



BME Attainment Gap in UK Universities
(joint event with the All-Party Universities Group)

Tuesday 30th April; 5pm – 6:30pm;
Committee Room 4, Houses of Parliament, Westminster, SW1A 0AA

The APPG on Students held a joint meeting with the All-Party University Group which focused on the National Union of Students (NUS) and University UK's upcoming report on the black attainment gap. The event was a special preview in advance of the publication of the report and included guest speakers; Baroness Valerie Amos, Director of SOAS University and Amatey Doku, Vice-President (Higher Education) at the NUS. The event was attended by cross-party Parliamentarians, student representatives and Vice-Chancellors.

Baroness Valerie Amos, Director of SOAS University – gave a brief overview of the report and the evidence sessions hosted across the country with many universities. These sessions she noted were good in highlighting best practice and also, understanding what didn't work well in some instances. Baroness Amos acknowledged that the black attainment gap is not isolated to just universities and recognised the divide comes before students enter university, and stated society as a whole must do more to tackle discrimination. She spoke about how by demonstrating a commitment, universities can lead by example to create a new culture that enables honest conversations about race. More can be done she argued to create a more inclusive environment, diverse curriculum and the way to start this is by sharing best practice with one another.

Amatey Doku, Vice President (Higher Education), NUS – spoke about how important this issue was for him when he originally ran to be an elected representative of the NUS back in 2017. He spoke highly of the report and hopes it will have 'real teeth' in tackling the black attainment gap. He agreed that universities should be cutting edge and leading society around this work. Amatey noted that we shouldn't underestimate the scale of the challenge ahead. He argued that there needs to be a whole institutional approach in tackling the attainment gap from support, to curriculum, progression in academia etc. He ended by reinforcing the need to ensure BME students and staff must be engaged in this process.

In comments from the floor, there was much discussion and attendees raised a number of concerns and issues. These included:

- How we can support BME academic staff in universities, both with regard to ability to join academia and progress through it.
- Concerns surrounding student admissions and how to ensure that any changes in curriculum are real solutions and not just symbolic gestures.
- How can we make change across the whole of the education system from primary up to university level.
- As a society there must be acknowledgement in our own history of slavery and colonialism – and the steps needed to accept this and move forward in order to make real changes to curriculum.
- Need for both short and long-term changes in our institutions.

For further information, please contact the Secretariat, David Malcolm,
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