*Faculty of Arts and Humanities*

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**REIEF Report**

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# Glossary of Abbreviations

REIEF – Race, Equity, and Inclusive Education Fund

BAME – Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic\*

A&H – Arts and Humanities

PoC – Person of Colour

GTA – Graduate Teaching Assistant

\*We have used other terms during the course of this project. In March 2021, the [Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-commission-on-race-and-ethnic-disparities/summary-of-recommendations#recommendation-24-%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20%20disaggregate-the-term-bame) recommended that the government stop using the term BAME.

# Executive Summary

Reducing awarding gaps is an objective of the Access and Participation Plan at King’s. Towards that aim, Faculties are striving to cultivate an inclusive learning environment. In light of the significant ethnicity awarding gap within the A&H faculty, 11.2% at the level of 1st class degrees and 3.4% when combining 2:1 and 1st class degrees between students from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and their white peers, the Ethnicity Awarding Gap project was initiated to explore the experiences of these students and identify structural factors contributing to this disparity.

Building on this project, our current initiative began in February 2024, targeting seminar engagement and inclusion specifically. This project involved conducting five focus groups with students from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic backgrounds to delve into their seminar experiences and gather insights on desired improvements. These focus groups concentrated on four key areas: learning environment, seminar leaders, experiences in seminars, and student interactions within classes. By exploring students' past experiences and the changes they wish to see, we aimed to uncover actionable insights to enhance seminar participation and foster a more inclusive academic setting. Through securing funding, engaging with key stakeholders, and maintaining ongoing student consultation, the findings from these discussions have been analysed and will inform a comprehensive action plan, with both long- and short-term goals aimed at transforming seminar experiences and ensuring equitable academic opportunities for all students. This initiative aims to transform the experiences and improve the graduation outcomes for students from Black, Asian, and other minoritised ethnic backgrounds.

This project identifies five key areas for improvement: 1) raising awareness of the Report & Support system, 2) enhancing seminar leader training to address racial bias, 3) diversifying the curriculum, 4) increasing engagement through Early Career Academics and/or GTAs, and 5) rebranding office hours for a more inclusive atmosphere.

# Methodology

Participants for this study, all of whom were students from Black, Asian, Arab, Latinx and other minoritised ethnic backgrounds studying in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities at King’s, were recruited through a number of digital means, including social media posting, newsletter promotion, and emailing/texting. Within each advert, the focus groups were distinctly marketed as a platform through which Black, Asian, Arab, Latinx and other minoritised ethnic background students could share their past seminar and lecture experiences in a safe and comfortable setting as a means of providing valuable input for future improvements within the faculty. As an example, one promotional text read the following:

*Do you identify as a PoC? Student researchers from Arts and Humanities are running short focus groups to better understand the experiences of students from Black, Asian, Arab, Latinx and other minoritised ethnic backgrounds at King’s.*

Similarly, the Instagram page for King’s Arts & Humanities Faculty (@kingsartshums) published a promotional post calling for participants, with the caption reading:

*Find out more and join our REIEF Project, helping towards our aim to reduce awarding gaps. We are inviting Black, Asian and minority ethnic students in the Faculty of Arts & Humanities to take part. Click the link in our bio to join. (This link led to the focus group sign-up form).*

Another Instagram page that promoted the study belonged to the King’s Minorities and Philosophy Society (@kcl\_map), an account run by one of the student co-researchers. Similar to all the aforementioned adverts, the post implored Black, Asian, Arab, Latinx and other minoritised ethnic background A&H students to sign up and share their experiences in exchange for a £10 book voucher and, of course, the opportunity to make a difference within the faculty. Various society group chats on WhatsApp and Instagram, particularly those which the student co-researchers had involvement in, were also utilised as a means of getting the word out. Finally, the February and March editions of the Arts & Humanities Student Experience Team newsletter also contained a call for participants, displaying a short informational blurb about the study along with external links for viewers to read more about the project and sign up to participate. According to the newsletter’s analytics, 30 people accessed the sign-up link in February and 35 in March, indicating that this medium greatly expanded the project’s reach.

# Focus Groups

Over a six-week period from March to April 2024, student co-researchers conducted six focus groups, collecting data from 24 participants within the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. Five focus groups were conducted via Microsoft Teams after the semester two teaching period ended. Each focus group was facilitated by two student co-researchers assigned specific roles by a Student Experience Officer before each session. The focus group questions are in the appendix. Facilitator One was responsible for leading the discussion whereas Facilitator Two recorded the discussion, monitored time, and noted recurring themes and follow-up points.

The discussions focused on four primary themes. Student co-researchers were equipped with a briefing document containing time indicators and prompts jointly compiled with the Student Experience Team, ensuring that all discussions uniformly addressed the learning environment, the role of seminar leaders, experiences in seminars, and interactions with peers. Within these themes, participants were encouraged to articulate their preferences for learning environments, including their favoured classroom spaces and discussion formats, such as small group versus larger group discussions. They shared instances where seminar leaders either succeeded or failed in creating an inclusive atmosphere, highlighting the impact of these experiences on their willingness to engage. Additionally, participants discussed experiences of racial bias or discrimination, including microaggressions, and their effects on seminar participation. Finally, the dynamics of small group discussions were examined, with participants recounting instances where they felt either heard or overlooked.

Non-verbal communication and transcripts from the focus group discussions were reviewed by student co-researchers and subsequently analysed thematically. The insights derived from these focus groups will inform strategies to enhance the seminar experiences of students of colour.

These insights and recommendations have informed an action plan, with long- and short-term goals, including:

## Results and Discussion

### Theme 1: Further Promotion of Report & Support

A significant finding from the focus groups indicates that many participants were unaware of the Report & Support system at King’s College London. This lack of awareness is crucial as it reflects a broader issue where students passively acknowledge microaggressions and other discriminatory behaviours without knowing how to address them or feeling powerless to act. For example, while P2 and P4 (P = participant) from FG1 (FG = Focus Group) are aware of Report & Support, others in the group indicated a lack of knowledge prior to the focus group and believed any such issues should be addressed by themselves. Similarly, P1 and P2 from FG3 directly shook their heads when they were asked whether they had heard of this supporting mechanism prior to their session. This sentiment was echoed by others who expressed frustration at not knowing where to turn for help. The general lack of awareness signifies a critical gap in the university's communication strategy regarding available support systems. This gap can lead to a normalisation of negative behaviours and a feeling of isolation among affected students, as they are not equipped with the necessary resources to report and address issues effectively.

To address this gap, it is essential to enhance the visibility and accessibility of the Report & Support system through multiple channels. It can be done through various methods to increase awareness, including the use of posters and QR codes placed in strategic locations around the campus. Social media promotion, integration into induction programmes, and inclusion in seminar discussions were also recommended. Posters can be put in common areas like the library and the student union, and maybe have QR codes that link directly to the Report & Support page. The role of technology should also be emphasised. The information can probably be integrated into KEATS, possibly as a tab under the programme material, which allows more students to notice it and maybe use it more. By leveraging these diverse communication channels, the university can ensure that information about the Report & Support system reaches a wider audience, thereby empowering more students to take action when they encounter issues.

An additional strategy to encourage the use of the Report & Support system involves promoting the option for both anonymous and non-anonymous reporting. The option for anonymity can significantly lower the barrier for students who might fear retaliation or judgment (Messman et al., 2024). Knowing that they can report something anonymously may make students feel significantly safer owing to the importance of privacy. Promoting this feature can reassure students that their concerns will be handled confidentially and without fear of repercussion, thereby fostering a more supportive environment where issues are more likely to be reported and addressed.

The promotion of the Report & Support system should be prioritised in the short term, with immediate steps taken to implement the suggested strategies. Initiatives such as creating posters and QR codes, enhancing social media outreach, and incorporating information into induction programmes can be rolled out within the next few months. This swift action is necessary to start bridging the awareness gap and to create a safer, more responsive campus environment.

To evaluate the effectiveness of these promotion strategies, it is essential to implement both qualitative and quantitative assessment methods. One approach is to conduct another series of focus groups at the end of the next academic year to gather feedback on students' awareness and use of the Report & Support system. Additionally, platform metrics can be analysed to assess usage levels before and after the implementation of the promotional activities. By requesting access to this data from management, the university can measure the impact of the promotion strategies on the system’s utilisation rates. This dual approach will provide a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the initiatives and highlight areas for further improvement.

In conclusion, increasing awareness and encouraging the use of the Report & Support system at King’s College London is crucial in addressing microaggressions and other discriminatory behaviours. By implementing targeted promotion strategies and evaluating their effectiveness, the university can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for all students.

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### Theme 2: Seminar Leader Training and Pedagogical Changes

When prompted about how racial bias in seminar groups impacts student engagement:

*“I think at times in seminars I feel I'm not comfortable [...] I don't know, I'm a little bit nervous, especially when there are elements of, like, white supremacy or whiteness.” (P3, FG1)*

When prompted about microaggressions in seminar groups:

*“I don't know if this is, like, a part of training at King’s for seminar leaders, but regardless, I think that it definitely should be, you know, across all faculties [...] not even just Arts & Humanities.” (FG2)*

To enhance student engagement during seminars, several adjustments to current practices are recommended. In the short- to medium- term, seminar leader training programmes should be modified to emphasise intervention strategies for addressing student alienation, microaggressions, and participation challenges due to language barriers. These issues, identified through focus groups, highlight the need for a more inclusive learning environment. One participant recommended implementing cultural sensitivity training across all King’s faculties to address microaggressions during seminars. Notably, the work of Gradellini et al. (2021) emphasises the importance of training expert teachers in nursing to improve cultural competence, which is crucial for fostering an inclusive environment in higher education. Similar principles could be adapted to the Arts and Humanities. Sensitivity training should also include techniques for managing class discussions to ensure they are not dominated by native English speakers, as participants have criticised seminar leaders who have unintentionally excluded non-native speakers and failed to engage quieter students. Notwithstanding, achieving the full implementation of these practices across the Faculty may take longer.

Additionally, instructors should also proactively solicit information from students regarding any issues that may affect their participation in seminar discussions. Teaching methods should be adapted to encourage student participation without pressuring them to speak publicly, as participants mentioned that seminar leaders must ensure that they create a space for students of colour to safely contribute to class discussions. Creative, low-pressure activities such as Kahoot can be effective in this regard. For example, one example of good practice outlined by a participant was the proactive approach of a seminar leader emailing disclaimers about potentially triggering content, allowing students to opt out without feeling excluded, thereby creating an open learning environment. To support students who feel uncomfortable with particularly sensitive class discussions/themes, it was suggested that seminar leaders could offer one-on-one meetings, although this may pose scheduling and resource challenges. This could lead to a bottleneck, where the demand for one-on-one meetings exceeds the seminar leaders’ availability, thereby potentially disadvantaging students who need timely support.

Evaluation of these changes would involve feedback from seminar leaders and students sought through surveys collected at the end of each semester during the module evaluation. This feedback could qualitatively and quantitatively assess group dynamics, student responsiveness, and overall inclusivity, ensuring continuous improvement in the learning environment.

### Theme 3: Diversifying the Curriculum to Promote Inclusion

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| *Table One: Diversifying the Curriculum to Promote Inclusion*  |
| **Subthemes**   | **Example quotes**  |
| **Incorporation of More Diverse Perspectives and Representation into Module Content** | *“And so I just feel that like more research might be needed [...], just to make sure that like they’re not just teaching us a very fine, narrow like view of the curriculum and that it is inclusive and it's considering alternative viewpoints, even if it might slightly be just a alternative or difference from what the main aspect of the course might be. So like for Christianity and the arts, there is a lot of history in regards to Ethiopian Christianity and arts.**[...]**So I just think considering alternative - just making sure that people feel represented in some aspect of the curriculum - will be super helpful and if there isn't anything.”*  |
| **Greater Attention to Sensitive Topics**  | *“There was a time, well, so I was in an international law class and, um, our seminar leader's, quite jumpy. Um. And we were talking about, you know, like feminism and intersectional feminism throughout, like, you know, sort of the history of international law. And as soon as someone would start having a fruitful discussion about race and feminism and how they inter- you know, intersect, he would just be like, "we have to move on, we have to move on", because we had to cover a bunch of topics. And I really just don't think that's productive in any topic that you're talking about in a seminar, but especially something like that- where people are sharing their own experiences and what they think of, like feminism and its intersection with race in the world.”* |

A prominent theme observed throughout several focus groups was the desire for greater inclusivity and representation within not only the content being taught to students, but also the in-class discussions surrounding said content. As such, we recommend that faculty members - module convenors, instructors, etc. re-evaluate the curriculums of their respective modules to pinpoint any weaknesses in culturally sensitive or inclusive content, and make adjustments accordingly.

Such weaknesses include things like a lack of diverse perspectives or the presence of culturally insensitive resources within a given module. To elaborate, a participant of focus group four expressed discontentment with a lack of non-Western perspectives within a course on Christianity and the Arts, claiming that significant Ethiopian contributions to Christianity were omitted in favour of a high concentration of European perspectives. The overall predominance of White authors, philosophers, historians, etc. within many Arts & Humanities modules was a point of concern for multiple other students, with one participant of focus group one claiming that it directly undermines and conflicts with the decolonisation initiatives taking place across the college. As such, a critical re-evaluation of the content being taught within these modules is needed.

Pridham et al. (2015) posit that one of the most effective ways to approach constructing a more culturally inclusive curriculum is to follow the *4Rs Model of Reflective Thinking:* a structured 4-step planning process that encourages ‘reﬂection on professional practice, and the broader issues confronting school education’. The 4 steps consist of:

* **Reporting and responding** to incidents involving discrimination or microaggressions by asking questions to those involved; noting any patterns or prominent themes observed amongst respondents. (The focus group transcriptions and summaries created for this project may be a useful resource for this step.)
* **Relating** the incidents at hand to past professional experiences; asking yourself ‘Have I seen this before? Were the conditions the same or different?’ (Bain et al., 1999).
* **Reasoning**- i.e. highlighting ‘in detail significant factors underlying the incident or issue, [and explaining and showing] why they are important to an understanding of the incident or issue.’ This step also entails ‘considering different perspectives and asking oneself “would a knowledgeable person perceive/handle this? What are the ethics involved?”’ (Carrington and Selva, 2010).
* **Reconstructing** ‘future practice or professional understanding’ to minimise or eliminate exclusion and narrow-mindedness, utilising all the previously collected input to help (Bain et al., 1999).

By implementing a structured thinking model that so heavily incorporates student voices and perspectives, staff members should be able to procure curriculum changes that enhance students’ academic experiences and encourage inclusivity.

The integration of cultural sensitivity into the classroom extends far beyond just the curriculum, however. A truly inclusive learning environment would also require full cooperation and sociocultural awareness from all instructors. Moreover, another prominent theme brought up within multiple focus groups was the lack of attention given to certain sensitive topics within lectures and seminars - many of which were of critical importance to students. One participant of focus group two discussed her dissatisfactory experience in an International Law class wherein a seminar leader blatantly rushed students’ discussion of feminism and race, despite it being in line with the content for that week. This participant stated that they and many other women in the class felt disrespected and invalidated by this instructor’s actions, as many of them had similar personal experiences pertaining to the topic that they wished to share.

This example demonstrates that adding inclusive content into any given module would not be enough to ensure that inclusivity is achieved; instead, it would need to be *actively sought* and encouraged by teaching staff along with those curating the curriculum. Broadening the scope of an in-class discussion to make room for a diverse array of perspectives is bound to elicit greater participation and increased satisfaction from students.

While curriculum changes would certainly help to achieve this, adequate staff training on inclusion and sensitivity and direct feedback from students is also crucial. The performance of instructors and the level of students’ perceived inclusion can be measured via module evaluation surveys at the end of each course. These would provide future researchers with ample data to assess the effectiveness of such initiatives.

All things considered, a diversified, inclusive approach to learning would not only align with the college’s stated values, but also with the highly diverse and multifaceted nature of its student body. For this reason, it should receive greater attention from module convenors, lecturers, and seminar leaders alike.

### Theme 4: Improving Seminar Engagement and Inclusion by Increasing Student Exposure to Early Career Academics and/or Graduate Teaching Assistants

*‘The experience I've had is that [GTA/Early Career Academic] seminar leaders will try and speak on equal footing.’ (P2, FG 3)*

Through our findings, it was prominent that participants preferred early career academics to be their seminar leaders. To enhance student experience, a recommendation is proposed which involves the implementation of a system wherein GTAs assist with the planning and delivery of lessons, whilst keeping a lecturer on standby, in case they need to step in and assist. In addition, early career academics/GTAs would serve as the main point of contact for students and can either lead seminars or assist a more senior member of the faculty in delivering the seminar for students.

It is recommended that the inclusion of early career academic seminar leads be offered as an option for module convenors throughout the Faculty of Arts & Humanities. This would allow module convenors to have flexibility and for them to see if having an early career academic or GTA supporting the running of the course would be beneficial for the material in the module.

This could be a medium-term initiative for the faculty to implement. This will primarily focus on the conceptualisation and promotion of the option to further include GTAs in module teaching. The timeline we have envisioned for this is so that there is enough time for staff within the faculty to explore how GTAs can be implemented on a wider scale for each department.

To evaluate the effectiveness of this initiative, we would survey GTAs on how effective they have found this scheme after one semester or at the end of the academic year. This survey would focus on how the GTAs have seen student engagement and participation in seminars be impacted by their presence and how the GTAs themselves feel about their role. This would ensure that GTAs would play an important role in how the overall scheme is implemented and how it can be sustained. Without the feedback of GTAs, there would be no base on which improvements could be made.

With an increase in exposure to early career academics and/or GTAs within the Faculty of Arts & Humanities it will bridge the gap in PoC students’ aversion and hesitation to engage within seminars. If the early career academic/GTA receives adequate training, then we believe that they can be successful in creating an inclusive atmosphere where students feel welcomed and comfortable to engage in the seminar.

### Theme 5: Address & Adjust Terminology Surrounding Office Hours

The importance of office hours with professors or GTAs in creating a welcoming environment for bringing up issues or further discussing course content is recognised. However, the term ‘office hours’ often carries formal and academic connotations that can deter students from seeking support during these times. This is particularly true for marginalised students, defined as those excluded or disadvantaged due to characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, or sexual orientation (Sue et al., 2007). These students identified feeling intimidated by the formal and academic nature of the term and consequently are hesitant to use this time for personal check-ins or non-academic support.

Rebranding "office hours" to alternative terms which recognise the importance of check-ins and holistic support for students would be beneficial, alongside training for seminar leaders to foster a welcoming and encouraging atmosphere during these sessions.

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| *Table Two: Address & Adjust Terminology Surrounding Office Hours - Thematic Examples*   |
| **Subthemes**   | **Example quotes**  |
| Intimidating Environment   | “Sometimes smaller groups can be a bit intimidating when it's too intimate.” (P2, FG2)  “And I did notice that in my seminars especially, but also in the module at large, I was sort of the only person that looks like me, wearing a hijab, visibly Muslim, and I’d say at least half of my seminar peers weren't people of colour… And most of the people that were contributing, at least in the first five weeks or so, were people who weren't ethnic minorities.” (P1, FG5)   |
| Importance of terminology used by seminar leaders   | “One of my seminar leaders said something about like a ghetto or something. And obviously there were many students present that were not okay with that; it was challenged in the class. However, the seminar leader just moved on. And I really don't think it was dealt with very properly, especially when it was mentioned in such a casual context.” (P1, FG2)   “At the same time, I feel like whoever is facilitating the group, like the seminar leader or whoever it is, they should make the students feel comfortable enough to to ease that pressure off, slightly.” (P2, FG2)  |

In addressing the need to rebrand traditional "office hours", our initiative proposes the introduction of new terminology such as "Informal Check-In Hours" or "Student Support Sessions" (as suggested by our student researchers). These terms aim to convey a more approachable and supportive setting, shifting away from the formal connotations associated with traditional office hours. Alongside this rebranding effort, the development of comprehensive training modules tailored specifically for seminar leaders would support the academics to be well equipped. These modules will focus on key areas such as creating a welcoming environment, mindful communication, and setting ground rules to manage sessions effectively.

In the initial phase, the focus will be on conducting comprehensive brainstorming sessions aimed at identifying and selecting the most appropriate new terminology. Concurrently, training will be developed with content specifically designed for seminar leaders. This preparatory phase is crucial as it establishes the foundational groundwork for the subsequent implementation stage.

In the medium- to long-term, the newly developed terminology will be introduced across various departments. Alongside this rollout, targeted training sessions for seminar leaders will be conducted. These sessions are designed to ensure that seminar leaders are thoroughly equipped with the requisite skills and knowledge to effectively implement and propagate the proposed changes within their respective domains.

To evaluate the effectiveness of these changes, this initiative will employ a multifaceted approach. Surveys and interviews will be conducted with both students and teachers to gather feedback on their experiences with the new terminology and training. Specifically, it will focus on assessing student comfort levels and willingness to attend these sessions, as well as gathering observations from teachers regarding changes in student engagement and feedback on the new approach. It will also track specific metrics such as the number of students from Black, Asian and other minoritised backgrounds attending these sessions before and after the rebranding to provide quantitative data on the initiative's impact. By gathering comprehensive data and feedback, the impact of the new terminology initiative will be identified and any necessary refinements to further enhance the inclusivity and supportiveness of our academic environment can be made.

This initiative aims to create a more inclusive and supportive academic environment by addressing and adjusting the terminology surrounding "office hours" and enhancing the training for seminar leaders. By doing so, it will bridge the gap between students and faculty, encouraging more students to seek the help they need, both academically and personally.

##  Conclusion

This study highlighted five critical areas for improving the academic and support environment at King’s College London: (1) awareness and promotion of the Report & Support system; (2) training and pedagogical changes for seminar leaders; (3) diversifying the curriculum to promote inclusion; (4) improving seminar engagement and inclusion through increased exposure to GTAs and Early Career Academics; and (5) rebranding office hours to create a more inclusive atmosphere.

***Awareness and Promotion of the Report & Support System***

To begin with, a significant finding was the lack of awareness about the Report & Support system among students, which led to passive acknowledgment of microaggressions and discriminatory behaviours. Participants in the focus groups expressed that they were often unaware of the existence of this support mechanism, resulting in feelings of isolation and helplessness. To address this, it is crucial to enhance the visibility and accessibility of the Report & Support system through multiple channels. These include posters with QR codes placed in strategic locations, social media outreach, and integration into induction programmes and KEATS. The importance of anonymity in reporting was also emphasised to encourage more students to use the system. Future research should evaluate the effectiveness of these promotional strategies through both qualitative and quantitative methods, such as follow-up focus groups and analysis of platform metrics to measure changes in usage levels. Additionally, it would be beneficial to conduct studies targeting students with family obligations, who might face unique challenges in accessing support systems.

***Training and Pedagogical Changes for Seminar Leaders***

Moreover, the study identified the need for enhanced training programmes for seminar leaders to address issues of racial bias and improve student engagement. Focus group participants noted that microaggressions and language barriers often hindered their participation in seminars. Recommendations include implementing cultural sensitivity training across all faculties, as highlighted by participant feedback, to address microaggressions and create a more inclusive learning environment. Techniques such as managing class discussions to ensure inclusivity and engaging quieter students are crucial. Proactively soliciting student feedback and employing low pressure activities, such as Kahoot, can encourage participation without added pressure. Evaluating these changes should involve collecting feedback from seminar leaders and students through surveys at the end of each semester. This data will provide insights into the effectiveness of the training programmes on seminar dynamics and student inclusivity. Future research should focus on alternative assessment methods to better target individuals who have experienced issues and refine training programmes accordingly.

***Diversifying the Curriculum to Promote Inclusion***

Additionally, the desire for greater inclusivity and representation within the curriculum was a prominent theme across focus groups. Participants called for a re-evaluation of module content to ensure it includes diverse perspectives and culturally sensitive materials. For instance, the exclusion of significant non-Western contributions, such as Ethiopian Christianity, was noted as a concern. Implementing the 4Rs Model of Reflective Thinking (Reporting, Relating, Reasoning, and Reconstructing) can help faculty members create a more inclusive curriculum. This model encourages reflection on professional practice and addressing broader issues in education. Future research should explore the impact of these curriculum changes on student engagement and satisfaction through module evaluations and surveys. Additionally, there is a need to focus studies on students with family obligations, who might face additional challenges in engaging with the curriculum.

***Improving Seminar Engagement and Inclusion through GTAs***

Furthermore, participants expressed a preference for early-career faculty members, such as GTAs, who were perceived as more approachable and supportive. To capitalise on this, the study proposes a system where GTAs assist heavily with lesson administration, with senior faculty members available as needed. GTAs would serve as the main point of contact for students, leading or assisting in seminars. This approach should be optional for module convenors to allow flexibility based on the course material. The implementation of this initiative is envisioned as a medium-term goal, focusing initially on conceptualisation and promotion. Evaluating the effectiveness of this initiative will involve surveying GTAs and students to assess the impact on seminar engagement and participation. Future research should focus on refining this approach and measuring its long-term benefits.

***Rebranding Office Hours***

The formal connotations of the term 'office hours' were found to deter marginalised students from seeking support. Participants highlighted that the term often carries intimidating and academic overtones, which can discourage students from utilising this time for personal check-ins. Rebranding these sessions as 'Informal Check-In Hours' or 'Student Support Sessions' and training seminar leaders to foster a welcoming atmosphere were proposed solutions. Implementing this change involves brainstorming sessions to select suitable terminology and developing training content for seminar leaders. This initiative aims to create a more approachable and supportive setting for students. Evaluating the impact of this rebranding will involve surveys and interviews with students and teachers to gather feedback on their experiences. Tracking attendance metrics before and after the rebranding will provide quantitative data on its effectiveness. Future research should focus on further refining this approach and exploring its impact on student comfort and engagement.

In conclusion, these initiatives aim to foster a more inclusive and supportive environment at King’s College London. By implementing targeted strategies and conducting thorough evaluations, the university can enhance student well-being and academic engagement. Future research should continue to refine these approaches, with a focus on students with family obligations and those facing unique challenges, to ensure their long-term effectiveness.

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# Appendix

## Focus Group Questions

**Learning environment**

How do you feel most comfortable learning, including space and discussion format?

*Prompt: What kind of seating plan makes you feel most comfortable to engage in discussion?*

*Prompt: Do you enjoy working in small groups? Or larger discussions?*

**Seminar leaders**
When was a time that a seminar leader was successful in creating a seminar atmosphere where you felt comfortable to engage as a person of colour?

When was a time that a seminar leader was unsuccessful in creating a seminar atmosphere where you felt uncomfortable to engage as a person of colour?

*Prompt: When you share in class, what would be your ideal response from a lecturer?*

*Prompt: What response would make you less likely to share again?*

**Experiences in seminars**

Have you encountered any instances of racial bias or discrimination in class and how did it impact your engagement.

*Prompt: Can you describe a negative experience you've had in a seminar?*

*Prompt: Can you describe a positive experience you've had in a seminar?*

**Students in class**

Do you feel that small group discussion in class is an effective way for you to express yourself as a person of colour?

*Prompt: Can you describe an instance where you feel you haven't been listened to in your small group discussions?*

*Prompt: Can you describe an instance where your small discussion group made you feel heard?*