#), states: 'By 2030, students from the 20% most deprived areas should represent 20% of entrants to higher education.' While much of the early fair access work has focused on tackling underrepresentation among entrants to higher education in Scotland, 'Fair access is also about enabling entrants to thrive in higher education and helping them achieve positive outcomes after graduation.'

³Set up in 2019, and funded by the OfS, [TASO](#) is an independent hub for higher education professionals to access research, toolkits and evaluation guidance to eliminate equality gaps.

Yet, the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) report on current [Approaches to addressing ethnicity degree awarding gaps](#), as outlined by higher education providers in their APPs, highlights that 'the sector lacks confidence in successfully addressing the [ethnicity degree-awarding gap] and is seeking toolkits, guidance and advice about what to do' (2024: 7).³ While the TASO report commends the enthusiasm of 'one-of-a-kind individuals [...] hailed as catalysts for effective progress' (p 6), it emphasises a general 'lack of innovation, and repetition/recycling of "drag and drop" interventions' (p 7) compounded by uncertainty around how best to evaluate the effectiveness of interventions and secure buy-in from everyone across the provider.

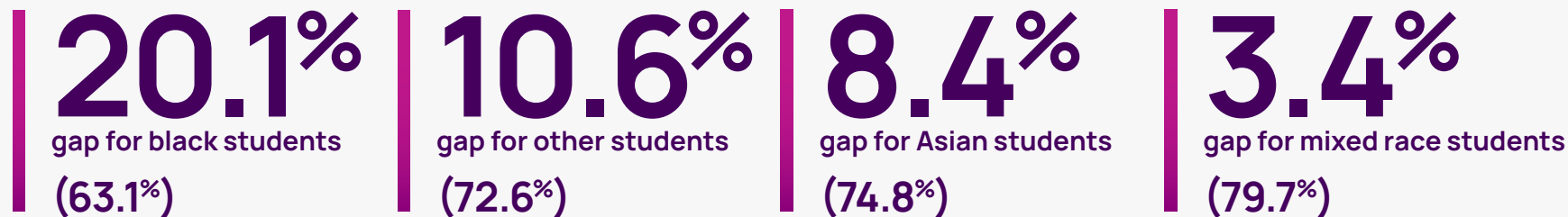


What the data says

The OfS [Access and Participation Data Dashboard](#) provides a useful snapshot of awarding gaps in the sector currently, albeit with the caveat that the [updated process](#) for submitting APPs means that, at the time of writing, the most recent sector-wide data available relates to academic year 2021-22.⁴

The number of students achieving a first or upper second-class degree declined from 2020-21 to 2021-22. At the same time, awarding gaps largely increased overall post-pandemic.

Starting with the **ethnicity degree-awarding gap**, the average gap for BAME students in English higher education providers in 2020-21 was 9.05% (77.25%) compared to the attainment of white students (86.3%). In 2021-22, this gap increased to an average of 10.65% (72.55%) for BAME students compared to white student awards (83.2%) and was particularly high for black students:



⁴The OfS consulted on a new approach to regulating equality of opportunity in late 2022 and have since updated their guidance on Access and Participation Plans (APP) for higher education providers in England. A first wave of 30-50 providers submitted their APPs in line with the new guidance in summer 2023, with plans taking effect in academic year 2024-25 following approval. A second wave of providers were then required to submit APPs in the new format by 31 May 2024, taking effect in academic year 2025-26 – only applicable to those providers that did not take part in the first wave and had an APP that began in 2020-21. The remaining providers are not required to submit a new APP until 2025, taking effect in academic year 2026-27.





The [Ethnic Representation Index \(ERI\)](#), which presents an annual appraisal of the progress made by universities in England and Scotland to become more ethnically inclusive and anti-racist, indicates that the average awarding gap for minority ethnic students in England increased further in 2023, sitting at 12.3% (compared to 10.3% in Scotland).⁵ For black students, the awarding gap remains significantly higher at 19.3% compared to white students, with the ERI report indicating that in 10% of English universities the gap for black students is over 30%. You can find out more about the minority ethnic awarding gap in Universities UK's (UUK) [Closing the Gap](#) series of reports.

Another significant gap in full-time degree outcome indicators for 2021-22 is the difference between those from the **most deprived (IMD quintile 1) and least deprived (IMD quintile 5)** areas. While this gap narrowed by approximately 2% during the pandemic (academic years 2019-20 and 2020-21), it has since increased from 15.4% in 2020-21 to 17.8% in 2021-22.

The **disabled student awarding gap** tells a different story. In 2021-22, 79.4% of students who reported having a disability achieved a degree classification of 2.1 or above, compared to 78.9% who did not report having a disability. The continuation gap also

appeared to have closed, resting at 88.8% for disabled students compared to 89% for those without a reported disability.

While this suggests disabled student award gaps have been eliminated, if we look at access figures for the same year, only 17.4% of students reported a disability compared to 82.6% who did not. It may be that there are more disabled students who either do not consider themselves to be disabled or have chosen not to share their disability with their provider and access any available support, as discussed in this [QAA Membership Podcast](#) with the [Disabled Student Commission](#).⁶ Such choices could mean that we do not have a sufficiently accurate picture of awarding gaps for disabled students.

A growing body of research emphasises that the effects of rising living costs are not felt evenly by all students (such as [Staffordshire University's Survey of Basic Needs](#)). Therefore, it is likely that many of these gaps will continue to increase.

⁵Please note, the Ethnic Representation Index does not currently provide awarding-gap data for minority ethnic students in Wales or Northern Ireland.

⁶This TASO report on [Supporting disabled students - mapping reasonable adjustments and transition support](#) (2024) highlights key themes and recommendations to enhance current provision and suggests the sector needs to implement more qualitative evaluation measures to help staff to monitor what works best for disabled students.

Addressing awarding gaps: What works

We all share a collective responsibility to engage with degree-awarding gaps, not only to try to eliminate the gaps but also to ask the right critical questions about where gaps come from, why they exist (both external and internal contributing factors), and whether we are doing the right things to address them in the short, medium and long term?

Through the course of developing this resource, QAA Members have offered insights into the practices and approaches that have proved effective for their students at different points in the student journey, several of which are detailed in the map. Some examples shared by our members include: the use of anonymous marking; increased student choice around modes of assessment (including the removal of exams); the advantages of assigning subject-specialist personal academic tutors; focusing on enhancing digital skills; the value of learner analytics and good data, and supporting staff to make the best use of that evidence.



It is apparent that successful interventions rarely tend to work in isolation but instead are made effective in combination. Returning to TASO's [Ethnicity Degree Awarding Gap](#) report (2024):

'Instead of aiming for a 'silver bullet' organisational approach that will close the gap, recognise that sustained change relies on a combination of bottom-up grassroots and top-down organisational approaches. Targeting many approaches for small but sustainable change through holistic mechanisms may yield more effective outcomes.' (p 6)

Creating impact most often depends on a multitude of factors including the diversity of the student population and how this is represented and experienced at different levels of the provider; the timeliness of interventions and how well they promote students' sense of agency and belonging; provider culture including the visibility of their commitment to structural change and buy-in from staff; as well as robust evaluation processes for any applied interventions.





'What works' is also about creating the right mechanisms to encourage staff at all levels (and their students) to reflect on, evaluate and enact achievable change. Getting the right people in the room and giving them the right information and evidence to understand the issue and to confidently communicate it to others are critical steps towards embedding new thinking and approaches (see the cascade effect in this ['Charrettes Model'](#) implemented at the University of Portsmouth). We cannot make judgements or design impactful solutions to tackle awarding gaps if we cannot all see the complete picture.

This point also speaks to the spirit in which this resource was developed. Gaps emerge long before students step into the world of higher education, as they seek reassurance about their choice of provider, their readiness for the journey ahead, and as they start to understand their place within a complex learning environment. Gaps are the culmination of a number of different factors embedded across a student's learning and assessment experience that we need to unpick. Curriculum reform and rethinking assessment are naturally significant parts of this puzzle, but so are transitions to, through and beyond higher education; understanding the influence and impact of student experiences inside and outside of the classroom, of (not) feeling recognised, included and empowered to succeed, both as a student and a graduate. Less quantifiable indicators also need to be taken into consideration and responded to.

Along with shifting perspectives around the origin of gaps and how they can be exacerbated at different points along the learner journey, there is also an evident need for good data - and an understanding of how to analyse, interpret and apply it efficiently and consistently - to improve student awards and experiences. When there is confidence in the data and what it indicates about the emergence of gaps in context across the learner lifecycle, it becomes possible to make more targeted and timely interventions which can then be measured and evaluated. Resources highlighted in the Awarding Map are most likely to prove successful when applied strategically in this way, considering learner analytics and other institutional data, alongside educator insights and student feedback. Again, resources can be used individually, although a combination may prove more successful dependent on your context and the scale of what you hope to achieve.

Find out more about approaches to understanding and addressing awarding gaps and the importance of data fluency in this [case study](#) by Professor Nicola King from the University of Exeter. You can also listen to the awarding gaps episode of the [QAA Membership](#) podcast where we discuss gaps in UK higher education and how to support staff to create real impact.⁷

⁷Podcast guests: Dr Sally Andrews, Pedagogic Projects Dev Manager, Staffordshire University; Mr Kevin J Brazant, Progression and Attainment Project Manager, University of the Arts London; Professor Gabriella Cagliesi, Professor of Economics, University of Sussex; Professor Nicola King, Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, University of Exeter



Learning from / with each other

The Awarding Map is part of a suite of QAA projects that strive to embed equitable, diverse and inclusive practices in the sector (see [Subject Benchmark Statements](#) and [Collaborative Enhancement Projects](#) focused on enhancing equality, diversity and inclusion). The Awarding Map will be useful as you seek to address the various intersecting factors that contribute to awarding gaps in your specific context.

What has emerged from our work so far and through our active engagement with external publications, events and networks dedicated to eliminating the degree-awarding gap, is the importance of accountability and how we share successes and failures with each other. Can we develop a more coordinated and collegiate response to awarding gaps as a shared sector challenge?

Examples of partnership working at a local level, such as Aimhigher's examination of [The Ethnicity Awarding Gap in the West Midlands](#) (2023), as well as nationally, including Universities UK and TASO projects cited previously, are significant reference points and reinforce that we have a collective responsibility to all underrepresented students that extends beyond individual providers meeting regulatory conditions. There is a moral duty of care which should be fulfilled for the good of all students as well as the reputation of the UK higher education sector.

Building on the Awarding Map, we will be conducting a roundtable activity in summer 2024 with a sample of UK higher education providers. This activity will explore approaches to understanding institutional data and how evidence is currently being used to inform and evaluate interventions aimed at addressing awarding gaps. We will share insights emerging from the roundtable discussions with QAA Members.

In 2024-25, our work on awarding gaps will continue as part of a focus on student outcomes and supporting the tertiary and higher education sector to go beyond baseline regulatory requirements. Explore the [Beyond the Baseline](#) resource which signposts the ways in which QAA Membership resources can be used to help demonstrate meeting and exceeding the regulatory requirements of the OfS. For providers based in other parts of the UK, it provides a helpful way of navigating QAA resources and key sector reference points.



If you would like to contribute to our research and/or engagement activities on awarding gaps, please contact membership@qaa.ac.uk

Thank you to all those QAA Members who have contributed to the Awarding Map and shared their insights, practices and unwavering determination to help make parity of achievement and experience a reality for all students in UK higher education.

Special mention to QAA Members who have contributed new case studies to this project:

- **Ms Jennie Blake**, Academic Lead for Student Success for the Institute of Teaching and Learning, University of Manchester
- **Ms Sarah Flynn**, Associate Professor and Deputy Director of the Centre for Learning, Access and Student Success, University of Hertfordshire
- **Professor Nicola King**, Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, University of Exeter
- **Associate Professor Geoff Paul**, Assistant Director (Academic), University of Sunderland in London



1.

Transitions support



Transitions support

How do students arrive?

Is their journey clear to them?

Let's start with **day one**. While any consideration of the contributing factors to awarding gaps will naturally call most attention to assessment design, practice and experience, gaps begin to emerge long before students even step into the world of higher education.

Many prospective students will question whether higher education is the right place for them, perhaps due to being the first in their family to apply, the anticipated cost of living while studying, the influence of previous education experiences, concerns around cultural capital, and so on. Effective enrolment and induction processes should seek to address such concerns and offer students reassurance about their choice of provider and the journey ahead.

Arrival is at once an exciting and potentially overwhelming experience for many students as the imagined space of higher education is made real and they try to settle into life at their chosen provider along with their new peers. Yet, student readiness for this level of change and the challenges ahead, the suitability of the support available to them as well as their capacity to make best use of it, and the importance of feeling recognised, accepted and encouraged for who they are, can lead to radically different experiences.

What motivates them?

Do they feel recognised?

Consequently, the transition into higher education can be marked by broader inequalities that exacerbate gaps in student knowledge and engagement, and can contribute to feelings of a lack of visibility, sense of belonging and mattering.

The resources and insights collected here suggest ways in which to address some of these challenges and support all students to plan and feel better prepared for their learning journey ahead.



Transitions support

Journey and expectations

Levelling the playing field

Recognition and support

Better enabling student success



Journey and expectations

One challenge for many students is accessing the 'right'/appropriate help to understand their trajectory as learners and developing the confidence to take ownership of that learning journey and appreciate it as theirs. This can be especially difficult for students who do not have family or peers with experience of higher education to offer insights and support.

It can be easy for students to feel powerless at times, lost in the busy rhythms and processes of higher education. However, supporting students to proactively engage with, and plan for, the future can provide new (as well as existing) students with a clearer sense of direction and purpose.

The following resources can be used to support students to manage their goals and expectations, to co-create community building initiatives, and to help staff better understand and engage with evolving student needs and expectations over time.

- **[Toolkit: Understanding and Engaging with the Student Value Journey](#)** - Explores how engagement develops across the undergraduate learner journey and offers activities and guidance relevant to staff across providers. This toolkit emphasises the need to better understand what a student is likely to be experiencing at key moments and how they could become positive influencers and respond to their shifting perspective of what represents value for them.
- **[Transition skills: managing expectations](#)** - Supports students to create their own Independent Learning Plans that will help them manage their goals and expectations throughout their education.
- **[Transition skills: community building](#)** - This staff resource considers how to co-create community building initiatives with students.
- **[Get Ahead Book Club for pre-arrival students](#)** - This blog highlights the value of a book club initiative as a safe and supportive way of connecting incoming students with current students and easing them into the culture and processes of their chosen provider. There are several successful 'Big Read' initiatives in place at other providers around the UK too, including

[Kingston University's Big Read](#) project and [The Big Read at Hallam Library](#), which provide incoming students with a chosen book to read before they arrive in higher education and discuss with their new peers.

- **[Embedding mental wellbeing: Methods and benefits](#)** - This project explores how mental wellbeing can be embedded into all aspects of higher education to enhance the student experience, including transitions during the student journey.
- **[SkillsMap](#)** - Designed to surface and articulate to learners the transferable skills that are innate to all subjects. The resource supports learners to recognise the longer-term value their education has and the richness of skills they are developing in higher education.
- **[Underrepresented Student Guides](#)** - This series of guides, written by students for students, is intended to better support students navigate their transition to the University of Reading. It includes a [Commuter Student Guide](#) and [First Generation Guide](#). Explore Reading's [Awarding Gaps Toolkit](#) for more resources and student perspectives.



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Levelling the playing field

Students arrive in higher education with different levels of confidence, skills and readiness for the journey ahead. Depending on their pathway, progressing from compulsory or tertiary education or perhaps from employment or unemployment, they may lack certain (subject) knowledge or experience of putting particular skills or competencies into practice in context. Equally, an absence of readily available role models to offer insight into the principles, processes and general experience of being in higher education can be challenging for many, such as being the first in family and care-experienced students.

Small gaps in knowledge and/or experience like these do not necessarily confirm a lack of experience, know-how or ability on the part of the student. Rather, they suggest that further transition support may be required in some instances to better prepare an increasingly diverse student body and improve the handshake between pre-higher education and the student starting study at their chosen provider.

The following resources can be used to better familiarise incoming students with their learning environments and help to make higher education more transparent.

- [Student Guide to the Hidden Curriculum](#) - Anticipates the sort of questions students might have as they start to navigate university life and familiarise themselves with the different principles, structures and processes. The existence of the 'hidden curriculum' means that some students are not equipped to navigate the unfamiliar territory of higher education, which can have consequences for their wellbeing, sense of belonging and success.
- [Unpacking your Hidden Curriculum: A Guide for Educators](#) - Includes prompt questions and tips to identify the hidden curriculum that needs to be unpacked for your students.
- [Transition skills: knowledge gaps](#) - Resource to support staff in identifying potential subject knowledge gaps for incoming students and developing inclusive curricula that address these.

- [Active Online Reading](#) - Includes pedagogic resources, case studies and examples of effective approaches from current students to help enhance students' reading practices.
- [Social induction framework](#) - Created as part of a Collaborative Enhancement Project led by Falmouth University, this resource can help to familiarise learners with in-house learning environments through a social-based framework for engagement.
- [Personalised Approaches to Resilience and Community \(PARC\)](#) - Students enter higher education with a diverse range of abilities and skills. This QAA Enhancement Themes project uses diagnostic tests to help students and staff to recognise the strengths and challenges that individual students bring to their new university.



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Recognition and support

We need to create environments where we can all feel and see that we belong in higher education. Role models, the visuals shared on campus and in virtual learning spaces, the voices and identities present in the curriculum; such elements play a critical role in cultivating a sense of place and belonging.

The following case studies and resources highlight different learning journeys and suggest ways to help students feel recognised, supported and motivated as they find themselves in higher education.

- **QAA Membership Podcasts** - Includes episodes focused on [transitions into college-based higher education](#), [supporting the experiences of disabled students](#), and moving [towards neuro-inclusivity](#).
- **Monitoring and Enhancing Retention Among Underrepresented Groups** - Includes the role of engagement data in identifying students at risk and the positive effects of targeted communication interventions.
- **Supporting and Enhancing the Experience of International Students in the UK** - Explores critical elements of the support higher education providers should offer international students studying in the UK, to safeguard and enhance their experience.
- **Transition skills: mindset** - This resource for staff explains how to support students in identifying, understanding and using their own strengths to enhance their mindset.
- **Mind the Gap? The Transition of College Students to University** - This QAA Enhancement Themes project explores the differences in learning and teaching experienced by college students transitioning to university. Highlights sectoral, academic, identity and social, and logistical factors that impact college-to-university transitions.

- **Lived Experiences of BAME Students Uncovered Through Reflective Diaries** - Highlights positive and negative influences on students' sense of belonging, identity safety and engagement with curricula.
- **Student Space** - Developed by [Student Minds](#), this online platform provides wellbeing information, student stories and a directory of services students can access at their own university or college. It includes tailored support for students who might face additional challenges with mental health.
- **Black Fresher's Guide** - Designed by [The Awarding Gap Project](#) to support black and minority ethnic students transitioning to the University of Southampton, this guide includes information on student services and support, local black-owned businesses (stores, hairdressers and barbers, restaurants), places of worship, and tips for navigating university life.



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Better enabling student success

The following resources highlight a range of initiatives and approaches developed to support all students - but particularly students from underrepresented backgrounds - to realise their potential and succeed in higher education.

- **[Supporting Student Transitions to Higher Education](#)** -

Practical materials and links to think pieces in this collection of resources demonstrate what UK providers are doing to enable students to settle into life at their chosen provider.

- **[Student transitions to higher education: Partnership working](#)**

- Sally Burtonshaw, Associate Director (Education) at Public First, reflects on transitions to higher education and suggests four key actions for the sector to improve the way we work with schools.

- **[UK Higher Education Award Gap Group](#)** - Created by a [Collaborative Enhancement Project](#) led by Manchester Metropolitan University, this resource provides practitioners with the opportunity to replicate and develop research, support mechanisms, and interventions in their own institutional contexts, minimising duplication, and progressing the group's commitment to eliminating racialised gaps. See also Manchester Metropolitan University's [Addressing Awarding Gaps Toolkit](#).

- **TASO Toolkits** - [TASO's Student Mental Health Evidence Toolkit](#) provides an overview of research measuring the impact of student mental health interventions, while the [Evidence Toolkit](#) summarises existing evidence on approaches to widening participation and student success for disadvantaged and underrepresented groups.

- There are a variety of sector initiatives designed to support underrepresented groups as they progress to and through higher education. Examples include:

- o Education programmes by [Grit](#), designed to transform the beliefs students have about themselves, their peers and their educational community.
- o [The Brilliant Club](#), which mobilises the PhD community to support students from less advantaged backgrounds to access and succeed in higher education.
- o The [Unite Foundation](#), supporting the establishment and growth of a community for all estranged and care-experienced students, as well as running a nationwide accommodation scholarship for these students.
- o [The Sutton Trust](#), championing social mobility and ensuring that people from all backgrounds can access the opportunities suited to their talents and aspirations.
- o [Positive Digital Practices](#) - this peer-led resource aims to embed and sustain positive practices that support mental wellbeing for part-time, commuter and distance-learning students by building positive learner identities, positive digital communities and positive pedagogies.



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2.

Shaping classroom culture



Shaping classroom culture

What does a belonging culture look like for your students and staff?

How can we empower students and staff to explore and express what matters to them?

We need to be alive to the complexity and diversity of our student population, where each student starts their journey from, and the different ways this might impact on their engagement and approach to their education. It is equally important to recognise the value this diversity of experience brings to the classroom, to our learning communities and institutional cultures, as well as society at large.

As we work at eliminating inequalities like awarding gaps, it is essential we see people for who they are, that we make explicit the value of their particular lens, and that we recognise inequity where it exists and see it as a challenge to be addressed by all - in the classroom, in the content students are taught, in the environment and culture that surrounds and enables their learning experiences.

Change at scale within any provider inevitably requires strategic intervention from senior leadership and governing bodies. Yet, impactful change can also come at course and individual levels too - through the buy-in and actions of students themselves and

How do we subject ourselves to our own vulnerabilities? It's not just about the students

Is what students are being taught representative of their reality and experiences? Is enough being done to address wider social goals?

all those who interact with them, including module and programme leaders, personal tutors and professional support staff. Smaller scale interventions focused on creating responsive and rewarding environments in which all students (and staff) feel recognised, understood and empowered can be just as significant to the individual as changes to assessment practice or how we make use of data.

The resources and insights collected here suggest ways of shaping classroom culture and collaborating at all levels to develop a more holistic educational experience for all.



Shaping classroom culture

Looking beyond labels

Start from the experiences of students in class

Include students in decision-making processes

Student-centred learning and teaching



Looking beyond labels

The aim is to work with students who have different lived experiences in an affirmative manner and to embed inclusive practice effectively in all that we do.

The following resources can support you and develop your approach to inclusivity and equity inside and outside the classroom.

- **[The Inclusive Education Framework](#)** - Led by the University of Hull, this project generated a cross-institutional framework and self-directed online learning resource bank that features practical materials to help implement inclusive educational practices effectively.
- **[Inclusive Employability Development through the Curriculum](#)** - This toolkit outlines the core principles of an inclusive curriculum, including examples to support the design and delivery, an evaluation tool for existing content, as well as self-evaluation resources for staff (recognising levels of confidence) and students (estimating their own learning gain). The toolkit also features a number of resources to promote peer-assisted learning, from giving and receiving inclusive feedback to supporting students to surface lived experiences and understand unconscious biases.
- **[Keynote: Quality Matters Conference 2023](#)** - Aranee Manoharan (King's College London) makes the case for taking a whole student lifecycle approach to developing the student experience so that it is inclusive by design, exploring how we can sustainably support the diverse student populations we serve. [Explore further highlights from our student engagement conference.](#)

- **[Subject Benchmark Statements](#)** - These valuable sector reference points describe the nature of study and academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas. Importantly for this context, they also incorporate consideration of how practice within disciplines addresses wider social goals, including equality, diversity and inclusivity.
- **[Anti-racist curriculum \(ARC\) project](#)** - building on a sector-wide commitment to call out and eliminate racism in all its forms, AdvanceHE and QAA Scotland worked together to produce a Project Guide to support the planning, development and implementation of an anti-racist curriculum, as well as curating a range of resources produced by academic developers and students.



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- **Disaggregating the BAME Degree-Awarding Gap** - In this report, Maisha Islam (et al) highlights the significance for universities to disaggregate between and among their BAME students, as the University of Winchester proactively works to address the large degree-awarding gap between their UK-domiciled white and Asian students.
- **Addressing the degree awarding gap at London Met** - Outlines the holistic approach taken by London Metropolitan University to tackle the degree-awarding gap, including embedding the values of social justice, compassion and inclusion throughout pedagogy and the student experience. See also the introduction of the [Value-Added \(VA\) score](#) to measure differential attainment of student groups, better engage and support staff, and identify contributing factors towards the awarding gap.
- **Decolonising the Curriculum** - Produced by the University of Reading, this resource includes advice and guidance on how to create and maintain inclusive teaching and learning environments, along with insights from student inclusion consultants sharing examples of best practice.
- **Disrupt the Discourse** - This digital toolkit and e-learning course builder is designed to aid the development of an anti-racist pedagogy. Teaching and learning staff can use this resource as a reference point and guide for facilitating courageous conversations relating to students' lived experiences and developing their understanding of issues of discrimination, oppression and structural inequality and how they can dismantle these structural systems to advance social justice.
- **Addressing bias in higher education** - Andrew Read, Independent Educational Consultant and Donna Hurford, University of Southern Denmark, unpack and evaluate the effectiveness of institutional practices applied to address bias, including unconscious bias training, anonymous marking and sensitive marking. The presentation includes links to a range of bias aware teaching, learning and assessment resources.



Shaping classroom culture

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Start from the experiences of students in class

We all have different starting points. Creating opportunities for discussing experiences and viewpoints in a supported space (formal or informal), having a culture where individuals feel safe to say that they have a problem and feel confident to have difficult conversations, and normalising interventions and routes to targeted support are all important steps.

The following resources offer valuable insights into the experiences and expectations of some of our students and can be used to enhance student engagement.



- **Student Engagement Guidelines** - Learning from innovative practices introduced in response to COVID-19, this resource considers students' priorities and how they engage in the post-pandemic world of higher education. Find out more in this [podcast with the project team](#).
- **Differing Perceptions of Quality of Learning** - Results from this Collaborative Enhancement Project highlight the importance of granularity of analysis needed to make informed actions to support students from different ethnic and disciplinary contexts to succeed in higher education. Findings reinforce the importance of wellbeing, sense of belonging and community for all students, yet offer valuable insights into how teaching and learning is perceived (and preferred) by different underrepresented student groups.
- **Student Engagement in Learning** - This project aims to understand and improve student engagement in learning by exploring psychological and sociological factors, students' experiences, and evaluating the effectiveness of high-quality interventions across different disciplines and cohorts.

- **Made Digital** - This QAA research project explores the approaches to digital delivery and assessment that are associated with improved student engagement and achievement. The resource includes practical ideas about what works to increase student engagement and how providers successfully adapted assessments and supported their students in a digital and hybrid environment during the pandemic.
- **Student Mentorship Scheme** - Developed for Manchester Metropolitan University's Business Technology programme, this mentorship scheme aims to close the award and progression gaps in higher education by developing an inclusive student experience, enhancing employability, building a sense of belonging and community, and rethinking learning and teaching practices.
- **Neurodiversity Toolkit** - Developed by the University of Warwick to help academics support neurodivergent students and reduce the disparity of students' experiences. The interactive toolkit includes resources and exemplars collected from the staff community and is supported by testimonies from neurodivergent students.



Shaping classroom culture

Looking beyond labels

Start from the experiences of students in class

Include students in decision-making processes

Student-centred learning and teaching



Include students in decision-making processes

It is important to make sure that opportunities for students to engage and share their viewpoints and ways of thinking are not tokenistic but, instead, make them part of decision-making processes. This can take a variety of forms including co-creating the curriculum and joining or even chairing committees at module, programme and provider level.

As students gain confidence in their environment and social groups, in what is expected of them as learners and in their ability to deliver on these expectations, opportunities for choice and decision-making can promote the development of key competencies for employability, as well as feelings of belonging and inclusion.

The following resources and insights will support you and your students to develop and get the most from staff-student partnerships.

- **Case study: University of Manchester** - Jennie Blake, Academic Lead for Student Success for the Institute of Teaching and Learning at the University of Manchester, considers how a focus on transforming institutional culture and championing inclusive practice can better support students from all backgrounds to thrive in higher education.

- **Student Engagement Toolkit** - This toolkit is designed for student leaders, students' union officers and senior student representatives who may be new to working in higher education and quality (although staff can benefit from the resource, too). It can be used to build knowledge of quality in higher education, provide structure when planning enhancement activities, build a shared understanding of the language and sector reference points for quality and standards, and as part of training and support for student representatives.

- **Making student representation and engagement on committees more meaningful** - This resource explores key challenges that can hinder meaningful student engagement and representation on committees. It offers reflective questions and examples of positive practice aimed at ensuring student contributions are impactful and valued.

- **Co-creating assessments: Explainer video** - This video highlights student and staff perspectives on assessment co-creation and its positive impact on student experience. Find out more about the value of co-creation and how partnership working could embrace opportunities created by generative artificial intelligence in this [QAA blog](#).



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- **The rewards of collaborative observation** - This project promotes opportunities for students and staff to reflect on their experiences of learning together and consider how these reflections affect their overall understanding of their subject areas. It includes a practical step-by-step guide and resources to support the training, preparation and implementation of a cycle of collaborative observation as a quality enhancement tool for students and staff. Find out more in this [QAA Membership Podcast](#).
- **Supporting staff to undertake staff-student partnership opportunities** - Led by the University of Sussex, this project explores strategies for developing successful student-staff partnerships. Based around key themes for establishing successful partnerships, the resource includes video materials developed in collaboration between students and teaching staff on setting expectations, trust, empowerment and impact.
- **Responding to Student Voice cards** - This QAA Enhancement Themes project developed a set of core principles that underpin policies and practices relating to responding to the student voice in a range of contexts. The resource pack includes guidance, principles of practice cards, and a planning sheet for use with students.
- **Charrettes for success** - In this case study, Professor Harriet Dunbar-Morris (University of Buckingham) introduces the 'charrettes model' and explains how it can be used to bring staff and students together to co-create solutions to awarding gaps.



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Student-centred learning and teaching

Embracing inclusive practices and approaches to enhancing engagement, and empowering students to directly influence what and how students learn and how they are assessed can help to create more holistic educational experiences.

This partnership approach should better enable students to see themselves reflected in different environments, both inside the classroom and as they navigate physical and virtual learning

environments. It should also help students to feel more connected to their peers and educators, and to feel a greater sense of autonomy over their learning (see Wonkhe and Pearson's [Building Belonging in Higher Education](#) for recommendations for facilitating peer connections and connecting with staff).

The following resources will support you to develop inclusive, rewarding and successful student-centred teaching and learning experiences within your own institution.

- **[Case study: University of Sunderland in London](#)** - Associate Professor Geoff Paul, Assistant Director (Academic) at the University of Sunderland in London, outlines the measures introduced to ensure equity of experience and enhance the quality of higher education for all students on the London campus. Interventions saw the attainment gap between minority ethnic and white students reduce from 40.6% to 5.4%.
- **[Competence-based education \(CBE\)](#)** - Our primer offers a broad introduction to CBE and its value to students and society, accompanied by three institutional case studies demonstrating the value of CBE in action.
- **[Hallmarks of Success: Student-Centred Learning and Teaching](#)** - The first in a series of playbooks, you can use this resource to stimulate discussion about successful student-centred learning and teaching, inform the delivery of new courses and future curriculum changes, review departmental and provider strategies that take account of learning and teaching practice, and help direct teaching as well as student support.

- **[Hallmarks of Success: Course Design, Approval and Management](#)** - The third playbook in the Hallmarks of Success series, this edition can help higher education providers consider what success in course design, approval and management looks like in blended and digital environments.
- **[Creating Inclusive Subject Learning Communities](#)** - This resource explores four interconnected themes - curriculum design, course content, teaching and learning, and assessment and feedback practices - focusing on enhancing the student experience. A set of [reflective questions](#) has also been developed to help academic and professional teams design inclusive pedagogical approaches.
- **[Competence-based education \(CBE\) framework](#)** - Using the University of Hull's CBE Framework as a starting point, this project has created an online CBE framework toolkit for the higher education community to adopt, mapped to the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), and a self-directed online learning package to help academics and educational developers make the most of the resources.



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3.

Assessment readiness



Assessment readiness

What are we assessing for?

Are your assessment methods fair, inclusive and valuable to students?

Assessment sits at the heart of the learning experience. As well as evidencing knowledge and/or the proficiency of the student's assessment practice and their readiness to progress, assessment shapes student understanding and the way in which they approach and experience the curriculum.

Diversification of assessment type, either in place of or in addition to more traditional assessment methods, may have a positive impact on student experience and degree outcomes. Previous work, such as our [Made Digital](#) research project, highlighted how placing greater focus on understanding, skills and competencies can facilitate more authentic assessments that prepare students to fully contribute to work and society, while shifting away from final exams to more formative and continuous assessment can enable greater parity of achievement between students with different characteristics and learning styles.

How do you support diverse student groups to develop their assessment practice and understanding of academic integrity?

How can you support others to engage meaningfully and confidently with data to improve understanding of awarding gaps, and to evaluate the effectiveness of applied interventions?

The introduction of 'no detriment' policies during the pandemic appeared to have a positive impact on progression rates for many underrepresented students without impacting on overall progression rates, meaning that these policies did not make it easier to pass (see Universities UK's [Closing the Gap: Three Years On](#)). More recently, projects around [compassionate assessment](#) have suggested that approaches like pass/fail assessment can improve students' engagement with learning and feedback, while [competence-based education](#) strives to give students greater clarity around what they can do as a result of their learning and the relevance and value of chosen assessment methods, both to them and their educators.

By reconsidering how we assess and reflecting on what we are assessing for, and how we are preparing students - both for assessment and stepping beyond higher education - we might deliver a more fulfilling, valuable and equitable experience for all students.



Assessment readiness

Purpose of assessment

Assessment support for students

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Purpose of assessment

The following tools and resources will support you to reflect on the purpose of assessment, the importance of developing students' assessment practice, and how best to create authentic, meaningful and impactful assessment experiences for all students.



- **[Hallmarks of Success: Assessment in Digital and Blended Pedagogy](#)** - This playbook can be used to stimulate discussion about how assessment can support student engagement, achievement and skills development; to devise assessment practices that enable students to use feedback to enhance their work and learning strategies; and to review strategic approaches to assessment design and delivery at course or programme level.

- **[Subject Benchmark Statements](#)** - These valuable sector reference points describe the nature of study and academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas. Each statement incorporates consideration of assessment strategies, methods and feedback, and will support you to reflect on the purpose, design and efficacy of assessments in your own context.

- **[Belonging through assessment: Pipelines of compassion](#)** - This digi-book features case studies and dynamic tools to help you challenge assumptions and normative practices around (i) pass/fail assessment, (ii) trauma-informed policy, and (iii) compassionate feedback. [Find out more about the project](#) and how experiences of feedback and assessment can impact students' sense of belonging.

- **[Students' views and experiences of pass/fail assessment](#)** - Hear from students about the role of tutor and peer feedback and how the experience of pass/fail assessment can support authentic learning.

- **[Making the business of assessment clear to all](#)** - In this QAA Podcast, Dr Paul Campbell (University of Leicester) and colleagues discuss the importance of developing students' assessment practice and how a lack of support in this area will often impact particularly negatively on students of colour and their award outcomes.

- **[Supporting student mental wellbeing through assessment design and feedback](#)** - Includes activities to support a growth mindset when approaching feedback, addressing practical exam-related stress and anxiety, and building confidence through groupwork.

- **[Competence-based Assessment Framework](#)** - The assessment of competence often proves challenging due to factors such as limited understanding, awareness or confidence in alternative assessment formats, staff buy-in to the use of competence-based assessment or, as a result of accrediting body requirements. Building on the [Competence-based Education \(CBE\) Toolkit](#), this project offers an assessment framework along with resources to support its adoption and promotion of good practice.



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Assessment support for students

While staff are more likely to share a common understanding of the language of assessment and agreed sector-wide standards, this does not automatically translate for students when they are approaching assessment tasks.

Another key factor of the 'hidden curriculum', the assessment process often makes implicit assumptions about student confidence, knowledge and skills: from understanding learning outcomes, assessment criteria and rubrics, to how students go about producing an assessment and subsequently making use of feedback.

As one student aptly explains in the University of Reading's [Awarding Gap Toolkit](#), developed to support staff to understand how systemic disadvantages affect the academic success of underrepresented groups and what they might do to address this:

'When I learn a **new piece of advice** that makes university easier, it **removes a burden that I would otherwise be carrying**. It frees me up to concentrate on achieving rather than worrying about how things work.'

The following resources are primarily designed for students to help develop their assessment practice, along with valuable insights and advice for those who engage with and support them through the assessment process.



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Teaching students how to tackle assessment

- **Unpacking Assessments: Student Guide** - This interactive guide unpacks the assessment process for students, from understanding the task at hand to familiarising them with marking criteria and making use of feedback.
- **Understanding learning outcomes** - This [infographic](#) and [set of short videos](#) for students focuses on enhancing understanding and making the most of the assessment process.
- **What is Credit? A guide for students** - Helps students to understand credit and equips them with the knowledge to have meaningful conversations about credit, what it is and what it means for them. See also: [Starting the Conversation](#) resource.
- **Toolkit: Making the language of assessment inclusive** - Led by the University of the West of England, this project created a toolkit to encourage dialogue around the language used in assessments, between staff, staff and students, and among students. Hear more about the project from students and staff in [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#) of this QAA Podcast.



Assessment readiness



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Academic integrity

- **[What is academic integrity?](#)** - This video explains what academic integrity is and what it means for students. It unpacks academic misconduct and the consequences of this and highlights available support for students.
- **[Inclusive and accessible academic integrity: student voice videos](#)** - Developed and produced by student participants as part of a [Collaborative Enhancement Project](#) led by Oxford Brookes University, these short videos are designed to help students retain core academic integrity messages.



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Assessment support resources for staff

Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students often feel that they have to work harder than their peers to connect with different modes of assessment and the content of the curriculum (see ['Pray\(ing\) the person marking your work isn't racist': racialised inequities in HE assessment practice](#)).

As highlighted by this [Collaborative Enhancement Project](#) led by Oxford Brookes University, disproportionately high numbers of academic misconduct investigations involve students of colour, international students, those from widening participation backgrounds and disabled students. This suggests that current teaching and learning to support academic integrity and deliver more inclusive assessments is perhaps not as effective for some student groups as for others, making it harder for them to follow good academic practice.

The following resources will support you to enhance and promote academic integrity and to develop inclusive assessment practice that better recognises the diversity of your student population.



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Externality and academic integrity

- **External Examining Principles** - External examiners play a crucial role in ensuring the integrity and fairness of assessment. This set of principles and reflective questions can help you to better understand the essential role of the external examiner system and ensure your institution achieves full value from the network of examiners who are engaged across the sector.
- **Understanding academic integrity** - Resources and guidance to support you with enhancing and promoting academic integrity, managing academic misconduct processes, assessment and digital assessment security, and artificial intelligence. Learn about contract cheating, student attitudes to misconduct, and the regulatory frameworks and legislation that underpin how the sector maintains academic standards in this [QAA Podcast](#).
- **Reconsidering assessment for the ChatGPT era** - This paper sets out QAA's advice for providers on how to approach the assessment of students in a world where students have access to Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools. See also [Maintaining quality and standards in the ChatGPT era](#) and advice on [how Generative AI can be used in teaching and learning](#) as part of [QAA's curation of Generative AI resources](#).
- **Inclusive and accessible academic integrity: staff teaching resources** - Activities and guidance for staff to deliver inclusive and accessible academic integrity education, created using Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles.



Assessment readiness



Purpose of assessment



Assessment support for students



Assessment support resources for staff



Evaluation



Inclusive assessment practices

- **Embedding Inclusive Assessment** - Practical resources designed to enhance student outcomes while enhancing their assessment experience. These resources include a set of [Inclusive Assessment Attributes](#) and a reflective toolkit summarising best practice.
- **Optionality in Assessment** - Analysing the scope, feasibility and practicality of student choice in assessment, this Collaborative Enhancement Project supports teaching staff to develop inclusive, accessible and flexible student assessments.
- **Tackling racial inequalities in assessment** - This project focuses on improving the experience of, and awarding outcomes in, assessment for undergraduate students from different ethnic backgrounds. Findings indicate the Racially Inclusive Practice in Assessment Guidance Intervention (RIPIAG) improves student confidence, reduces stress in students relating to assessment, and directly improves the assessment experience for students of colour. Find out more in this academic paper: ['Pray\(ing\) the person marking your work isn't racist': racialised inequities in HE assessment practice](#).



Assessment readiness



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Evaluation

A robust process for evaluation is fundamental to determining the effectiveness of any intervention applied to enhance both the quality and equity of teaching, learning and assessment, and to reduce awarding gaps.

This requires not only a clear understanding of what success will look like in this context and how you plan to track and analyse the impact of interventions at different stages - see [Theory of Change](#) approach to evaluation - but also data fluency and the ability to interpret, communicate and apply this data.

The following resources and insights can be used to plan your evaluations for any interventions you introduce to reduce awarding gaps - from changes to course design, content and assessment methods, to making explicit pathways to support and embody inclusive practices.

The range of case studies provided below also highlight the importance of data visibility and transparency, and supporting colleagues to engage meaningfully and confidently with data to improve understanding of awarding gaps and how we can address them.

- [Using outcomes-based approaches to learning, teaching and assessment](#) - A set of resources aimed at supporting higher education providers to address challenges such as over-assessment, demands for increasingly flexible student pathways, and forms of assessment that are more directly related to graduate skills and scenarios.

- [Evidencing Value: Beyond the Metrics](#) - Evidencing value in higher education beyond the metrics entails delving into 'intangible assets' - things that we know are vitally important elements of a high-quality educational offer but are sometimes difficult to evidence in an increasingly metrics-driven world. This toolkit will help you to identify and gather focused evidence about priority intangible assets in your context.

- [Universal Evaluation Framework](#) - An open access tool for planning evaluations or for gathering evaluative evidence, created by Professor Stella Jones-Devitt and Professor Liz Austen. The tool has been designed to support all colleagues, regardless of their levels of evaluation experience, role and starting points, to engage more confidently and effectively in evaluation tasks.

- [Developing a pilot peer evaluation system](#) - Peer evaluation provides external feedback and objectivity from colleagues with similar challenges and expertise. This project led by the University of Bath has created guidelines to support organisations in commissioning and participating in peer review evaluation, as well as offering templates for developing and evaluating your own peer review approaches.

- [The Learning Together Project](#) - Led by Newcastle University, this project will create a guide to enable enhanced learning about and from the evaluation of inclusive learning, teaching and assessment.



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Making use of (the right) data

- **Case study: University of Hertfordshire** - Ms Sarah Flynn, Associate Professor and Deputy Director of the Centre for Learning, Access and Student Success at the University of Hertfordshire, explains why training in the access, customisation and interpretation of data is critical for supporting programme continuous enhancement processes and addressing the awarding gap.

- **Using Data to Enhance Outcomes** - This research project investigates how data is used to inform quality assurance and enhancement activities. It identifies clear recommendations for members seeking to improve the use of data in their quality processes and, ultimately, enhance the student learning experience.

- **Using institutional data to address the causes of awarding gaps** - This University of Sussex project is collecting and analysing data from three universities with diverse characteristics regarding ethnic student body composition and approaches to assessment and feedback. Research findings will enable professional services and academic staff to collect and use data more effectively, improve understanding of awarding gaps, and inform decision-making around assessment and feedback policies.

- **TASO: Ethnicity and Race Equality Gaps** - A selection of TASO-commissioned projects devised to support the sector to better understand and evaluate the effectiveness of their interventions which aim to tackle ethnicity degree-awarding gaps:

- o [Approaches to addressing the ethnicity degree awarding gap](#) (June 2023)
- o [From vision to action: Harnessing Theory of Change to tackle ethnicity degree awarding gaps](#) (March 2024)
- o See also [Mapping Outcomes and Activities Tool \(MOAT\)](#) which assists practitioners and evaluators to consistently label and record the outcomes and activities they deliver as part of their widening participation outreach.



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4.

Stepping beyond study



Stepping beyond study

How is employability taught to and experienced by your students?

What is being done to eliminate barriers (financial, cultural, logistical) to employability and enable successful career development?

Gaps persist beyond the point of award. How students are supported to enhance their employability skills throughout their studies and to best capitalise on their achievements once they graduate, plays a significant role in their future success.

Employability can be experienced in different ways across the learner journey. Depending on the circumstances of the individual student, they may be required to work part-time to enable their study, to generate the necessary income to meet daily living costs and perhaps support dependents or satisfy other essential responsibilities. While students undoubtedly develop valuable skills, competencies and behaviours through paid employment, it can also lead to them having to be more selective about the classes and activities they attend; to having to make judgements about what is essential (or not) from their point of view, potentially to the detriment of their academic success, social mobility and, in some cases, their mental health.⁸

Some providers have introduced dedicated scholarships or bursaries to provide additional support to those impacted most by rising living

How do you approach measuring and evaluating educational gain?

Are students sufficiently supported to recognise and articulate the competencies and skills they have gained as a result of their higher education experience?

costs, which is a positive step. Alleviating financial and logistical barriers to allow students to engage with work more confidently - and perhaps even participate in placement opportunities where available and other forms of career development during study - can enable students to gain better academic and employment outcomes.⁹ Ultimately, it is our responsibility to try to meet students where they are in terms of their learning journey and circumstances and to make sure that employability becomes (or remains) a core part of teaching, learning and assessment experiences.

We can no longer rely on students having additional time and capacity to proactively engage in their own career development. Instead, we have to work to eliminate inequities, remove barriers to participation where possible, and to consistently deliver opportunities for students to develop, recognise and articulate the skills and competencies that they need to succeed in their future careers and create impact in society.

⁸ Basic needs insecurities (financial, food, housing) and an overreliance on social support to help bridge financial gaps can directly impact the student's ability to engage fully in the whole higher education experience (see [Staffordshire University's Survey of Basic Needs](#)). Blackbullion's [Student Money and Wellbeing 2024](#) report highlights that 76% of students (from a survey sample of 1,200) are worried that the cost-of-living crisis will have a negative impact on their final degree result, with 59% of students stating they received a lower grade than expected due to cutting down on going to campus to study independently or use facilities, and 58% not having enough time to study, revise for an exam or complete an assignment due to hours spent working.

⁹ As per Aimhigher's [Ethnicity Awarding Gap in the West Midlands](#) report, 'There is evidence that students who engage with work and other forms of placement gain better academic and employment outcomes than might otherwise be expected given their characteristics. This does, though, require support, which can range from promoting and supporting participation in placements, to removing financial and logistical barriers to them, and engaging with placement students whilst they are off campus' (2023: 23).



Stepping beyond study

Repositioning employability

Creating positive impact beyond the classroom

Enabling student success

Repositioning employability

The following resources can be used to help develop employability skills in the curriculum, supporting students to become responsible global citizens capable of navigating rapid change and creating positive impact in their communities through their professional careers.

- **[Understanding Barriers to Student Employability](#)** - Part of the [Inclusive Employability Toolkit](#) - which outlines the core principles of an inclusive curriculum along with examples to support design, delivery and evaluation - this short resource will help you to identify the barriers that students may be experiencing to engaging with and developing their employability.
- **[What is enterprise and entrepreneurship education?](#)** - In this collection of short videos for students and educators, we explain what enterprise and entrepreneurship education is, the kinds of behaviours, attributes and competencies it can support students to develop, and suggest a few simple ways to build an entrepreneurial mindset. For more information, explore QAA's [Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education guidance](#).
- **[Enterprise and embedded employability in higher education](#)** - This episode of the QAA Membership Podcast considers the student experience of enterprise and entrepreneurship education in teaching and learning, and how to embed employability and enterprise education principles in the curriculum.

- **[Framework for Embedding Employability in Higher Education](#)** - Building on QAA's enterprise guidance, this framework from Advance HE is designed to inform and support the activities of educators who interact with students, through the delivery of enterprise and entrepreneurship within the curriculum and/or extracurricular activity.
- **[Access and awarding gaps in UK university undergraduate placement programmes](#)** - Explores the extent to which students of different ethnicities, (dis)abilities, sexes, POLAR groups, and academic abilities undertake Year in Industry (YINI) placements and the post-placement academic improvements to which this can lead. The paper highlights students completing YINI programmes are significantly more likely to achieve first-class (70.1% YINI, 28.5% non-YINI) and good degrees (97.7% YINI, 83.6% non-YINI).



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Creating positive impact beyond the classroom

- **Social Entrepreneurial Skills Toolkit** - Designed to support the development of social enterprise and entrepreneurial skills in students, this toolkit identifies the key knowledge, skills and capabilities that should be included when designing a social enterprise learning experience and provides resources to support the delivery of needs-led education.
- **Student Intrapreneur and Entrepreneur (SIE) Toolkit** - This toolkit is designed to enhance the wider-scale impact of work-based learners on global issues. Focusing primarily on those studying part-time, the project team collated best practices on how these individuals - as student intrapreneurs and entrepreneurs (SIEs) driving change within and beyond their organisations - can combine practitioner knowledge with new academic learning outside the classroom to tackle societal issues. Find out more in this [podcast with the project team](#).
- **Exploring Community Partnerships** - Interrogating what we mean by community and the benefits of student-community partnerships for learners and for members of the local community, this project considers how different communities interact and enrich each other and how individuals move within and between them.
- **Interdisciplinary, challenge-led learning** - This paper explains how interdisciplinary, challenge-led learning can increase students' confidence and self-awareness and encourage them to believe that they can and should make a change in the world. Discover more about the Students as Change Agents (SACHA) programme at the University of Edinburgh in this podcast discussing [Enterprise, entrepreneurship and student ambition](#).



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Enabling student success

The following resources and insights can be used to enhance understanding of graduate attributes and develop student confidence, and to support staff and students to identify, measure and communicate educational gain.

Understanding and articulating skills and competencies

- **[Virtual Careers Fair Toolkit](#)** - This toolkit was created in response to industry reports, anecdotal feedback and evaluations suggesting that students from underrepresented groups do not feel confident participating in careers fair events for graduate-level employment. It is designed to be inclusive and relevant to all students and graduates, and offers bite-sized directions, easily accessible FAQs and a Virtual Fairs Action Planner to help students collect the right information and turn it into successful applications.
- **[Generative artificial intelligence and the workplace](#)** - In this panel discussion from the QAA [Quality Insights Conference 2024](#), speakers discuss the value of such key skillsets as critical thinking, creativity and social intelligence to contemporary employers and what rapid technological change really means for current and future graduates.
- **[Enhancing student progression through course-specific Graduate Pathways](#)** - This presentation examines the implementation of graduate pathways at the University of Bedfordshire to ensure institutional graduate competency development is consistently considered at course level and that all students are effectively supported to understand and articulate their graduate competency development.
- **[Adventure and exploration in playful co-curricular learning](#)** - This podcast focuses on how metaphors and design principles borrowed from open world video games are supporting students to forge their own pathways in Manchester Metropolitan University's award-winning programme - Rise. An [interactive game](#) is also available to play which allows you to explore the world of Rise and its key metaphors and activities.
- **[Transforming and embedding graduate attributes and skills](#)** - This short case study explains how students at the University of Aberdeen are supported to record, reflect on and articulate the skills they have developed throughout their time at university.



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Recognising, measuring and evaluating educational gain

- **Quality Compass: Educational Gain** - This issue considers educational - or learning - gain: what this is, where some of the challenges are and how those challenges might be addressed. Reflections from colleagues across the sector illustrate the opportunities presented by different approaches and how grappling with the concept of education gain can provide an opportunity to celebrate excellence and enrich the experience of staff and students.
- **Educational gain (event summary and presentations)** - This collection of resources considers how to describe, evidence and evaluate the wider benefits of the student learning experience.
- **Evidencing Value: Beyond the Metrics** - Evidencing value in higher education beyond the metrics entails delving into 'intangible assets', things that we know are vitally important elements of a high-quality educational offer but are sometimes difficult to evidence in an increasingly metrics-driven world. This toolkit will help you to identify and gather focused evidence about priority intangible assets in your context.

- **My Employability Development Journey** - Part of the [Inclusive Employability Toolkit](#), this inclusive approach to learning gain is based on the principle of self-assessment for learning and on the student defining their starting point and setting their own goals for progress. The resource is designed to be used by educators in an academic curriculum context.
- **Accounting for student success: Measuring educational gain** - This project explores the approaches institutions are taking to identify educational gain. The project team will develop a framework for classifying and categorising measures of educational gain; a guide for students to reflect on and account for their own learning and wider student experience; and a suite of practical case studies and recommendations of good practice for providers to holistically capture student success.



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