

## Implementing the value added score: potential challenges and possible solutions

While the benefits of using the value-added (VA) score as a metric have been evidenced at Kingston University, there are a number of potential challenges that could be faced if another institution chooses to implement the VA score. This article, based on the collaborations own experiences, details some potential challenges that may be encountered and possible solutions to these challenges:

- understanding of the VA score and appreciation of its use by key senior staff as well as their role in scaling the approach within their institution –
  - ✓ understanding needs to be supported through coaching and use of available materials that can be found under the VA score section of this project collaboration;
- ensuring wide-scale buy-in from programme leaders even with strong institutional support in place can be challenging –
  - ✓ excellent communication with deans/associate deans and heads of departments will be needed to ensure programme leader engagement. This is often already in place in institutions where there are already strategies in place to improve retention and success of under-performing groups;
- time commitments of teams to attend training sessions and commitment to rollout VA score at institutions –
  - ✓ where possible workshops should be scheduled with other activities (e.g. team away days, or validation/periodic review meetings). Line managers should be advised by senior leads that there will be a time commitment needed within workloads to ensure an effective rollout.
- the VA score may suggest good progress in relation to reducing the BME attainment gap but could potentially hide specific differences according to ethnicity –
  - ✓ data at Institutional level, school/department level, and programme level will be considered alongside the VA score to enable consideration of different ethnic group performance and ensure that positive activity in relation to improvements in VA scores is aligned with reductions in attainment differentials for all ethnic minority groups.
- maintaining focus on BME attainment despite competing institutional priorities –
  - ✓ efforts should be made to identify links and benefits of the VA score in relation to key institutional activities such as the National Student Survey (NSS), Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and Athena Swan.

Discussion of VA scores in relation to other activities will help to embed the use of the VA methodology;

- the VA score is currently calculated for undergraduate programmes only but for many institutions, postgraduate provision makes up a significant proportion of the student body
  - ✓ once an institutional understanding of the VA score is achieved and the identification and implementation of measures to address the gap has been done, the institution may also take the opportunity to consider better data processes or analysis of BME success in postgraduate taught and postgraduate research provision;
- institutions need to ensure institutional commitment to ongoing calculation of the VA score, so that this is not seen as a 'one-off' activity –
  - ✓ once the impact of the VA data is recognised, it should form part of an institution's annual metrics, ideally as part of a set of data for learning analytics. Key members of an institution's planning unit would need to commit time to calculating and supporting the dissemination of the VA score on an ongoing basis;
- ensuring the ability to present the VA score using appropriate software –
  - ✓ institutions will need to commit to procuring appropriate software for the presentation of the VA score. This would need to be available across the institution to enhance engagement with the methodology and be supported on an ongoing basis;
- addressing challenges to the validity of the data and VA score –
  - ✓ to ensure take-up, the methodology has to be accepted as valid and reliable. Existing materials and the proven success of the VA score will help staff understand the validity of the VA methodology.