Raising Awareness, Raising Aspiration

A partnership of: The University Of Sheffield. King's College London University of Portsmouth

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A Targeted Personal Tutoring Support Programme for Narrowing Gaps in Student Achievement

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Who we are…

A diverse coalition of universities dedicated to closing their attainment gaps and sharing best practice…

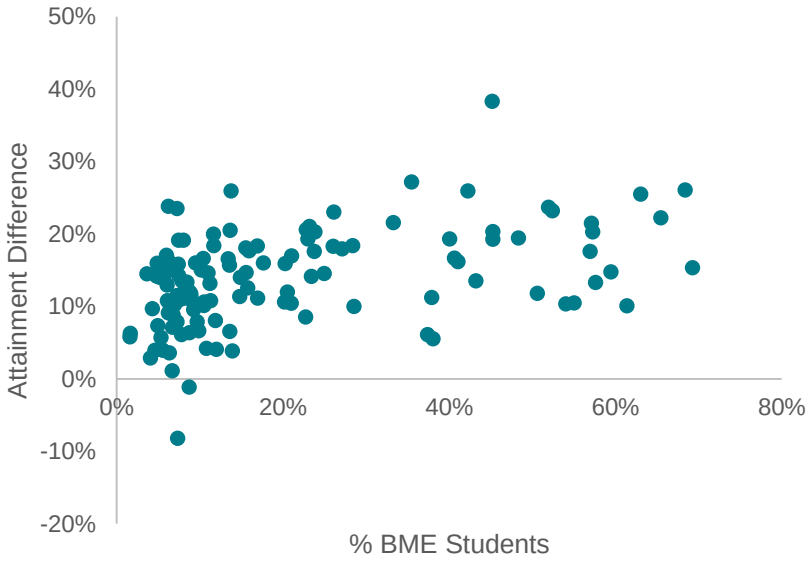
University of Sheffield

10%

Source: TUOS analysis of UUK Universities/National HESA data

Narrowing the Gap – What we know

- Controlled for prior attainment, and a wide range of other relevant factors these gaps still exist. Therefore these gaps emerge once students arrive (Broecke & Nicholls, 2006)
- Access is important – but increasing access to create more diverse student bodies in itself doesn't seem to automatically impact/reduce the gap.
- This would suggest the relationship goes deeper into the quality of pedagogical relationships between staff and students, once they enter university.



Graph: UK Universities – 5 Year profiling of Attainment Gap: % of BME students in the Student Body

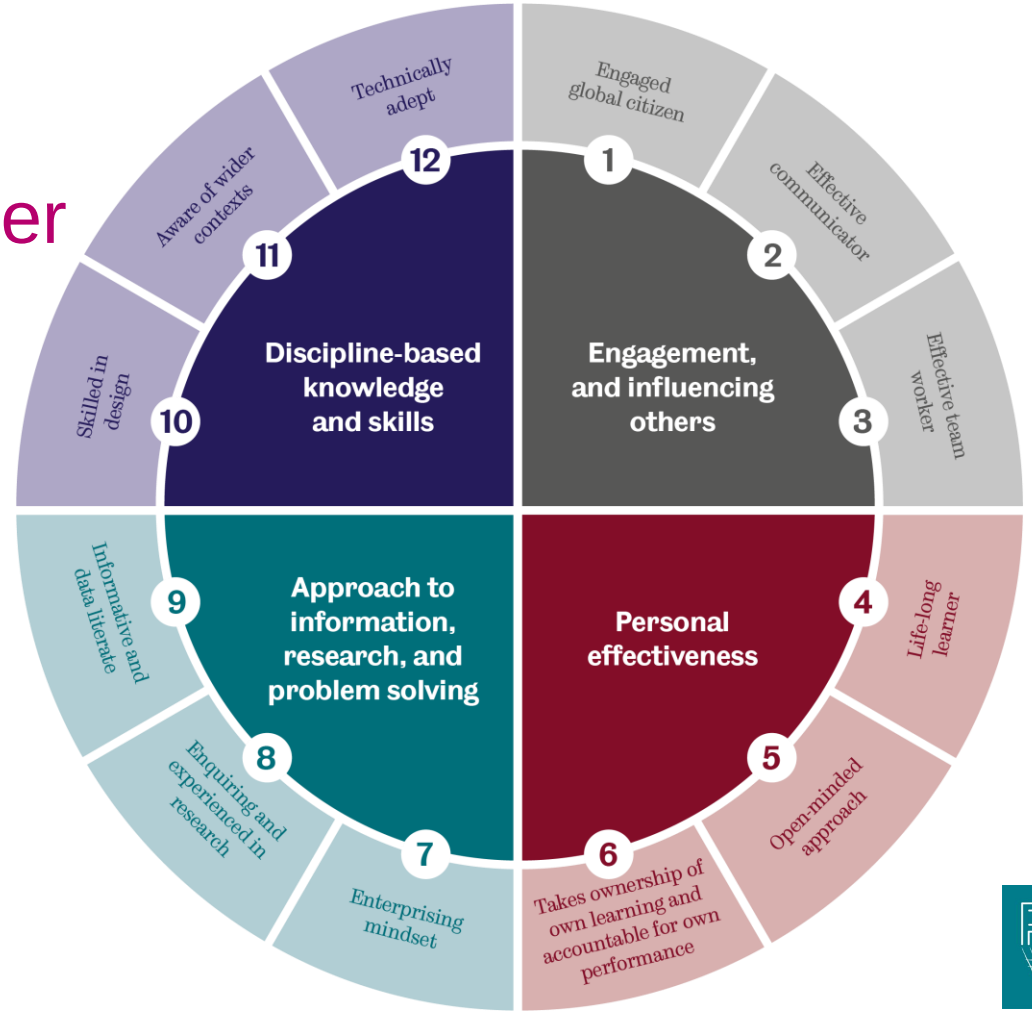
What can make a difference?

- Non-traditional students "**struggle to learn the rules of the HE game**" (Stuart et al, 2011)
- "First-generation students employ engagement strategies that emphasise **independence** while middle-class students…emphasise **interaction, in addition to independence**." (Yee, 2016)
- What Works? report notes that students want to get to know their Faculty, and **prefer pastoral support delivered by academics** (Thomas, 2012)
- Positive relationships (with staff, with peers) a factor known **to influence student outcomes** (Cousin & Cuerton, 2012)
- "Staff are **agents of change**" for students – can instigate a dialogue about HE 'rules' (Mountford-Zimdars et al, 2015)

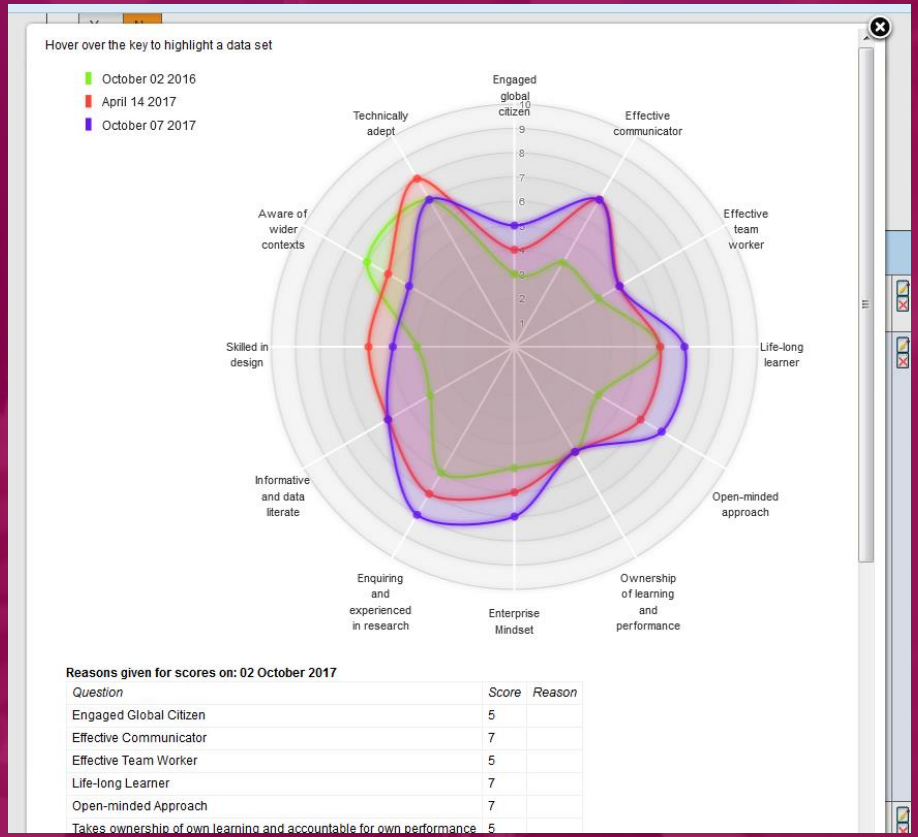
Why Personal Tutoring?

- PTs can be the “interlocutors” that help students to feel that that someone on their course knows them and is looking out for them in the following ways:
  - Successful tutor-tutee relationships may help to foster some ‘**belonging**’
  - Discussing potential barriers to learning may help students to **anticipate and access** support early
  - Conversations with academics may ‘**nudge**’ students to seek out further co- or extra-curricular opportunities

The Sheffield Graduate Engineer



The Sheffield Graduate Engineer in Practice



Key Hypotheses

- ***Good personal tutoring provision, (incorporating an online platform, CPD and policy) will improve engagement in personal tutoring, which can make a contribution to raising the attainment for students from BME/LSEB.***
- A students sense of belonging and mattering at university can affect a students attainment, and personal tutoring has the potential to improve this, which can be done through the RARA approach to personal tutoring.
- Having an overt point of access through a personal tutor, creates a space for students to seek help and can have a positive impact on attainment.
- By having a systematic approach to personal tutoring, staff and students should feel clear about, and empowered by, their rights and responsibilities in this relationship, which should support student attainment positively.
- The role of educational mentors/personal tutors can be pivotal to shape, effect, and enable students to think differently to what futures are open to them, improving progression and attainment.

Key Deliverables

- The **implementation of a PATS-like approach to personal tutoring at all three institutions**. In pilot faculties across 2017/18 academic year: Engineering (Sheffield), Dentistry (King's), Creative and Cultural Industries (Portsmouth).
- **An evidence-based best practice toolkit and CPD package** to tackle closing the attainment gap, which can be rolled out nationally to support PT, aligned to national HE CPD frameworks.
- **A National Best Practice Support Menu**, which will provide 'courses' of reflection drawn from the three diverse institutions and subject areas, enabling scalability, and empowering staff to 'test' varied approaches. Each 'course' on the menu will tackle a 'wicked issue' connected to deploying personal tutoring frameworks that work to reach all students.
- **Added value research, evaluation into attainment gaps and personal tutoring**. With a big data set being generated, and a team of leading and talented HE researchers supporting the project, the opportunities for sharing additional research and insight with the sector are numerous!

Questions?

Let’s continue the conversation;
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