



CLOSING THE GAP
BME EMPLOYMENT IN HIGHER
EDUCATION

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FOREWORD

There is no doubt senior leaders in higher education are committed to understanding the blockages that prevent talented staff, of all backgrounds, meeting their personal aspirations within the organisation and effectively delivering policies leading to first class education services. The commissioning of this research by the University of the West of England (UWE, Bristol) demonstrates a desire to confront the BME recruitment challenges that currently exist and harness the talents of BME staff. However, many BME respondents in this research highlighted that we have been here before; this is not a new issue. Universities in various cities across the UK, at various times and at various levels, have looked at these issues. BME respondents in this study question whether there is, in fact, a real appetite for change. The intention of UWE, Bristol is outlined in its equality policies and this brief is clear. The organisation wants to increase its BME staff to a level that reflects BME demographics across the city.

Their Equity Student Programme, the BME staff forum, the Race Equality Task Force (RETF), the Equality and Diversity Forum (EDF) and other groups are helping talented BME staff develop the skills to progress. However, difficulties still remain in attracting BME individuals to apply for positions within the university. The levels of BME staff moving into leadership positions and BME students obtaining good level degrees are well below that of their white counterparts. This being said, with a more strategic and focussed approach being driven from the top BME staff, those who previously felt that they did not have equal access to opportunities within the university can now begin to feel more hopeful.

However, diversity needs to be on the agenda at every level in order to demonstrate real and committed action towards an organisation's vision of an open, fair and inclusive operation. We looked into the three overarching themes of Culture Leadership and Accountability.

These themes are, in reality, interrelated and overlapping; for example one cannot consider leadership and accountability without the context of the prevailing culture. We have attempted to be systematic in feeding back the target groups perceptions of 'their reality', but the different elements need to be considered together in addressing BME recruitment, retention and progression to moving forward in a meaningfully constructive way.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are indeed grateful to the 72 BME respondents who gave us their time and shared their experiences and perceptions freely. Our gratitude also goes out to UWE's equality and human resource teams that provided the much appreciated documentation, on request, that enabled the completion of the desk research in a timely and consistent manner. We are also grateful to all who helped us with the logistics of delivering this paper namely, Phoenix Social Enterprise Operations Manager and his research team Dr Anthony Stott, and Sarah Hough for the countless hours spent researching, analysing and drafting sections of the report. We would also like to Khalidah McLarty for leading the social media sections of the study, transcribing the focus groups and interviews data and for managing the online experiment. We are especially grateful to Pat Hart and Victoria Tiley from e-com media for facilitating and management the focus groups and interviews sessions that provided some rich and powerful data. And finally, a big thank you goes out to Sherrie Eugene Hart for her invaluable insight and support during the research.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of the West of England (UWE Bristol) has one of the most ethnically diverse student populations in the south west region of England. The institution actively promotes equality and diversity through inclusive practice by creating a supportive environment for all staff and students. Whilst the organisation's BME student population meets the local demographics its BME staff statistics is well below the local and national population average. UWE Bristol currently employs nearly 10% of staff from a BME background. However, the organisation aspires to raising this proportion to 16% to better reflect the local demographics.

The research project

Phoenix Social Enterprise was commissioned by UWE Bristol to assist in identifying the most positive and successful approaches that will encourage BME candidates to consider UWE as a potential employer and to discover existing and potential barriers BME individuals may face in the recruitment process. The research began main data collection in June 2018 and was completed in January 2019.

Research Methods

Desk research activity: a brief review of UWE's employment literature, taking as a starting point face to face and telephone interviews were the organisation's HR and equality personnel to gather information from those responsible for recruitment, selection, training and employment support. Relevant recruitment-related documentation was analysed as well. Information was also gathered from seventy-two BME respondents using interviews, a questionnaire and focus groups. Seventy-two respondents participated in the research. 54% were aged 40+, 15% were in their thirties and 18% were 25 years and under. The majority were female, 94% had some form of qualification and the vast majority lived within thirty minutes' drive of UWE main campus and other city sites. Respondents were recruited via Phoenix Social Enterprise membership networks of networks, partner's organisation, via the telephone and by word of mouth.

Key Themes

Focus groups respondents and those interviewed for the study represented a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, as well as individual experiences, beliefs and values. 32% were Pakistani background, 28% Black African, 19% African Caribbean and the remaining 21% were a range of other BME backgrounds to include Black British, Chinese, British Asian and BME from other EU countries such as Swedish. The diversity of BME respondents was further reflected in the stories and observations shared with researchers. Whilst BME respondents had varied experiences a number of common themes emerged from the interviews and focus groups. These will be explained under the main research questions above set out above.

SUMMARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recruitment selection and retention

The recruitment of new staff and the promotion of existing staff is the main ways UWE Bristol ensures it remains a high performing, efficient and effective higher education institution. UWE Bristol is keen to attract and appoint talented, high calibre BME staff who shares its values. This literature review found that legislation was the primary driving force behind race equality and diversity management in UWE Bristol.

Recommendation 1

- a) *UWE to consider extending its current diversity training courses to enhance manager's diversity training to include raising awareness amongst line managers of how bias, discrimination and stereotyping can affect recruitment and selection decisions.*
- b) *Train UWE's current BME workforce as interview panellists, including BME research staff on temporary contracts, to participate in interviews.*

Mentoring

Mentoring was a recurring theme. Schemes are increasingly being used as a method of engaging, supporting and developing underrepresented individuals' career progression to higher levels of responsibility within an organisation. A staff team of mentors could provide support to new BME staff when they enter the organisation. For example, UWE has used mentoring and positive role models with its BME students through its Equity Scheme. This principle can be applied to increase BME support to underrepresented groups in recruitment and selection.

Recommendation 2

- a) *Establish a team of BME and other mentors to support new staff*
- b) *Explore how its Equity Programme and other staff mentoring schemes such as the one used by Sheffield Hallam University to increase awareness of diversity issues and awareness of existing diversity talent to increase staff intake.*

Social and digital

We use the terms "social" and "digital" to refer to the use of both social media and digital marketing more generally and to include the role of effective and intuitive websites used in recruitment and selection communication internally and externally. For example 72% of BME respondents said the UWE's social and digital platforms are overwhelmingly linked to student experience. We acknowledge the challenges UWE may have in striking a balance in student and staff information on its main website. Staying intuitive and uncluttered maybe one reason why focus on the main website is almost exclusively dedicated to the UWE's main business of promoting students. However, the majority of BME respondents were unaware of UWE's business focus outside its main student experience/recruitment.

Recommendation 3

- a) *UWE to consider placing a toolbar on its main website with links to its Job websites; the organisation should also consider writing a statement for the main website that says "...we are also a main employer of people in the region offering positions in academic and none academic jobs. To view current job opportunities click here."*
- b) *Advertise job vacancies on other websites that BME use to search for jobs such as Indeed, Reed, Totaljobs etc.*

Recommendation 4

Diversity jobs website: To increase the amount of BME applicants using the diversity website (Vercida), UWE to consider improving the visibility of its advertising to reflect more diverse BME groups on that site. The more people see themselves reflected, the more likely it is that BME individuals will apply [through this website]."

Twitter

Overall the usage of UWE twitter was low. Although twitter has some excellent BME images that the other social media platforms can learn from it was not a favourite social media of choice for BME recruitment according to over 60% of respondents. Both the African and Pakistani participants (mainly women) said they would not use it but 22% (mainly African Caribbean and Black British backgrounds) said they would only use it “if they were students.”

Recommendation 5

- a) *UWE to consider having the official UWE twitter retweet some of the job postings that are posted to the job twitter so more people see it.*
- b) *Consider using twitter for finding internal BME applicants from the student population, particularly BME Business, law and IT students*

LinkedIn

None of the respondents under twenty-five years use LinkedIn. Older respondents infrequently use this medium however not for job search. They also found the platform difficult to use in terms of layout, structure and the language used.

Recommendation 6

Use “short description” and “sub headings” to break up texts so people can find the information they are looking for more easily.

Facebook

UWE’s Facebook has very low numbers of followers. It has good BME representative images that can be used as good practice to draw BME individuals to the site.

Recommendation 7

- a) *Use images as a regular part of your content strategy.*
- b) *The most common reason people unlike a brand page are because their posts are uninteresting. Use exciting and unique stories to pull people in.*
- c) *Use Facebook’s Page Plugin (formerly Like Box) on your website or blog.*
- d) *Engage with other pages in your niche.*
- e) *Promote your page on your other social media accounts.*
- f) *Positive Messages: Use the look and feel of UWE Facebook to capture the diversity of imagery as a guide for other areas of the websites that could benefit from diverse images.*

Glassdoor

BME respondents were reluctant to use Glassdoor as it requires them to have an account to access all information. They considered this as gatekeeping.

Recommendation 8

Consider making Glassdoor an open accessible platform.

INCREASING BME PARTICIPATION

The study points to a need to increase BME participation through closer involvement in local BME communities. This could be achieved through designated UWE outreach staff going into local BME communities to talk about the work of the university and provide information on UWE’s employment opportunities.

Recommendation 9

UWE to consider increasing BME participation through strengthening links with BME communities, groups and forums by utilising its organisational and strategic links to widening participation departments, HR staff recruitment, and equality and diversity teams.

Community outreach

UWE's reputation as an employer of thousands of people across different non-academic roles is unknown amongst the groups this research targeted.

Recommendation 10

Strengthen outreach operations to reach into BME community. This could be achieved through designated UWE outreach staff going into local community groups to talk about the work of the university and provide information on UWE's employment opportunities. Local trustees and governors could also visit community groups and staff could on occasion provide talks on making applications and writing CVs which are delivered in the community centres. Information about the UWE and courses should be displayed in these centres which gives the local community and residents a feel for the type of learners who attend the university and the range of programmes they deliver as well as the types of jobs on offer at the university and how to assess them.

INTRODUCTION

There is growing recognition that an ethnically diverse higher education workforce positively affects the ability of higher education institutions (HEIs) to deliver their core functions fully to an increasingly diverse student population. The National Union of Students report 'Race Matters'(2011), shows that BME students want a more representative workforce, diverse teaching practices and more BME role models. UWE, Bristol has demonstrated a strong desire to ensure its services meets the diversity needs of the city's multi ethnic populations.

The characteristics of universities in general have strong traditions of professional autonomy and freedom in decision-making at departmental levels, which make institutional policies and strategies complicated to implement successfully (Clark 1983; Becher and Kogan 1992). Most institutions have a rigid employment division between different categories of staff – academic, administrative and manual – this is a factor with implications for equality and diversity.

Research studies carried out on equality and diversity in the workplace suggests that equality documents alone cannot remove racism from institutions. Other academics such as Ahmed (2006) argues that 'speech acts', such as those that commit higher education institutions (HEIs) to equality or diversity, do not do what they say – 'saying it' does not bring about actions that 'do things'. Ahmed further suggests that not only can such speech acts fail to deliver what they promise; they potentially can block rather than enable action.

The claim to be committed to anti-racism 'can function as a perverse performance of racism' (Ahmed 2007: 601) as institutions may fail to recognise the existence of racism. Furthermore, in HEIs where student diversity has a strong marketing appeal, there is a sense that diversity and equality has been achieved. However, as this commissioned work recognise and Ahmed (2006) notes, there is a huge difference between being diverse and 'doing diversity', especially in relation to staff population.

The research project

Phoenix Social Enterprise was commissioned by UWE Bristol to assist in identifying the most positive and successful approaches that will encourage BME candidates to consider UWE as a potential employer and to discover existing and potential barriers BME individuals may face during the recruitment process. The research began main data collection in June 2018 and was completed in January 2019.

The starting point of this study was to carry out an audit into UWE recruitment practices with BME groups in mind and to recommend changes and/or improvement in employment, training and other practices where appropriate.

Key Themes

Focus groups respondents and those interviewed for the study represented a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, as well as individual experiences, beliefs and values. The diversity of BME respondents was further reflected in the stories and observations shared with researchers. Whilst BME respondents had varied experiences a number of common themes emerged from the interviews and focus groups. These will be explained under the main research questions set out below.

THE RESEARCH BRIEF

1. Desk research/audit with BME applicants in mind. Review:
 - UWE's online presence/recruitment website presence.
 - A variety of job descriptions and person specifications.
 - UWE online and print media job adverts, and supporting information.
 - Data analysis provided by UWE regarding recruitment, retention and progression.
 - Review the content of recruitment-related training provided to UWE staff to ensure that the issues and challenges that BME applicants may face during the selection process are understood and reduced.

2. Focus groups:
 - Design a range of focus groups with local BME people (not UWE employees) of a range of ages and backgrounds to explore external perceptions of UWE as a potential employer. Review and agree the design with identified UWE RETF members before implementing.
 - Facilitate and deliver these workshops by the end of August 2018, inviting a range of participants to cover demographic groups (to be agreed with UWE).

3. Report with recommendations:
 - Articulate findings from desk research in a written report.
 - Analyse and interpret focus group results, taking into consideration the wider UWE evidence that has been evaluated and draw conclusions from the focus groups
 - Identify and describe barriers that potential BME applicants might face and recommend solutions (such as the wording in advertisements and job descriptions).
 - Incorporate external research or other sources of potential good practice solutions to the various recruitment issues identified (with a focus on promoting both equality and representation).
 - Present initial findings to selected RETF team members by no later than mid-September 2018.
 - Present final summary of findings and recommendations to RETF meeting on October 3rd, 2018.

The following research questions guided the development and conduct of this study:

1. What are your perceptions of what it might be like to work in Higher Education?
2. What are your perceptions of UWE as a potential employer?
3. What information would you need to know in advance of applying and what methods of engagement do you feel would be useful?
4. How does UWE compare in relation to other employers?
5. What barriers or challenges might be preventing you from applying to UWE?
6. What is working and what is UWE not doing so well?
7. How could UWE do better?

METHODS

The methodological framework for this study consisted of a combination of primary and secondary research. Secondary research examined UWE's equality, HR employment and recruitment policies. We reviewed job advertisements in newspapers, on the social media platforms, staff surveys and equality training documents and the organisation's recruitment, retention and selection strategies. Detailed review was carried out on UWE's job websites. Forty-two (42) job descriptions and personal specification (across all grades) were reviewed included telephone interviews with four heads of departments on the process they use when advertising jobs in their department.

Primary research, on the other hand, adopted a combination of both quantitative (based on a questionnaire) and qualitative (semi-structured interviews) and focus group methodologies. Primary data were collected from BME respondents via five focus groups and one-to-one interviews. In total seventy-two (72) BME respondents participated in the study.

Respondents were recruited through Phoenix Social Enterprise membership database, partner organisations, word of mouth and through direct involvement in radio programmes that target specific BME groups. During focus groups participants were also asked if they knew how to apply for jobs within UWE. From the focus groups sixteen (16) respondents were selected to make an online application to UWE via its job websites. Respondents were then asked about their experience of the application process.

These sixteen BME participants looked in detail at UWE's social media platforms, the main job site and the diversity jobs website, Vercida. Respondents were further tasked to comment and report back on the usability of the UWE's social media platforms and job websites. Those who access the job website and made an application did so within their occupation area across all the available grades (C-J) according to their competence and skills level. One-to-one Interviews and focus groups were recorded, transcribed and analysed.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Total participants: **72**

Age

16-24	9	12%
25-29	9	13%
30-34	12	17%
35-39	3	4%
40+	39	54%

Gender

Female	52	76%
Male	18	20%
Did not to say	2	4%

Ethnic background

AfricanCaribbean	14	19%
Black African	20	28%
Pakistani	23	32%
Black Other	15	21%

Education background

Higher Education (degree)	26	36%
Further Education	12	17%
GCSE's	14	19%
NVQ Levels 1-2	7	10%
Apprenticeship	9	12%
No Qualifaction	4	6%

Post code area

Bristol BS2 – BS5	31	43%
Bristol BS6 – BS9	16	22%
Bristol BS10 – BS16	21	29%
Bristol BS 32 – BS34	4	6%

MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recruitment and selection

The recruitment of new staff and the promotion of existing staff is how UWE Bristol ensures it remains a high performing, efficient and effective higher education organisation. Recruitment and promotion decisions, if made properly, can have a significant impact upon organisational capability and capacity.

Within UWE, employment policy and procedure cover all activities that form part of the recruitment and selection processes. It is applicable to all applicants seeking employment or promotion. In order for the policy and procedure to be effective it is essential that any employee who is involved in any aspect of the recruitment and/or selection of staff is aware of this document and that all recruitment carried out will be in accordance with this policy.

UWE Bristol is keen to attract and appoint talented, high calibre people from diverse backgrounds who share its values. The organisation's policy approach to recruitment and selection reflects this. To achieve this it is essential that effective means of recruiting, selecting and retaining employees with the right skills and attitude is employed to further its equality and other aims. One of its diversity aims is to increase BME staff within the workplace. The review highlights that embracing equality and diversity is a fundamental part of the way UWE recruits and select people for employment. The organisation comply with employment and equality legislation, operates a number of supportive race and other equality forums and provide training for managers involved in

recruitment processes. However UWE struggles to attract BME candidates to apply for positions within the organisation that would better reflect the demographics of population across the city.

This literature review found that legislation was the primary driving force behind race equality and diversity management in UWE Bristol. The organisation diversity training for managers covers all protected characteristics under the legislation. But whilst equality legislation plays an important role in compliance recruitment procedures that actively promote and ensure equality and diversity must look beyond basic compliance with equality legislation, guidance and provision of equality statements in advertisements to more holistic approaches.

Holistic approaches tended to look at minimising procedural, structural and cultural barriers to diversity and emphasise the importance of raising awareness and commitment amongst selectors and interviewers to ensure they attract talent from a wide range of backgrounds. Below is a working example of how this can be achieved.

Good practice example

A good practice example which highlights the benefits of raising awareness by utilising current BME staff to make measurable impact in recruitment of BME staff can be found operating at University of the Arts London (UAL) initiative '**Selecting the Best**' diverse interview panels. The training enables different perspectives to influence the selection process and help ensure applicants with a dynamic view of the university's culture, priorities and objectives.

The initiative is aimed at raising awareness amongst line managers of how bias, discrimination and stereotyping can affect recruitment and selection decisions through a 'Selecting the Best' training workshop. Supported by a positive-action training scheme to establish a volunteer 'pool' of BME interview panellists are trained in recruitment and selection. BME panellists in turn also contribute to the 'Select the Best' workshop. BME panellists are surveyed for further understanding of their experience and the effect of increased representation of BME staff on interview panels on BME staff recruitment is monitored.

Outcomes: This initiative drastically increased UAL minority ethnic staff. All interviews panels now have a BME staff member as a panellist, with over 50 BME staff trained as interview panellists across all departments. All line managers must take part in a Selecting the Best Workshop before they are permitted to recruit.

Recommendation One

- c) *Using the example above UWE to consider extending its current diversity training courses to enhance manager's diversity training to include raising awareness amongst line managers of how bias, discrimination and stereotyping can affect recruitment and selection decisions.*
- d) *Train UWE's current BME workforce as interview panellists, including BME research staff on temporary contracts, to participate in interviews.*

MENTORING

Another theme emerging from the study is the effectiveness of mentoring. Mentoring schemes are increasingly being used as a method of engaging, supporting and developing underrepresented individuals' career progression to higher levels of responsibility within the organisation. For example, UWE has used mentoring with to increase the performance of its students. This was praised by respondents as one of the best schemes to enhance BME student outcomes. Sheffield Hallam

University has seen qualitative and quantitative success from its mentoring scheme for female academics considering applying for professorships.

Schemes which involved mentoring from internal staff also reported real benefits to the mentors, in terms of increased awareness of diversity issues and awareness of existing diverse talent within their institutions. Internal mentoring also has general benefits of networking, relationship-building, as well as making the best use of ‘human’ resources – particularly advantageous for the long-term commitment of a mentoring scheme.

Recommendation Two

UWE to explore how the Equity Programme and other mentoring schemes such as the one used by Sheffield Hallam University to increase awareness of diversity issues and awareness of existing diversity talent

SOCIAL AND DIGITAL

UWE’s branding and marketing has been mainly carried out through its online space, using a variety of platforms for external engagement and communication. We use the terms “social” and “digital” to refer to the use of both social media and digital marketing more generally and to include the role of effective and intuitive websites. UWE uses social media and digital platforms like Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Vercida (a diversity job website) to market jobs. Whilst it’s main website design and interface is proving a crucial component in how the university presents itself to prospective students there is very little on the main website’s front page that invites applicants from outside the university to apply for vacancies

Of the sixteen BME participants that looked in-depth at UWE online presence 43% found the homepage feature elements such as “well-placed navigation bars” and engaging visuals (e.g., slideshows, multimedia content, etc.) and “calls to action” (e.g., “Apply Now” buttons) feature prominently throughout the website experience. 72% said the page is overwhelmingly linked to student experience and although it has very diverse images they were exclusively of students and not staff and could benefit from a search button that leads external job searchers to the job website.” This may also be a connecting reason why the majority of BME respondents could not connect UWE as an employer of choice. However respondents acknowledged the challenge in staying intuitive and uncluttered may be the reason why focus is dedicated to the main business of the university; its student experience.

Recommendation Three

UWE to consider placing a toolbar on its main website with links to its Job websites

The diversity job website

The main UWE job website contains all UWE’s advertised jobs which are also on the organisation’s diversity job website Vercida. Sixteen of the seventy-two respondents were selected and tasked to make an application for one of the positions on the job website and then share their experience of what it was like. The majority of BME participants 51% found the actual application website “... quite daunting to someone who may just be browsing rather than looking for something specifically”. The majority said it was “unclear” whether a position was “only available to internal applicant or external applicants” until they enter the application process itself. This they said “...can be irritating for someone who doesn’t have much time to thoroughly go through all of the jobs on the website”. They also observed and one echoed: “The website doesn’t have many filtering options so it made searching more difficult for people who aren’t looking for a specific position.” Participants engaging

in this exercise were also asked to compare UWE's job website to other websites they currently use when looking for jobs. One BME participant summed up her findings:

UWE's job vacancy website is a lot less customisable where its search function is concerned. The other universities website I looked at allows you to separate jobs for external applicants and internal applicants. As well as this they allow you to filter the search by salary, work pattern, contract type as well as department and job type. UWE should implement something like this because it helps narrow down the search a lot and makes the website a lot more user friendly.

Nearly 30% of BME respondents said if UWE were to advertise on more popular job searching websites such as those listed below, which they all use, they would consider applying.

Indeed: <https://www.indeed.co.uk/> Reed: <https://www.reed.co.uk/> TotalJobs: <https://www.totaljobs.com/> or Jobsite: <https://www.jobsite.co.uk/> they would consider applying

69% of BME respondents said the diversity jobs website, Vercida was not relevant to them because the majority of the people 'speaking in the videos were White which may give a negative impression to BME applicants'. They added that they did not find "Vercida ...a really popular website for job searching even though the website seems great and very professional". In addition they recommend UWE should "...ask staff and students to share opportunities on Facebook, improve filtering options on the job application website. Improve diversity in the images on the website.

Recommendation Four

To increase the amount of BME applicants using Vercida, UWE should consider improving the visibility of its advertising to reflect more diverse BME groups. The more people see themselves reflected, the more likely it is that BME individuals will apply".

Twitter

22% of BME respondents said they would only follow the UWE job twitter if they were students." Twitter had little interaction between the page and its followers. There are "not many likes or retweets. There are followers, meaning not many people are taking note of what's being posted on the pages."

Recommendation Five

- c) *UWE to consider having the official UWE twitter retweet some of the things that are posted to the job twitter so more people see it.*
- d) *Twitter would be a great place for finding internal applicants but not necessarily external applicants.*

LinkedIn

The majority of BME respondents said LinkedIn was probably better for getting people into full time positions which require above entry level qualifications but not necessarily entry level jobs. Younger respondents under twenty-five years said they did not use linked in during the exercise and would not consider using it. Younger participants suggested that: "If UWE are looking for younger applicants, they aren't going to find many on LinkedIn". The majority of respondents also found the description on LinkedIn "too long, very difficult to find what you are looking for and very academic".

Recommendation Six

Consider using “short description” and “sub headings” to break up texts so people can find the information they are looking for more easily.

Facebook

Not much engagement was found on the UWE’s Facebook site. The general feedback from participants was that they do not use Facebook for job searching. Closer observation found UWE Facebook had a similar issue to that of its twitter in that it was not used by respondents as a search engine for jobs. However some good practice can be gained from UWE’s twitter and Facebook in terms of the amount of good quality BME images.

Recommendation Seven

Positive Messages: Use the look and feel of UWE Facebook to capture the diversity of imagery as a guide for other areas of the websites that could benefit from diverse images.

Glassdoor

BME respondents were reluctant to use Glassdoor as it requires them to have an account to access all information. One participant puts it like this: “I am not a fan of websites that have any form of gatekeeping” others said “it may dissuade people from applying”.

Recommendation Eight

If possible, consider making Glassdoor an open accessible platform.

BME perceptions of working in higher education

Universities have a high status; being part of an organisation which has an impact on so many lives can be very rewarding. There is a real sense of community in being part of an organisation whose main aim is to make a difference to people’s lives and, indeed, the world. With some universities employing thousands of people, the opportunities for social and professional networks are impressive. Many facilities open to students are also open to staff including leisure facilities, crèches and some students’ union societies. The majority of BME respondent’s perceptions of working in higher education were varied.

Mixed reaction from focus group and follow-up interviews recorded recurrent themes of ‘isolated,’ ‘discrimination,’ feeling uncomfortable,’ lack of BME cultural understanding’ whilst others said it would be ‘very busy’ highly competitive’ and ‘inflexible’ but stable.

“For me personally yeah, I finished my PGCE so... And I did my placement in a college. For me...I just felt really uncomfortable because I was the only black and minority ethnic group. And I felt like I didn’t kinda belong there in a sense so me being there ...I just don’t feel comfortable.”

(Female, African, Focus Group)

Another

“I was thinking that actually, apart from it being very busy, that there would be a lot of prejudice and unfair judgment we go and challenged quite a lot. And that would be one of the reasons why I personally would be hesitant ...well I am very careful about where I apply to work for those reasons, because you don’t have to keep challenging every second of every minute of every day. Especially as you go to do your job, you go to work. And um...issues arise, especially when issues arise that occur for everybody but they are dealt with positively for... let’s say this person, but the exact same situation is dealt with very differently for me.”

(Female, African Caribbean, Focus Group)

I think it will be quite difficult because I remember coming back from India, I've done teacher's training and um, I was applying for jobs in school and they said you have to redo certain tests and things like that, so I know education is different levels. So I think it will be quite difficult, that's my perception.

(Male, Indian, Interview)

I don't know whether they have enough of an understanding of ethnic minorities and uh how they'll deal with it because yes we all want employment, we're all living here, uh but our needs and um...I think our needs are quite different, so I don't know whether they'll have enough people who will understand the cultural side of it.

Universities have rigorous employment and human resources (HR) policies and recognise a range of trade unions. Equal opportunities, diversity, staff development are all areas where there has been considerable development in recent years. And although the world of pensions is in a state of flux, universities still offer some particularly well-regarded schemes.

Many universities can be more like small towns. This is particularly true of the larger campus institutions like UWE. But even with some smaller universities, there are a variety of jobs to be had. They all recruit to areas you'd find in any medium-sized or large organisation such as finance, human resources, marketing, IT, and a wide range of roles under the general heading of administration. However, the majority of BME respondents, a large percentage with degrees (36%) were unaware of these facts.

UWE as a potential employer

- UWE has a huge range of jobs; a whole variety of employment under one roof.
- A high number of BME students (22%) well above the National average. This should be attractive to potential BME employees.
- Excellent job opportunities, prospects and benefits.
- It is the largest HEI in the Southwest with an **impressive and growing** reputation.
- It is served well by local public transport; the campuses are all within easy reach of the City centre.

However, when respondents were asked their views of UWE as a potential employer the majority did not have much knowledge of UWE's potential. There was a lack of knowledge about UWE as such and what participants could expect from working for the organisation. 23% said they were concerned about issues of potential discrimination that included "lower pay for BME workers". An example given was: "If you were from a black or ethnic minority, you wouldn't necessarily be on the same pay structure as someone of the same grade as your peers and that was highlighted recently with the gender pay gap." Respondents' level of awareness about UWE and employment opportunities and its equality drive were low.

After facilitators went through a list of job opportunities and benefits open to UWE's employees 58% said they would consider working for the organisation but offered up very little comments. "I wouldn't mind working for them personally; I don't have any thoughts on them" said one participant. Others recognised the diversity within the student population but said they were

concerned about staff diversity as they were unaware of anyone from BME communities working there. “Visually it’s diverse [reference to the student population] but within the system I don’t actually think it is.” And another said, “A lot of people studying are diverse like us but the teachers, the lecturers, we’re not seeing that.” These comments points to the lack of knowledge about the wider employment opportunities available outside of teaching with stereotypes of exotic buildings full of bright academics and students dedicated to cutting-edge research and fascinating inventions.

INCREASING BME PARTICIPATION

The study points to a need to increase BME participation through closer involvement in local BME communities. UWE is currently involved in partnerships with industries and schools across Bristol to increase student participation from an early age. Respondents believe one way of encouraging BME participation would be through regular dialogue with minority ethnic groups in local community groups and forums.

This could be achieved through designated UWE outreach staff going into local BME communities to talk about the work of the university and provide information on UWE’s employment opportunities. Local trustees and governors from the university could also visit community groups and UWE’s staff could, on occasion, provide talks on making applications and writing CVs; delivered in community centres. Information about UWE and its courses should be displayed in these centres which give the local community and residents a feel for the type of learners attending the university and the range of programmes UWE delivers as well as the types of jobs on offer at the university and how to assess them.

Recommendation Nine

UWE to consider increasing BME participation through strengthening links with BME communities, groups and forums by utilising its organisational and strategic links to widening participation departments, HR staff recruitment, and equality and diversity teams.

How UWE compare to other employers

UWE has a large workforce, making it a major employer in the West of England. The organisation employs over 3,500 people comparable to major local employers such as Airbus, GKN or Rolls Royce. UWE Bristol has been a particularly stable source of employment over recent years, at a time when other employers locally have seen significant reductions in their overall workforce. UWE Bristol has a stable and sustained workforce and provides employment right across the skills spectrum. Roles range from manual, to academic, to the senior management team.

The lack of information of what the organisation does outside lecturing lead many respondents to have a negative perception of the organisation. The general perception was that “UWE was the same as other [employers].” Some said it would be better to ‘work for Asda. [...] say you’re working for Asda, they’re recruiting from everyone and you understand what the roles are so culturally they’re more aligned to everyone that works with them. [...] When I think of the university I think of lecturers, professors. You forget about all the other jobs.”

Respondents also believe the NHS would be better employer to work for, believing that “[NHS] have huge diversity from top to bottom and you feel comfortable. It doesn’t matter what colour you are going into hospital. You actually feel comfortable with the surroundings of the people that are actually there to look after you in a professional manner.” Only 2/12 from one focus group said they thought UWE would be better than other employer in Bristol. “The hospitals are accessible. They are seen as places where you can go get a job, they don’t mind at all. But the universities are sometimes being seen as an elitist organisation.”

Accessibility was seen by respondents as an important criteria in their employment choice.

Community outreach

Very little is known about what UWE does outside its academic brief. UWE is engaged in multiple activities around widening participation and schools outreach. They are increasingly looking at raising attainment as well as aspirations for higher education study (including younger age groups) across Bristol schools. The literature review highlighted examples that demonstrate the variety of approaches that the university currently engage in to increasing its diversity particularly with schools in Bristol. This study is particularly interested in how UWE are strengthening its organisational and strategic links between widening participation departments, BME staff recruitment and equality and diversity teams, together with the wider BME community in which it operates.

UWE's reputation as an employer of thousands of people across different non-academic roles is unknown amongst the groups this research targeted. This goes some way to explaining why numbers of African Caribbean's, Africans and Pakistani respondents do not have a good image of the university as an employer. Respondents believe one sure way of increasing BME participation is through regular dialogue with minority ethnic groups, through local community groups and forums.

Recommendation Ten

Strengthen outreach operations to reach into BME community. This could be achieved through designated UWE outreach staff going into local community groups to talk about the work of the university and provide information on UWE's employment opportunities. Local trustees and governors could also visited community groups and staff could on occasion provided talks on making applications and writing CVs which are delivered in the community centres. Information about the UWE and courses should be displayed in these centres which gives the local community and residents a feel for the type of learners who attend the university and the range of programmes they deliver as well as the types of jobs on offer at the university and how to assess them.

Information need in advance of applying and methods of engagement

- "Good pay."
- "Equal opportunities"- regarding numbers of BME in the department, support forums etc.
- Equality and diversity staff statistics that shows progression of BME staff.
- "An image of people and diverse people in the community. All ages (appropriate ages of course), but certainly people of colour, different religions, disabilities perhaps."
- "Welcoming learning parents."
- "If you have young children, whether you have to work term time or not."
- Facilities and benefits available.
- "If I'm honest, [...] there is nothing on that piece of paper that's gonna give me the confidence that y'know what, you are gonna deal with me correctly and as a human being as you would everybody else. I would want to hear this from others within".
- "It's good to have equalities policies but it's the evidence that they have a commitment to influence that in fairness."

Barriers and/or challenges that might prevent their employment

- Amongst potential BME employees from outside the university there is a constant perception of discrimination, sometimes multi sectional. Also there is a lack of confidence in public sector management.
- UWE's jobsite is too cumbersome and difficult to navigate. All applications must be online; it's the same application form for all posts. In this way it's very inflexible particularly for the lower grades.
- There are quite rigid boundaries separating academic, administrative and manual staff groups and these groups enjoy very different rights, status and rewards.
- UWE does not particularly target BME individuals, groups and communities when recruiting
- Job vacancies are promoted on Social media that are not used by many external BME candidates.
- Imaginary travel barriers- UWE is still thought of as being 'out in the sticks'. It isn't! Most places are within 20 minutes of the City Centre with easily accessible bus routes.
- For some groups particularly, Africans and Pakistani women language is a barrier which is made more complex with the language used in job descriptions and person specifications
- Lack of promotion about the university and the jobs that are available
- The application process -"I think just getting through the application process in the first place is one thing because y'know, just in this conversation it's making as a question and that question is, do they really want me to work there?"
- The application process could be more simply, "maybe not having to write as much in your personal statement or short questions as opposed to long essay that you have to write."
- Access to the application form offline.

Best Engagement methods

- Contact through community leaders.
- TV and bus Ads.
- Access to a MS word copy of the application to complete and then cut and paste into online system.
- Email – circular via email.
- Text – informing of the opportunity.
- Internet – easy to access via website.
- Flyers – in community centres and spaces.
- Application Forms in community centres.
- Bus stops.
- Social media.
- Yes, social media.
- Radio.

What UWE is doing well

- “The equity program I thought was a really powerful piece of work in Bristol [...] the caliber of speakers they had during those sessions were second to none”.
- It holds Athena Charter for gender equality in stem subjects.
- UWE is committed to diversity and says so on the website.
- Demonstrate real commitment to increasing the BME workforce.
- Ability to attract BME students.
- Good BME images on Facebook and twitter pages that can be used as good practice examples elsewhere to capture BME interests

What the university could be doing better

- Utilise BME community groups to target a potential BME workforce.
- Job fairs on site and also in locations with a high BME population.
- Promote working at UWE more internally with students- 22% are BME.
- Make their job site easier to navigate.
- Populate the pages of the UWE website with more BME images.
- Bus and poster advertising with more BME images.
- Community Radio adverts could target a big BME audience; Local radio base their programming on lifestyle but certain stations e.g. BCFM and Ujima target a high BME audience by virtue of the music they play. Radio advertising is very cost effective.
- Consider using different or more Job appropriate application forms.
- Emphasise the locality of UWE – very accessible.
- Better outcomes for BME students.
- Consider ‘Headhunting’ to increase the ethnic diversity of higher grade positions.
- Ensure equality and diversity training is made available to departmental managers and monitor this.
- Utilise the Racial Equality Charter in the same way as Athena Swan.
- Promote the advantages of working at UWE.
- Delivering diversity that goes beyond words.

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