



## Value Added at the University of Hertfordshire

At the University of Hertfordshire, we gained early momentum, and success, in reducing our BME attainment gap. However, we have seen the progress plateau over the last two years, partly due to pressures of other Institutional initiatives. The gap between White and BME student performance is still large and having set a new equality objective to specifically reduce this attainment gap we are keen to re-energise our BME student success project.

Previously we have made use of National, Institutional and Academic School level data to instigate change, but it has been difficult to extract programme/subject level data for more in-depth discussions with staff. Having attended the workshop on Value Added (VA) at Kingston University as part of the collaborative project we were very keen to consider the possibility of using VA scores at Hertfordshire and identified this as a potential catalyst for our project.

With support from the Students' Union we presented a paper about the benefit of adopting the use of VA at Hertfordshire to our Student Educational Experience Committee (SEEC) which oversees the BME student success project. The committee which, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and includes Associate Deans Learning and Teaching (L&T), members of registry, Students' Union executives, plus the Directors of L&T and Academic Quality, fully endorsed the proposal and asked for the paper to be considered by the Academic Board. The Board also fully endorsed the use of VA and we invited Kingston University staff to lead an operational workshop at Hertfordshire to support the use of VA.

We were very keen to gain support from students in using the VA approach as well as from senior members of the University so at a recent meeting of our newly formed BME student success working group, we considered School level data and then the potential of using VA scores. The very diverse group which comprises of teaching staff and students from all academic schools, could see the benefits of using VA for target setting at programme/subject level and were unanimously supportive of this approach.

Over the summer and next academic year, we will work with programme tutors and Associate Deans to review the VA scores for their programmes and through the use of the inclusive teaching strand of the curriculum design toolkit and the top tips for staff we will help programme teams to identify relevant actions.

### Challenges

The response to the suggestion of using VA scores has been consistently positive within the university. The test for us will be how the programme leaders respond to using the data and identifying actions.

There will also be resourcing issues; we do not have a dedicated team working on the BME student success project so it will be challenging for staff in the Learning and Teaching Innovation Centre to facilitate conversations with programme tutors within their normal workload.

## **Use of the Value Added Methodology at the University of Wolverhampton**

Following the initial presentation of the Value Added (VA) methodology, the University of Wolverhampton team was very keen to determine how this methodology could be used to raise awareness of attainment issues, not just for BME students but also for other groups of students (e.g. disabled students). It was felt that this would be a valuable tool for discussions with course teams, given the granularity of the VA data to the level of a course and potentially, in the future, to specific modules.

The Wolverhampton team was also interested in using the VA methodology as a tool for evaluating other academic practice-related initiatives (e.g. the use of learning spaces).

The VA methodology was presented to the University Attainment Group and a recommendation was made to consider calculating the VA data for the University on a regular basis.

The VA methodology has yet to be introduced more widely to members of staff. The primary reason for this has been access to the software required to view the data. This issue is being resolved and it is anticipated that the University will be in a position shortly to introduce the VA data to members of staff. The team will also use this opportunity to assess the use of VA data for other evaluation purposes, in parallel with analysis of other student-related data sources.