Graded observations of trainee teaching practice: Analysis of grades by ethnicity

Initial Teacher Training Programmes
Full-time study 2010-11

Penny Noel
September 2011
Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks are due to Anita Moore for regularly providing me with the data upon which this analysis is based.

Thanks are also due to Gill Waugh for her ongoing support.
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Executive summary

The University of Bolton has a clear commitment to improving the success and attainment of black and minority ethnic (BME) students. Research undertaken for the teacher training team at the University in 2008 had drawn attention to differential achievement of BME trainees in relation to their white colleagues. Although recruitment of BME trainees to University teacher training provision remains high, the teacher training team continues to interrogate its own practice in relation to BME achievement, and to work to identify strategies for improvement.

The introduction of the teaching observation grading pilot during 2010-11 has made possible a detailed analysis of an aspect of trainee progression and achievement. Specifically, it has enabled a more precise monitoring of progression and achievement in relation to ethnicity and other diversity characteristics. This report presents findings from an analysis of grading results by ethnicity for all full-time trainee teacher cohorts – generic, Skills for Life (SfL) and partnership.

Analysis of the graded observation results for all cohorts demonstrates overall trainee progression from observation 5 to observation 8 for both BME and white trainees. However differential achievement has been identified, and for each of the three cohorts, BME trainees have generally been assessed as achieving less well than white trainees. These differences are most evident in relation to generic and partnership cohorts. It should be noted that very few trainees, either BME or white, fail to achieve in terms of their assessed teaching observations (less than 2% of the total). What the analysis of grading overwhelmingly draws attention to is the extent to which BME and white trainees have achieved; it reveals very little failure to achieve at all.

Quantitative methods only were employed in the analysis and therefore any attempt to explain differential achievement is at this stage tentative. However, one of the key factors would appear to relate to skills in written English. Further research, involving qualitative methods, is recommended.

Other recommendations focus upon:

- More formalised use of SfL trainees in providing support
- Discussion around differing cultural conceptions of teaching and learning
- Focused use of recorded/filmed observations of trainee teaching practice
- Maintenance of a bank of subject specific recordings/films of trainee teaching practice
- Use of the software package SPSS in support of the future analysis of grading data
1. Background

1.1 In relation to diversity, the University of Bolton aims to:

- ‘Identify trends or barriers and recommend strategies in specific areas e.g. improving the success and attainment of black and minority ethnic (BME) students
- Achieve student outcomes that are comparable across all students irrespective of their racial/ethnic backgrounds’ (see: http://www.bolton.ac.uk/POD/DiversityMatters/Uni-Diversity.aspx)

Recruitment of BME trainees to University teacher training provision remains high, with 18% of all trainees and 27% of full-time trainees coming from a minority ethnic background (data analysis 2010-11)\(^1\). In part fulfillment of the aims noted above, the teacher training team at Bolton continues to interrogate its own practice in relation to BME achievement, and to work to identify strategies for improvement.

1.2 A small-scale examination of second attempt module results of white and BME trainees on the [then] full-time PGCE/Cert Ed at the University of Bolton for the year 2006-07 had drawn attention to differential achievement. Because a similar pattern was indicated yet again in the year 2007-08, a detailed analysis was undertaken in order to examine data for that year in terms of the achievement rates of white and BME trainees, to explore the reasons for any differences found, to identify good practice in working with diverse ITT trainee cohorts, and to recommend practical strategies which would support the development and achievement of all trainees (Noel, 2008) (see Appendix 5). The recommendations which were made were accepted. In subsequent years, and following the introduction of new teaching qualifications, the monitoring of achievement by ethnicity has continued.

1.3 The introduction of the grading pilot during 2010-11 has made possible a more robust analysis of trainee progression generally and, specifically, has enabled a more precise monitoring of progression and achievement in relation to ethnicity. Before the grading pilot, the teacher training scheme did not involve a numerical grading of the eight teaching observations, and a grade of ‘successful’ or ‘unsuccessful’ was recorded following each assessed observation. The grading of teaching observations now means that trainees receive a grade for the last four of their assessed teaching observations. Grades are based upon the criteria identified by Ofsted (2009).

2. Objectives

2.1 To analyse results from the grading of teaching observation pilot by ethnicity

2.2 To identify key issues emerging and to begin to explore the reasons for any differences found

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\(^1\) The resident population from a non-white background in the North-West for 2009 was 8.2%; for Bolton it was 13.3% (ONS, 2009). The percentage of BME staff teaching in further education in the North West of England for the year 2009-2010 was 10.6% (LLUK, 2011).
2.3 To identify additional strategies in support of the progression and achievement of all trainees

3. Ethnicity and achievement: an overview of findings from the research undertaken in 2008

3.1 A pattern of differential achievement was found at Bolton on the University-based full-time generic pathway (2007-08). Analysis of the pass rates of BME and white trainees for first module submissions revealed that white trainees were more likely to succeed first time:

- The overall pass rate on first submission for white trainees was higher than for BME trainees.
- The discrepancy in achievement between white and BME trainees was the most marked where assessment involved submission of a written assignment or a portfolio.
- There was no significant discrepancy in achievement where assessment concerned practical teaching (WBE), where first attempts for BME trainees were slightly better than for white trainees.
- The most significant gap in achievement was in relation to the first assignment.
- Discrepancy in proportionate achievement between the two groups remained through to course completion.

3.2 The evidence suggested the following:

- The standard of written English required by the course may have been a contributory factor in the relative underachievement of some BME trainees.
- It is easier to detect plagiarism in the work of any student who requires support with written English – international, BME or white; however, greater use of plagiarism within the BME group was not detected.
- Some BME trainees were found to be reluctant to seek out support for themselves.
- Some BME women lacked support from their families.
- BME trainees are not a homogenous group, including those from the same communities and sharing the same religion.

3.3 Key recommendations focused upon initial assessment, action planning, enlisting support from SfL trainees, enhanced staff diversity awareness and the ongoing monitoring and evaluation of ethnicity and achievement. Each of these areas of focus has been subject to review, with practice and procedures strengthened as necessary.

4. Methodology and actions undertaken

4.1 An analysis by ethnicity of graded teaching observation results for the University of Bolton PGDE/PDE generic full-time cohort (2010-2011), University based
4.2 An analysis by ethnicity of graded teaching observation results for the University of Bolton PGDE/PDE SfL full-time cohort (2010-2011), University based

4.3 An analysis by ethnicity of graded teaching observation results for the University of Bolton PGDE/PDE partnership full-time cohort (2010-2011)

Note: Summary sheets record trainees' four graded observation results and their final overall grades for each separate group within the three cohorts – generic, SfL and partnership. Summary sheets were made available following the June exam board when a few trainees had yet to complete, therefore data used in the analysis, although largely, is not fully comprehensive.

5. Analysis of data from the grading pilot by ethnicity

5.1 Generic full-time cohort, University based

5.1.1 Analysis of the graded observation results for the generic cohort as a whole demonstrates trainee progression from observation 5 to observation 8 for both BME and white trainees (Figure 1).

5.1.2 However, whilst the pattern of progression noted above is to a large extent in direction similar for each ethnic group i.e. each group progresses in a positive direction overall, the results do reveal significant differences. From the first to the final graded observation white trainees achieve a greater proportion of
observations graded 1. This is quite marked by observation 8 (Figure 2). For a detailed breakdown of grading by ethnicity, from observation 5 – 8 for the generic cohort, see Appendix 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation 8</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BME trainees</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White trainees</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals for generic cohort</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages rounded to nearest whole

Figure 2. Final observation grades achieved by University based generic trainees by ethnicity

5.1.3 A Grade 4 was recorded for one white trainee and for two BME trainees; however for each of them this was in relation to a sole observation. Progress was made by each of these trainees following this.

5.1.4 A total of 55% of white trainees from the generic cohort achieved a Grade 1 for at least one graded observation; this contrasts with the 29% of BME trainees who achieved at least one Grade 1.

5.2 Skills for Life full-time cohort, University based

5.2.1 Analysis of the graded observation results for the SfL cohort as a whole demonstrates trainee progression from observation 5 to observation 8 for both BME and white trainees (Figure 3).

5.2.2 The pattern of progression noted above is to a large extent in direction similar for each ethnic group i.e. each group progresses in the main in a positive
direction; however, for both BME and white trainees at observation 2 the number of trainees graded 1 has decreased slightly from observation 1, and for observation 8, the number of trainees assessed at Grade 3 has increased slightly from observation 7 (Figure 4). The results do reveal differences between ethnic groups, but not as great as in those of generic trainees. From the first to the final graded observation white trainees achieve a greater proportion of observations graded 1. For a detailed breakdown of grading by ethnicity, from observation 5 – 8 for the SfL cohort, see Appendix 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation 8</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BME trainees</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White trainees</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals for SfL cohort</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages rounded to nearest whole

Figure 4. Final observation grades achieved by University based SfL trainees by ethnicity

5.2.3 None of the SfL trainees received a Grade 4.

5.2.4 A total of 54% of white trainees from SfL achieved a Grade 1 for at least one graded observation; this compares with the 65% of BME SfL trainees who achieved at least one Grade 1. However, for a higher proportion of the BME trainees this was on a single occasion only.

5.3 Partnership full-time cohorts

5.3.1 Analysis of the graded observation results for the partnership cohort as a whole demonstrates trainee progression overall from observation 5 to observation 8 for both BME and white trainees (Figure 5).
5.3.2 The pattern of progression noted above is to a large extent *in direction* similar for each ethnic group i.e. each group progresses in the main in a positive direction; however, for BME trainees progression is less marked and at observation 8 the number assessed at Grade 3 has increased from observation 7 (Figure 6). Again, the results do reveal differences in achievement between ethnic groups and by observation 8 these differences are greater than those found in either the generic or the SfL cohort. However, although by the third and final graded observations white trainees achieve a greater proportion of observations graded 1, at the first graded observation a higher proportion of BME trainees than white are graded 1 and at graded observation 2 the proportions are the same. For a detailed breakdown of grading by ethnicity, from observation 5 – 8 for the partnership cohort, see Appendix 3. It should be noted that numbers of BME trainees in the partnership cohort were small (n=9) and statistics must be viewed accordingly.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation 8</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BME trainees</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White trainees</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals for SfL cohort</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages rounded to nearest whole

Figure 6. Final observation grades achieved by partnership trainees by ethnicity

5.3.3 None of the partnership trainees received a Grade 4.

5.3.4 A total of 47% of white trainees across the partnership achieved a Grade 1 for at least one graded observation; this compares with the 33% of BME trainees who achieved at least one Grade 1.

6. Discussion

6.1 The report into grading by ethnicity presented here is based upon a quantitative analysis only and any attempt to account for differential achievement must at this stage remain tentative and unsubstantiated. Qualitative research allowing for interviews with a representative sample of teaching observation assessors – teacher educators, mentors and other assessors – from across each cohort should enable a better understanding of the factors leading to the differences identified.

6.2 The percent of full-time trainees across all University teacher training provision who attained the qualification in the year 2010-11 was 81%; for BME trainees this was 70%, mirroring the *direction* of difference revealed through the analysis of grading data. However, overall, trainees are achieving in relation to their assessed practice. For the final four WBE observations to be judged successful, the trainee must achieve a judgement of at least satisfactory (i.e. Grade 3); it is only a grade of 4 that signals that an observation is inadequate. As there were very few observations graded 4 in the total full time cohort (less than 2%), what the analysis of grading overwhelmingly draws attention to is the *extent* to which BME and white trainees have achieved; it reveals very little failure to achieve at all. Nevertheless, it is clear that BME trainees, whilst achieving successful observations, are not seen to be doing quite as well on
teaching practice as their white colleagues. It is important that the teacher training team are able to understand the reasons for this and that they continue to work to implement strategies to improve BME teaching practice results.

6.3 It has been noted that earlier research undertaken at the University into ethnicity and achievement found no significant discrepancy in achievement where assessment concerned practical teaching (WBE), where first attempts for BME trainees were slightly better than for white trainees. However, as it has been pointed out, before 2010-11 teaching observation assessments were judged either successful or not, and this system did not allow for precision in determining the extent to which trainees were achieving.

6.4 A key factor to emerge from the earlier research into ethnicity and achievement was the significance of written English skills. In comparison with white trainees, some trainees from BME backgrounds were found to perform less well with written assessments. Teaching practice clearly also involves the use of written English – for example, with regard to planning documentation, the production of learning resource material and the recording of self-evaluation. It would be useful to ascertain whether this has been a factor in differential grading results (see also: Bowl, 2001; Ofsted, 2005; Universities Scotland, 2006; Broeke and Nicholls, 2007).

6.5 Differences in achievement are less evident within the SfL cohort. Entry requirements for the ESOL and Literacy courses include possession of at least a Level 3 qualification in English (or equivalent). Applicants who do not possess this must work through a pre-course booklet where skill at this level is checked. This provides support to the notion that English language skill may be a factor in under achievement.

6.6 As recommended, following the earlier research the course team have promoted use of SfL trainees to provide support in written English skills for trainees on the generic pathway, where appropriate. There have been notable successes whereby SfL trainees have given effective support (and they have been able count this towards their WBE hours). However, there have also been instances where a trainee has not taken up the offer of support; previous research indicated that some BME trainees may not always seek out support for themselves. A more formal ‘twinning’ would strengthen this process, where need has been identified following PTLLS assessments (in relation to either the micro-teach and/or the written component), and progress subsequently monitored and recorded in the trainee’s ILP.

6.7 Trahar (2007) in a discussion about working with international students in higher education in the UK, draws attention to the use of adult learning theories which ‘are informed by concepts that are culturally embedded, drawing on ‘truths’ from one culture’ — usually white and Western (p. 11). She highlights the ways in which teaching and learning may be conceptualised differently in other cultures. There are likely to be occasions where the teaching practice of a trainee is influenced by ‘other’ ways in which learning is conceptualised. This is an issue that merits further exploration, and is one certainly worth discussion within the teacher training classroom.
6.8 Where appropriate, trainees are encouraged to arrange for one of their assessed observations to be filmed; this provides the opportunity for assessor and trainee to watch the recording together and enables very focused feedback and discussion. This strategy would be particularly beneficial where a trainee is not making the progress that might be expected in their teaching practice. Where permission has been obtained from all relevant parties, a bank of subject specific recordings might provide a useful resource for all trainees to draw upon.

6.9 Use of the software package SPSS would be a useful tool in the ongoing analysis of grading data.

7. Recommendations

In the light of this analysis into grading and ethnicity, it is recommended that management of ITE at the University of Bolton:

7.1 Commission qualitative research allowing for interviews with a representative sample of teaching observation assessors in order to enhance understanding of the factors influencing differential achievement

7.2 Ensure that the teacher training team are able to understand the reasons for differential achievement, and work to implement strategies to improve teaching practice results for all trainees

7.3 Establish a formal ‘twinning’ arrangement whereby SfL trainees provide support with written English and/or ESOL support for trainees who require this

7.4 Ensure curriculum tutors identify trainees needing support immediately following the marking of PTLLS assessments, and that they pass on names to the appropriate SfL tutor (see 7.3)

7.5 Ensure that curriculum tutors require trainees receiving support to monitor and record progress within their ILP (see 7.3)

7.6 Encourage curriculum tutors to seek opportunities to include discussion of the ways in which teaching and learning may be conceptualised differently in other cultures

7.7 Encourage WBE assessors to seek opportunities to make use of recordings of assessed teaching observations as a vehicle to encourage discussion and to provide focused feedback upon practice

7.8 With permission from all relevant parties, work to build a bank of subject specific recordings of successful teaching practice

7.9 Consider the software package SPSS for use in the ongoing analysis of grading data
8. References


Noel, P. (2008). *Ethnicity and achievement: An analysis of module results (Generic Initial Teacher Training Programme Full-time study (University-based) 2006-08*. Bolton: University of Bolton


Traher, S. (2007) Teaching and learning: the international higher education landscape HEA/ESCalate [online] Available at: http://escalate.ac.uk/3559


Appendix 1

University of Bolton PGDE/PDE: Graded observations pilot (2010-11)

University based full-time generic cohort – grading by ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BME trainees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White trainees</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals for generic cohort</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BME trainees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White trainees</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals for generic cohort</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BME trainees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White trainees</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals for generic cohort</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BME trainees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White trainees</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals for generic cohort</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Final grade**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BME trainees</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White trainees</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Generic trainees’ overall grade**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Percentages rounded to nearest whole

Progression

Progressive teaching observation grades achieved by University based generic trainees (ethnicity – white)

Progressive teaching observation grades achieved by University based generic trainees (ethnicity – BME)
## Appendix 2

**University of Bolton PGDE/PDE: Graded observations pilot (2010-11)**

**University based full-time Skills for Life cohort (Literacy, Numeracy and ESOL) – grading by ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation</th>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Observation 5</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>BME trainees</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White trainees</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Totals for SfL cohort</strong></td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Observation 6** |         |         |         |         |
| BME trainees | 6%      | 56%     | 38%     |         |
| White trainees | 9%      | 70%     | 21%     |         |
| **Totals for SfL cohort** | 8%      | 67%     | 25%     |         |

| **Observation 7** |         |         |         |         |
| BME trainees | 29%     | 65%     | 6%      |         |
| White trainees | 41%     | 57%     | 2%      |         |
| **Totals for SfL cohort** | 38%     | 59%     | 3%      |         |

| **Observation 8** |         |         |         |         |
| BME trainees | 47%     | 35%     | 18%     |         |
| White trainees | 51%     | 43%     | 6%      |         |
| **Totals for SfL cohort** | 50%     | 41%     | 9%      |         |

**Overall grade**

| BME trainees | 24% | 41% | 35% |
| White trainees | 28% | 70% | 2%  |

**All SfL trainees’ final grade**

| 27% | 62% | 11% |

Percentages rounded to nearest whole

### Progression

Progressive teaching observation grades achieved by University based SfL trainees (ethnicity – white)

Progressive teaching observation grades achieved by University based SfL trainees (ethnicity – BME)
## University of Bolton PGDE/PDE: Graded observations pilot (2010-11)

**Partnership full-time cohorts – grading by ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BME trainees</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White trainees</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals for partnership cohort</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Observation 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BME trainees</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White trainees</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals for partnership cohort</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Observation 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BME trainees</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White trainees</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals for partnership cohort</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Observation 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BME trainees</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White trainees</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals for partnership cohort</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Observation 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade 1</th>
<th>Grade 2</th>
<th>Grade 3</th>
<th>Grade 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BME trainees</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White trainees</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Partnership trainees’ overall grade**
  - BME trainees: 36%
  - White trainees: 44%

Percentages rounded to nearest whole

### Progression

**Progressive teaching observation grades achieved by partnership full-time trainees (ethnicity – white)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation 5</th>
<th>Observation 6</th>
<th>Observation 7</th>
<th>Observation 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Progressive teaching observation grades achieved by partnership full-time trainees (ethnicity – BME)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observation 5</th>
<th>Observation 6</th>
<th>Observation 7</th>
<th>Observation 8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Addendum

Graded observations of trainee teaching practice:
Analysis of grades by ethnicity

Factors influencing differential achievement

In the light of the analysis into grading and ethnicity, it was recommended that management of ITE at the University of Bolton commission qualitative research allowing for interviews with a representative sample of teaching observation assessors in order to enhance understanding of the factors influencing differential achievement.

This addendum details the subsequent small-scale research undertaken.

Penny Noel
October 2011
1. Objectives

1.1 To identify and explore the factors which may account for differential achievement of BME and white trainees in relation to graded teaching observations

1.2 To identify and recommend additional strategies in support of the progression and achievement of all trainees

2. Methodology and actions undertaken

2.1 With four graded teaching observations and the addition of the overall grade awarded, trainees receive a total of five grades. There were seventeen BME trainees who received a majority of grades at 3 and/or (rarely) 4. They are the focus of this small-scale research.

2.2 The teaching observation assessors of the BME trainees noted above were identified for interview. Interviews, which were in the main unstructured, were completed with the assessors of fifteen of the seventeen trainees. This involved seven assessors. Assessors taught on the generic and SfL pathways at the University, and on partnership programmes. A number of interviews were conducted by telephone.

2.3 Each interviewee was told about the purpose of the research and then asked to outline the reasons for a named BME trainee, one whom they had assessed for a teaching observation, receiving grades at the lower end of the scale. Open discussion followed.

2.4 Research was conducted in line with ethical guidelines for educational research (BERA, 2011) and identifying information concerning trainees and assessors is withheld.

3. Analysis of interview data

3.1 Tutors/assessors identified a number of factors to account for the lower grades of the BME research trainees. These are outlined below (Figure 1) and discussed in section 4. (For more detail, see Appendix 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor identified</th>
<th>Percent of BME research group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching is teacher rather than learner-centred</td>
<td>60% (n=9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English is not the trainee's first language (an issue in relation to some trainees, but not all for whom this applies)</td>
<td>33% (n=5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health issues</td>
<td>27% (n=4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family commitments</td>
<td>20% (n=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing challenging behaviour</td>
<td>20% (n=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching at an inappropriate level</td>
<td>20% (n=3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plagiarism</td>
<td>13% (n=2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>47% (n=7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1 Tutor/assessor explanations for BME trainee observations graded at the lower end of the scale
4. Discussion

4.1 Teaching is teacher rather than learner-centred

Attention has already been drawn to the work of Trahar (2007) in relation to working with international students in higher education in the UK. At this point in time in the UK participative learning is emphasised and teacher training encourages a learner-centred approach. This has not always been the case – and will not necessarily remain the favoured way of teaching. As noted, teaching and learning are conceptualised differently in other cultures, and the teaching practice of a trainee is likely to be influenced by the ways in which he or she has been taught. The following quote from a teacher of English as a foreign language illustrates the potential for misunderstanding:

… at the beginning of my teaching career in Taiwan, I found it very easy to teach English, but very difficult to get the students to interact with me while I was teaching. Teaching was very easy because the students were well behaved and very attentive. The difficulties surfaced when trying to get the students to interact with me, their teacher. At the time, I did not realize that in Taiwan, it was culturally unacceptable for students to interact with their teacher … (http://www.tefl.net/)

The findings from the present research, whilst admittedly small-scale, indicate that for some BME trainees there may be a certain challenge in moving towards a learner-centred approach. An interviewee described how for one of her BME trainees, this was ‘a long journey’. The fact that people from different cultures may have been taught in very different ways – and may have learned very effectively, is something worth discussing with trainees at an early stage in the programme. Tutors might then clarify course expectations about the learner-centred approach to be adopted.

4.2 English is not the trainee’s first language

Earlier research undertaken for the University into ethnicity and achievement drew attention to the standard of written English required by the course as a contributory factor in the relative underachievement of some minority ethnic trainees (Noel, 2008). Ofsted (2005) has pointed out that:

Although English remains the most common first language for more than a third of bilingual young people nationally, it is not consistently the language spoken at home. While a significant proportion … are fluent in English and another language, many – even those who have been in the British education system for a considerable length of time – require ongoing support to develop their academic writing and comprehension skills …

Seven of the BME research group were identified as using English as a second language; for two of them this was not judged to be a problem. However, in relation to teaching practice, interviewees felt that for five of the trainees, language was causing some difficulty, for example:

- … didn’t always appear to understand nuances in language/non-verbal communication
- … some difficulty with pronunciation and written English
• ... spoken English quite accented
• ... trainee’s accent could be difficult to understand
• ... trainee needed support with written English

Trainees had been directed to support and some had taken advantage of this. An interviewee explained how one of her trainees, through working on her English with an ESOL trainee, had improved – not only in terms of her English, but also in relation to a growth in confidence. However, earlier research had revealed that some BME trainees might be reluctant to seek out support. A recommendation was made in the initial report that a formal ‘twinning’ arrangement be established following the marking of PTLLS assessments, whereby SfL trainees would provide support with written English and/or ESOL for trainees identified as needing it. This has now been implemented.

4.3 Health issues

Rather less than a third of the BME research group had experienced health issues. There is no evidence to suggest that this is a factor of specific relevance in relation to BME differential achievement. Statistics relating to instances of ill health across the total trainee population are unavailable.

4.4 Family commitments

Again, as in the earlier research, a small number of BME women were found to lack support from their families. One interviewee commented on the dual role of one of her trainees, both as a student and as the person responsible for a young family. As noted in the previous research:

There are likely to be women from every background who are unsupported in their pursuit of higher education. As tutors we are well placed to provide encouragement, and where possible, to demonstrate flexibility – for example, in our response to trainees’ childcare arrangements (Noel, 2008, p.16)

4.5 Managing challenging behaviour

Three trainees found the challenging behaviour of their students difficult to manage – and their assessors identified this as one of the reasons for their lower grades. Experience tells us that this is also likely to be an issue for some of our white trainees. Interestingly, two of the interviewees identified a possible contributory factor relating to the BME difficulty with classroom management noted. One tutor felt that it was the apparent difficulty in understanding nuances in language and non-verbal communication that had made managing challenging behaviour an issue for her trainee. Another tutor explained that because in some cultures to give eye-contact to someone in authority would be found disrespectful, certain BME trainees may misread the non-verbal signals of their students as a sign of challenge to their authority. Who on Earth are we? is a BBC series about culture. It explores differences between cultures and looks at how people from different cultures communicate. Part 5 focuses upon culture and non-verbal communication. This could be a useful resource for initiating discussion – and encouraging the sharing of experience – with all our
4.6 Teaching at an inappropriate level

Three trainees had difficulty in assessing the appropriate level at which to pitch their teaching. There is no evidence to suggest that this is a factor of specific relevance in relation to BME differential achievement.

4.7 Plagiarism

A couple of interviewees described an initial misunderstanding about how to reference on the part of two BME trainees. Both tutors felt that this could have suggested that the trainee was plagiarising. However, this was quickly addressed. It is easier to detect plagiarism in the work of someone who uses English as a second language; however there is no evidence to suggest that plagiarism is a factor of specific relevance in relation to BME differential achievement. It is important that all trainees are provided with precise advice about correct referencing from the outset, backed by examples of what would constitute plagiarism.

4.8 Other

Inevitably, interviewees identified very specific reasons for the lower grades of individual trainees. There is no evidence to suggest that any of these are factors of specific relevance in relation to BME differential achievement.

5. Recommendations

In the light of research findings it is additionally recommended that within the Education Department:

5.1 Course tutors across the partnership provide trainees with the opportunity for discussion about different academic traditions, and clarify course expectations about the learner-centred approach to be adopted

5.2 The formal ‘twinning’ arrangement following the marking of PTLLS assessments is embedded and subject to monitoring, review and evaluation

5.3 Course tutors explore differences in non-verbal communication across cultures with their trainees

5.4 From the outset, all trainees should be enabled to develop (or recall, as appropriate) an unambiguous understanding of plagiarism.

References

BBC. (2009) Who on Earth are we? Part 5 Culture and non-verbal communication [online] Available at:
http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/webcast/tae_whoonearth_archive.shtml


### Analysis of grades by ethnicity: Tutor/assessor explanations relating to individual full-time BME trainee grades (2010-11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trainee</th>
<th>Ethnic origin (as declared on the application form)</th>
<th>No. of observations graded 3 (or below) (including overall grade)</th>
<th>Explanations provided by the tutor/assessor for three or more grades of 3 and/or 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A       | Asian or Asian British - Pakistani                   | 5                                                                | • Significant health issues meant that the course wasn’t the trainee’s priority; insufficient time given to development  
• Was neither dynamic nor creative |
| B       | Other ethnic background                              | 5                                                                | • Initially, didn’t understand referencing (it could appear that the trainee was plagiarising); this was subsequently addressed  
• Only addressed most recent targets set following an observation, not those from earlier observations |
| C       | Black or Black British - African                     | 3                                                                | • Initially, didn’t understand referencing (it could appear that the trainee was plagiarising); this was subsequently addressed  
• Teaching was teacher-centred  
• Taught challenging students and classroom management was an issue; didn’t always appear to understand nuances in language/non-verbal communication  
• English was not the trainee’s first language - however, used throughout the trainee’s life |
| D       | Black or Black British - African                     | 3                                                                | • Teaching was teacher-centred; there was little interaction with no opportunity to explore concepts  
• English was probably not the trainee’s first language - however, used throughout the trainee’s life; spoken English quite accented, although fluent; written English weak |
| E       | Chinese                                              | 4                                                                | • English was not the trainee’s first language; initially there was some difficulty with pronunciation and with written English, although the trainee had support, with English from an ESOL trainee and improved; levels of confidence also improved  
• Teaching was very teacher-centred; however the trainee did make progress and tried to use different methods – to get students to explore ideas for themselves, but this was a long journey for the trainee |
| F       | Asian or Asian British - Pakistani                   | 4                                                                | • Teaching was teacher-centred  
• Although sufficient to teach, English was not the trainee’s first language  
• The trainee had a young family; there was an expectation that this was the trainee’s responsibility, with no allowances made for course commitments |
| G       | Asian or Asian British - Pakistani                   | 3                                                                | • Teaching was teacher-centred  
• Although sufficient to teach, English was not the trainee’s first language  
• Family expectations, a death in the family and the fact that the trainee was out of the country for a month |
<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appendix 4</strong></td>
<td>lead to insufficient preparation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>H</strong> Mixed – White and Black African</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>• Qualified to PhD level – the trainee struggled with teaching at an appropriate level for students • Teaching was very teacher-centred, with over-use of PowerPoint; this was noted by two WBE assessors and the trainee’s mentor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I</strong> Other mixed background</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>• Lack of motivation; questioned whether teaching was the right choice • Found classroom management more difficult than anticipated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>J</strong> Asian or Asian British - Indian</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>• Showed great promise initially, however decided to pursue a different career in a family business and subsequently merely wanted to pass • An un-graded teaching observation was described by an assessor as ‘formulaic’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>K</strong> Black or Black British - African</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>• Teaching was very teacher-centred • English was probably not the trainee’s first language, and although this was not a key issue; trainee’s accent could be difficult to understand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>L</strong> Black or Black British - African</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>• The trainee misjudged the level at which the students were working, teaching at a higher level than required • Teaching tended to be teacher-centred, with insufficient participation; this was addressed by trainee’s tutor • There were significant health issues, and family commitments meant that timing was a cause for concern;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>M</strong> Black or Black British - African</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>• English was not the trainee’s first language; there was some difficulty for students with the trainee’s speed of delivery; the trainee needed support with written English and was directed to support • There were health issues; the trainee’s tutor was impressed by the determination demonstrated by the trainee</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N</strong> Asian or Asian British - Pakistani</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>• Teacher-centred approach, though confident • Was required to use placement planning documentation, but didn’t put ‘own spin’ on this • Ongoing health issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>O</strong> Black or Black British - African</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>• Challenging students at a lower level than the trainee had expected • Key issue was the need to demonstrate more confidence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ethnicity and achievement: An analysis of module results

Generic Initial Teacher Training Programme
Full-time study (University-based) 2006-08

Penny Noel
June 2008
Acknowledgements

My thanks are due to Phil Matear and members of the Initial Teacher Training team, to Ruth Coward and the University Student Experience Officer team, to Karen Senior – Head of the Library at the University, and to David Price, all of whom gave me their time during the course of the research.

Thanks are also due to Gill Waugh for her ongoing support
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### Appendices

Appendix: University of Bolton Post-Graduate Certificate in Education/Certificate in Education: Referred module results (2nd Attempt) Full-time study 2006-07 21
Executive summary

An initial small-scale examination of the module results of White and minority ethnic trainees on the full-time PGCE/Cert Ed at the University of Bolton for the year 2006-07 revealed significant differences in achievement. The research reported here builds on that earlier work and provides a more detailed analysis for the following year (2007-08). The research also sought to identify strategies to support the achievement of diverse ITT trainees. Research methods involved a literature review, an analysis of first attempt results, focus group discussions with the teacher education and student experience officer teams and an unstructured interview with the Head of Library at the University.

Minority ethnic people from every group are more likely than White people to enter higher education and have been found to place a higher value on higher education qualifications. However, despite their greater representation, no minority ethnic group achieves as well as their White counterparts in terms of degree classifications. The likelihood of an Asian student gaining a good degree is half that of a White student, and for a Black student the likelihood is a third of that of a White student. A pattern of differential achievement has been found at Bolton on the University-based full-time generic pathway (2007-08). Analysis of the pass rates of minority ethnic and White trainees for first module submissions revealed that White trainees are far more likely to succeed first time. Findings from the analysis:

- The overall pass rate on first submission for White trainees was 79%; for minority ethnic trainees the equivalent pass rate was 69%
- The discrepancy in achievement between White and minority ethnic trainees was the most marked where assessment involved submission of a written assignment or a portfolio
- There was no significant discrepancy in achievement where assessment concerned practical teaching (WBE), where first attempts for minority ethnic trainees were slightly better than for White trainees
- The most significant gap in achievement was in relation to the first assignment
- Discrepancy in proportionate achievement between the two groups remained through to course completion

The evidence suggests:

- The standard of written English required by the course may be a contributory factor in the relative underachievement of some minority ethnic trainees.
- It is easier to detect plagiarism in the work of any student who requires support with written English – international, minority ethnic or White; however it was not possible to detect greater use of plagiarism within the minority ethnic group.
- Some minority ethnic trainees were found to be reluctant to seek out support and there may be a perception of shame in doing so. Trainees were referred for support by their tutors.
- Some minority ethnic women lacked support from their families,
- Minority ethnic trainees are not a homogenous group, including those from the same communities and sharing the same religion.
- The ‘voices’ of minority ethnic trainees themselves are missing from the research and we need to hear from them
1. Background

1.1 The University of Bolton has been commended by researchers for the Higher Education Academy (HEA) for its “description of activity to be taken in relation to students’ achievements and progress” (Willott and Stevenson, 2008, p 8). Commitment to this activity is outlined in the Race Equality Policy of the University, which draws attention to the following:

The town of Bolton and the North West of England is the home of significant minority ethnic communities. Such communities have a valuable and increasingly significant role in the social, political, cultural and economic life of the sub-region which the University serves. It is part of the widening participation mission of the University and also of our leadership role as a major local institution to celebrate the influence and successes of minority ethnic communities. It is also our duty to set an example in ensuring that there are no intentional or unintentional impediments to the aspirations of individual members of such communities to learn and work.

The University welcomes students and staff from overseas to study, teach and conduct research. It is our duty of care to such people, as well as to indigenous staff and students, that our own institutional practices are not discriminatory and demonstrate respect for everyone irrespective of obligations acquired as a result of the recent legislation (p.1)

The policy specifies an undertaking to collect and analyse relevant monitoring data about student admissions, achievements and progress. In their survey of Higher Education Institution (HEI) policies concerning ethnicity, gender and attainment, the HEA researchers found Bolton’s to be the most thorough example of good practice.

1.2 In relation to admissions, the University is achieving its widening participation mission and Bolton has one of the most socially inclusive student populations. Many students from minority ethnic communities have chosen the University as the HEI where they will study and the student population is amongst the country’s most ethnically diverse. Minority ethnic trainees on the full-time initial teacher training programme at the University are particularly well represented (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resident population from a non-white background (North-West)</th>
<th>Resident population from a non-white background - Bolton (Local Authority)</th>
<th>Minority ethnic (home) students at Bolton University (All)</th>
<th>Minority ethnic¹ students on Bolton F/T ITT generic programme (University based)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.57%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ This includes a small number of international students

Table1. Comparative minority ethnic populations
1.3 A healthy representation of minority ethnic trainees intending to teach in the Lifelong Learning sector is to be welcomed in light of the findings of the Commission for Black Staff in Further Education (2002). The Commission drew attention to the proportion of further education (FE) teaching staff from minority ethnic groups – seven percent of the total, with the majority of FE colleges employing less than five percent. This is not representative of the population in England where over nine per cent are from a non-white background. Black and minority ethnic students entering (school) teacher training have also been found to be under-represented (Carrington and Tomlin, 2000). Young people from different minority ethnic communities continue to underachieve compared with young White learners and they are more likely to remain unemployed (DfES, 2006). The report of the Commission for Black Staff in FE highlights “tackling the under-representation of Black staff in further education which is key to raising achievement for all learners” (p. 50).

1.4 In relation to achievements and progress, the Race Equality Policy of the University specifies the collection of the following data:

   Student assessment (including the results of different assessment methods) including tests, examinations, course projects, dissertations, continuous assessment and presentations (p.3)

1.5 In 2007, the Module Board for the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education/Certificate in Education (full-time study 2006-07) held at the University towards the end of the academic year, examined referred module results (2nd attempts). An examination of the names of the trainees with referred results on the generic pathway indicated that a disproportionate number were members of minority ethnic communities, although the majority subsequently went on to achieve the award. A pattern of disproportionate minority ethnic referral obtained in relation to each of the six modules that made up the (then) generic course. The smaller number of referrals overall on Skills for Life provision did not support a robust analysis; however a pattern of minority ethnic underachievement was not indicated. The analysis undertaken took place near the end of the academic year and had not been planned for, arising only in response to what appeared to be a pattern of underachievement. There were difficulties in achieving an accurate analysis. Names had to be used as an indication of ethnicity and clearly this strategy would not capture the total number of trainees from a minority ethnic background. Additionally, the module results as printed and distributed at the Module Board were unavoidably incomplete. Where possible, this was subsequently corrected. However, the analysis that was undertaken cannot be viewed as fully reliable.

1.6 Two members of the initial teacher training (ITT) team were interviewed briefly about the referrals of minority ethnic trainees from their groups, but these interviews were neither structured nor sufficiently in-depth to provide a detailed insight. Reasons for referrals given by the teachers were varied and included – illness, difficulty with written language, leaving work to the last minute and minimalism. No discernible pattern was indicated. Without
recourse to more detailed research findings, it was difficult to determine what might have been done to address the situation as identified.

1.7 Although the number of referrals involved in each of the modules was small, what was clearly indicated was a worrying general pattern meriting further investigation. (For a detailed breakdown of the 2006-07 referrals, see Appendix 1). What was required was a more in-depth analysis in subsequent years.

2. Objectives

The initial small-scale examination of the module results of White and minority ethnic trainees on the full-time PGCE/Cert Ed at the University of Bolton for the year 2006-07 had revealed differences in achievement. The overall aim of the subsequent research project was to identify strategies to support the achievement of diverse trainees. The project had the following objectives:

2.4 To analyse School data for the year 2007-08 in terms of the achievement rates of White and minority ethnic trainees on the full-time PGCE/Cert Ed at the University of Bolton

2.5 To explore the reasons for any differences found

2.6 To identify good practice in working with diverse ITT trainee cohorts

2.7 To recommend practical strategies as appropriate which support the development and achievement of all trainees

3. Ethnicity and achievement in HE

3.1 Minority ethnic people are more likely than White people to enter higher education. In an examination of ethnicity and higher education, Connor et al, (2004) found that although participation rates are not the same for each minority ethnic group, with the exception of female Bangladeshis, all minority ethnic groups have a higher participation rate than the White group. People from minority ethnic groups were found to place a higher value on the benefits to be derived from higher education qualifications, with parents and family exerting more influence than is the case for White students. However, despite their greater representation, no minority ethnic group achieves as well as their White counterparts in terms of degree classifications. Richardson (2008) reported “the odds of an Asian student being awarded a good degree were half those of a White student … whereas the odds of a Black student being awarded a good degree were a third of those of a White student” (p.10).

3.2 An analysis undertaken by Broeke and Nicholls (2007) examined a range of factors in relation to achievement – “prior attainment, subject of study, age, gender, disability, deprivation, type of HE institution attended, type of level 3 qualifications, mode of study, term time accommodation and ethnicity” (p.3). They conclude:
Appendix 4

University of Bolton: Ethnicity and achievement, 2008

The following variables were not examined in their analysis – term-time working, parental income and education, English as an Additional Language and prior institution attended.

3.3 Research commissioned by the Higher Education Academy and the Equality Exchange Unit (Jacobs et al, 2007) sought views from within HE concerning differences in achievement between minority ethnic and White groups. For many respondents the differences were seen to relate to “disadvantages students faced through financial need or other factors relating to socio-economic positioning” (p.3). Family background was also highlighted. Jacobs et al discuss the use of a “deficit model” by some of their respondents in the search for an explanation of difference, where the focus becomes “some type of cultural lack by a student or groups of students” rather than “educational or institutional processes and practices” (p.38). A broad spectrum of opinion was revealed – with one respondent accounting for differential achievement in terms of the mental capacities of Black students, through to explanations drawing attention to everyday racism.

3.4 Exploring the experience of minority ethnic students, Connor et al, (2004) sought to identify the occurrence of racism and discrimination through their student survey and follow-up interviews. They wanted to know whether minority ethnic students found themselves subject to stereotyping, whether they suffered from “particular assumptions and behaviour by staff (e.g. ‘not very bright’, ‘hardworking’, etc)” (p.69). They found the incidence of racial discrimination relatively low, with seven per cent of their sample reporting discrimination. However, they caution that numbers were too small to support generalisations, and that under-reporting may mask the real extent of racism experienced. Trahar (2007) draws attention to the inherent difficulty within HE of raising the issue of discrimination:

> Most academics would baulk at the suggestion that their attitude or behaviour might, in any way, be discriminatory. Such a suggestion is not only provocative but also it does not fit with the liberal values traditionally embraced by higher education. Unfortunately though this can mean that it is difficult to initiate reasoned debate (Back, 2004) about the complexities of the multicultural higher education environment and the opportunities for increased understanding can, therefore, remain subordinated discourses (Koehne, 2006) (p.4)

Certainly, it has been found that people are not always aware of their own implicit attitudes towards, and stereotyping of, different social groups (see Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002; Crombie, 2003).

3.5 The final report of the HEA (2008) into ethnicity, gender and degree attainment highlights findings from consecutive National Student Surveys that reveal a discrepancy concerning assessment in the perceptions of White and minority ethnic students. Whilst 74% of White students agreed that
‘assessment and marking arrangements have been fair’ only 64% of Asian students and 66% of Black students agreed with the statement. The authors suggest that “what students think is happening can have a bearing on their study behaviour” (p.16)

3.6 Interventions to address differential achievement, identified through the HEA/ECU survey (Jacobs et al, 2007) were primarily those concerned with data collection and the provision of various forms of student support. Attention was also drawn to the need to monitor the take-up of student support activities (HEA, 2008). The final report of the HEA (2008) suggests that HEIs consider two key recommendations; closing the loop “between data collection, data analysis and action planning”, and implementing “systems that can evaluate, review and design teaching, learning and assessment activities in light of data on degree attainment variations” (p.4).

4. Methodology

4.1 The research project made use of both qualitative and quantitative methods and involved the following:
   - A literature review
   - The analysis and interpretation of Education Department data
   - A focus group discussion with the Initial Teacher Training team
   - An unstructured interview with Karen Senior, Head of the Library
   - A focus group discussion with the University Experience Officer team

5. Actions undertaken

5.1 A literature review with a focus upon:
   - Minority ethnic achievement in HE
   - Teaching, learning and cultural diversity
   - Race equality and assessment issues

5.2 A detailed analysis of relevant Departmental data for the academic year, 2007 – 08. The information analysed concerned full time trainees based at the University and provided a breakdown of their achievement in terms of module referrals and final awards. Information relating to trainees seeking mitigating circumstances (names only) was also examined.

5.3 Towards the end of the academic year, a focus group discussion was held with the initial teacher training team. Fourteen members of staff were present (all White). Attention was drawn to statistics indicating differences in patterns of achievement between minority ethnic and white trainees, and staff were invited to contribute ideas. Discussion was informal and shaped largely by individual staff members.

5.4 The Head of the Library at the University had jointly published a report into the challenges faced by international students in HE (SCONUL, 2008). Her research had involved focus groups, surveys and interviews with international students. The ITT cohort includes a small number of international trainees.
Whilst the focus of her work was library services, she was interviewed in order to ascertain whether any of her findings might inform the research described in this report.

5.5 The University Student Experience Officers (SEOs) offer a generic and school specific support service, with the aim of improving the retention, achievement and satisfaction of students. The University Experience Officer team took part in a focus group discussion following an end of year evaluation of their service.

6. Analysis of full-time generic pathway module results 2007-08

6.1 The analysis that follows relates only to trainees on the University-based full-time generic pathway. In other cohorts the smaller number of both referrals and minority ethnic trainees were insufficient from which to draw reliable conclusions.

6.2 Although names may be used to provide an indication of ethnicity, this approach is unlikely to be either comprehensive, or accurate in every case. In order to ensure accuracy, curriculum tutors were asked to identify the names of minority ethnic trainees from group lists.

6.3 The pass rate for each module has been calculated as a percentage of the number of trainees who submitted assignments (1st attempts). Trainees who did not submit, or deferred submission have been omitted from the calculations. Analysis involved use of data prepared for the Final Awards Board, 2008.

6.4 As in the previous year, data analysis revealed significant differences in the achievement rates of White and minority ethnic trainees. The overall pass rate on first submission for White trainees was 79%; for minority ethnic trainees the equivalent pass rate was 69% (2007-08). The specific pass rates for each module are shown in Table 2.

6.5 Overall, the discrepancy in achievement between White and minority ethnic trainees was the most marked where assessment involved the submission of an assignment or a portfolio. There was no significant difference in achievement for elements of the course that involved the assessment of practical teaching (WBE), where the overall percentage pass rate (1st attempt) for minority ethnic trainees was slightly better than that of White trainees. The most significant gap in achievement was found in the pass rates (1st submission) for the first assignment – Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>% White trainees: 1st submission = pass</th>
<th>% Minority Ethnic trainees: 1st submission = pass</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction to Teaching and Learning Part 1 (PTLLS)</td>
<td>88% (n=71)</td>
<td>57% (n=16)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

University of Bolton: Ethnicity and achievement, 2008
Appendix 4

University of Bolton: Ethnicity and achievement, 2008

Introduction to Teaching and Learning Part 2: WBE

78% (n=62) 85% (n=23)

Teaching and Learning: Theory and Practice

62% (n=49) 50% (n=13)

Teaching and Learning: Theory and Practice: WBE

97% (n=77) 89% (n=24)

1st Option module

74% (n=60) 59% (n=16)

2nd Option module

67.5% (n=54) 65% (n=17)

Continuing Personal and Professional Development

78% (n=61) 56% (n=14)

Continuing Personal and Professional Development: WBE

93% (n=70) 88% (n=23)

Curriculum Development and Professional Contexts

76% (n=61) 54% (n=14)

Curriculum Development and Professional Contexts: WBE

93% (n=70) 96% (n=24)

Overall pass rate (1st submission)

79% (n=687) 69% (n=196)

Source of data: Final Awards Board (2007-08)

Table 2. A comparison of the achievement of white and minority ethnic trainees: 1st submission results (2007-08)

6.6 The analysis above concerns first submissions and attempts only. The majority of both White and minority ethnic trainees went on to achieve the qualification for which they had enrolled. However, although the numbers are very small, the discrepancy in proportionate achievement between the two groups remains through to course completion. Although White trainees outnumbered minority ethnic trainees by a ratio of 74% to 26%, this was not reflected in the proportion of trainees who finished the year with a result of PTLLS only, Defer, Refer, or Fail, as shown in Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PTLLS only</th>
<th>Defer</th>
<th>Refer</th>
<th>Fail</th>
<th>% without the full qualification (end of year)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White trainees</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority ethnic trainees</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source of data: Final Awards Board (2007-08)

Table 3. A comparison of the results of white and minority ethnic trainees who finish the year without the full qualification

University of Bolton: Ethnicity and achievement, 2008
7. Focus group discussion with the initial teacher training team

The focus group discussion was relatively brief, taking place at the end of a full team meeting. Key issues discussed are summarised below, with no commentary. Illustrative quotations are included in italics. Where a sole respondent holds a view this has been indicated.

7.1 Much of the discussion around differences in achievement between White and minority ethnic trainees focused upon standards of written English; clarity was evidently perceived to be a key issue. There was felt to be some lack of Standard English and problems with the use of academic language were noted. Attention was drawn to the fact that although most minority ethnic trainees are completely fluent in English, many will use another language in the home. Someone pointed out that *in the past, everyone did English*. A view was expressed that possession of a degree does not necessarily indicate that a person is ready to do a teacher training course.

7.2 Linked to the concern expressed about written English, but addressing additional issues, team members considered aspects of student support. Initial assessment followed by additional and focused support was seen as very important. A member of the Skills for Life team described how a trainee on the ESOL pathway had provided support to a minority ethnic trainee. She noted that this arrangement had worked very well. One suggestion concerned the use of Skills for Life trainees to provide additional [English] workshops. Someone expressed the view that minority ethnic students do not necessarily always accept support.

7.3 There was some discussion suggesting examination of any possible link between curriculum subject and achievement. A team member asked *Have you looked at curriculum area – science and maths?*

7.4 Other points arising:

- There is the possibility of racism
- An examination of cultural issues would be useful (tacit knowledge)
- The issue of plagiarism needs to be addressed
- Work issues may have a role to play

8. Interview with the Head of the Library at the University

8.1 The Head of the Library had been the convener of a group of staff from four HEIs who produced guidelines for library services for international students on behalf of the Access Group of the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL). The teacher-training cohort had included a few international trainees, included as minority ethnic in the analysis that forms the focus of this research. An informal and unstructured interview took place where discussion moved from the SCONUL guidelines to focus specifically upon support mechanisms in place for any student needing to make progress.
8.2 She identified three important skill sets, lack of which will have a negative impact upon student achievement. They are study skills, academic writing skills and information literacy. The SCONUL guidelines note that students who lack study skills are more likely to withdraw from their course or fail to achieve to their full potential (p. 15).

8.3 She drew attention to the value of the Bolton Interactive Study Skills Tutorial Online (BISSTO) as a source of support for trainees wishing to improve their information skills, study skills, computer skills, basic skills – including support with written English for academic purposes, and/or their research skills. She promoted the services of the Student Experience Officers and outlined the new Framework designed to address the issue of Information Literacy throughout the University.

9. Focus group discussion with the University Student Experience Officer team

9.1 All three SEOs, one of whom was the officer attached to the School of Arts, Media and Education (AME), took part in a focus group discussion. Again, key issues discussed are outlined as follows, without commentary. Illustrative quotations are included in italics. Where a point made refers specifically to education trainees this is indicated.

9.2 The team noted that minority ethnic students tended to be referred by their tutors, and did not as readily as White students seek out support for themselves. There appeared to be some shame in asking for support and certainly in discussing family issues – don’t talk about problems to outsiders. One of the SEOs had only ever seen one minority ethnic student who hadn’t been referred and this student had been hesitant about coming through the door. The AME SEO in agreeing added that minority ethnic trainees had initiated contact with her as a direct result of her giving a talk about the service – rather than in response to the information leaflet.

9.3 Tutors referred minority ethnic students primarily with concerns about their standard of written English. Although the SEOs also see White students with poor English, one of the officers felt that minority ethnic students sometimes exhibited a different attitude to their perceived need of support. The difference is subtle – language is key.

9.4 As within the ITT team, there was discussion of the fact that minority ethnic people will often use one language at University and another at home – and will have used both languages all their lives. This may have meant for some that they had been unable to read schoolbooks to their parents when young, and that now they may not have anyone at home able to check their written work and proof read it. It was suggested that this might affect older minority ethnic students in particular, who can find themselves socially isolated at University. Some minority ethnic students may not be building the same level of vocabulary.
9.5 The SEOs working within Schools which have a more balanced intake of male and female students, both described how family issues sometimes came up in discussion with female minority ethnic students. The officers felt that some of these students were not as well supported by their families as they might be. One described a young student whose mother had prevented her from visiting the local library in her hometown; sometimes parents don’t want them to finish the course. For both male and female minority ethnic students, family expectations may differ from White family expectations – the pressures subject to cultural difference.

9.6 Sometimes international students have found teaching methods very different from those they have been accustomed to; for example, an African student expecting to be told. One SEO described how a Chinese student had had trouble with the notion of reviewing an academic article. Another student experienced difficulties in understanding how to undertake a literature search, in knowing which books to choose.

9.7 Two of the SEOs have had students talk about racism – sometimes explicitly and on occasion where the issue had been alluded to. Incidents had involved student to student, and had not involved staff. One education trainee had described the system of bursaries as discriminatory.

10. Discussion

10.1 The evidence suggests that course expectations about the standard of written English may be a contributory factor in the relative underachievement of some minority ethnic trainees. In comparison with White trainees, those from minority ethnic backgrounds were found to perform less well with written assessments and yet do better in regard to the assessment of practical elements of the course – indicating that theory is being understood and implemented. Course tutors identified written English as a concern, as did the SEOs. In their report into raising the achievement of bilingual learners, Ofsted (2005) notes:

Although English remains the most common first language for more than a third of bilingual young people nationally, it is not consistently the language spoken at home. While a significant proportion of the young people in schools and colleges are fluent in English and another language, many – even those who have been in the British education system for a considerable length of time – require ongoing support to develop their academic writing and comprehension skills … British-born, second or third generation bilingual students have weak written English language skills (p. 1)

Bowl (2001) provides an example of how this may be experienced. She tells of a mature student, educated from age 11 in England, whose mother tongue is Jamaican patois, describing her experience of academic writing as follows:

I can read and understand it, but then you have to incorporate it into your own words, but in the words they want you to say it in … The words, the proper language … Maybe it’s because I have difficulty pronouncing certain words; I
Universities Scotland (2006) point out that even where bilingual students have satisfactorily completed ‘A’ levels, “the demands of academic literacy in the higher education context will be greater” (p.39). Broeke and Nicholls (2007) were unable to examine English as an Additional Language as a variable in their analysis of differences in achievement, although they did predict that “those whose mother tongue is not English may struggle more in HE” (p.13). It is evident that many of our bilingual minority ethnic trainees have excellent written English, however we might assume that for others this can create an obstacle to achievement. For those whose mother tongue is not English and who do struggle, there are likely to be other factors in addition which may compound the impact upon attainment. (For example, Broeke and Nicholls were unable to include the following variables in their analysis – type of prior institution attended, term-time working and parental income and other parental attributes). In was noteworthy that the highest proportion of referrals for both minority ethnic and White trainees were found in the Maths and Science curriculum group, where use of English is less likely to have figured prominently at degree level.

10.2 The possible role of plagiarism was raised briefly in focus group discussion; however it was not possible to quantify the extent or the pattern in terms of type of trainee. An HEA study concluded that international students were not persistent plagiarisers (Juwah et al, 2007). The authors point out “it is easier to detect plagiarism practices in the work of an international student than in the work of a native speaker of English” (p. 26). This is likely to be the case with any student who requires support with written English – international, minority ethnic or White. Plagiarism is very much a western concept and there is a certain cultural arrogance in viewing it as some “crime against the academic community of enlightened Western scholars” (Leask, 2006. p. 183) (my italics). Juwah et al (2007) note that “in most Asian cultures, quoting the teacher verbatim is regarded as high scholarly achievement and is rewarded accordingly” (p.14). However, plagiarism is not an acceptable practice. What is required is that we ensure from the outset that all our trainees develop an unambiguous working knowledge of what constitutes plagiarism. And whilst we must provide specific support for trainees if we are to discourage plagiarism, “it is equally important to pay close attention to the principles of good teaching and for teachers to become intercultural learners” (Leask, 2006, p. 197). Trahar (2007) echoes this latter point in her discussion of the importance for teachers in developing an understanding of cultural differences in teaching and learning practices:

Academic staff in British universities are still ‘predominantly white…UK born’ (De Vita & Case, 2003: 394). This in itself does not imply a lack of sensitivity to diversity, but does seem to mean that very few challenges are made to our ‘established norms and pedagogic practices’ (ibid) in order to perhaps consider and create different learning and teaching approaches (p.5)
10.3 There was some evidence that minority ethnic trainees might not readily seek out any type of support for themselves and that for some there was shame attached to doing so. It was often their tutors who had referred them. Ofsted (2003) found “a major problem is the reluctance of many bilingual students to accept that they need additional help with their English” (p. 4). However, SEOs reported increased use of their service following direct class contact by an individual officer. The End of Year Report of the SEO team recommends that, perhaps at the beginning or the end of a lecture, “SEOs should go to students rather than relying on students coming to them” (p. 16). The team also recommends emphasising the promotion of group sessions as ‘ability enhancing’ rather than as ‘remedial’. These two strategies should improve the availability of the service to minority ethnic trainees. The apparent reluctance of some minority ethnic trainees to seek support with personal and family issues has been reported elsewhere, and may in fact merely indicate an independent approach. Kimura’s exploration of the experiences of minority ethnic students in HE revealed that:

Although students expressed a desire for their needs to be accommodated; when they had difficulties, such as family or financial problems, they tended to think that it was their own responsibility to sort it out. This seemed to be due, in part, to the lack of service provision at the institutions or the lack of information about services. However it was also due to the students’ perception that they were not typical students and therefore that they should deal with these problems alone (Kimura, 2006, pp 67-68)

To understand better how we might tailor support to the requirements of minority ethnic trainees, the take-up of support activities by ethnicity should be subject to monitoring, review and evaluation. In order to ensure that this process avoids “stereotypical ‘deficit model’ approaches” (HEA, 2008, p.30) the HEA recommends that we will need to engage with students.

10.4 There are likely to be women from every background who are unsupported in their pursuit of higher education. As tutors we are well placed to provide encouragement, and where possible, to demonstrate flexibility – for example, in our response to trainees’ childcare arrangements. The SEOs described a number of minority ethnic women who appeared to lack support from their families. Basit (quoted in Preece, 1999) drew attention to the ongoing influence of the Muslim community upon the family, which in turn may impact upon the educational decisions of women – “the honour … and welfare of the family which could include the extended family are considered to be more important than the feelings of ‘selfish’ interests of an individual” (p. 202). However, a recent report that examined Muslim women and their HE experience notes:

Echoing some other studies, the empirical data gathered here demonstrates how many Muslim women cited their families as key sources of encouragement and motivation towards higher education study and in thinking about future careers … Women also discussed how higher education acted to enhance social mobility and status for themselves and their families, but also how degree status influenced other personal factors such as marriage and work choices (Tyrer & Ahmad, 2008, p. 12).
It is worth remembering that minority ethnic women – including those from the same communities and sharing the same religion, are not a homogenous group.

10.5 The analysis drew attention to a few incidents of student to student racism. Case study research undertaken in five English HEIs examining student experience of HE revealed:

Only a few students said they had experienced being discriminated against or harassed on the basis of their ethnicity, but more students had experienced being treated differently because of their ethnicity or of being stereotyped” (Kimuna, 2006, p.70).

Missing from the analysis reported here are the ‘voices’ of minority ethnic trainees themselves. In order to address discrepancy in achievement and in order to identify the most appropriate support, we need to understand their experience of the course; we need to hear from them.

11. Recommendations

In the light of research findings it is recommended that within the Education Department:

11.1 Strategies for the initial assessment of trainees are evaluated to ensure that they enable a clear identification of academic literacy enhancement needs.

11.2 Trainees individually receive constructive feedback following the initial assessment process, and personal tutors work with trainees to action plan appropriate enhancement activity and monitor progress made.

11.3 ITT team members, full-time and part-time, remain updated about the range of University support activities and resources available.

11.4 ITT team members, full-time and part-time, are aware of the positive approach to academic skill development promoted by the Student Experience Officers, outlined in their end of year report.

11.5 ITT team members, full-time and part-time, are familiar with the new University Information Literacy Framework and implement the recommendations as appropriate.

11.6 The AME SEO continues with the practice of introducing the service to each curriculum group at the beginning of the first semester, and repeats the process around the time for return of the first marked written assignment.

11.7 The ITT team and the Skills for Life team jointly give consideration to ways in which Skills for Life trainees might support the development of the written English skills of trainees on the generic pathway, as appropriate.
11.8 From the outset, all trainees should be enabled to develop (or recall, as appropriate) an unambiguous understanding of plagiarism.

- University resources, including a quiz, [online] are available at: http://data.bolton.ac.uk/bissto/infoskills/useinfo/plagiarism.htm
- Staff may also wish to trial 'The Secrets of Biblioland', an interactive game developed for graduates and post-graduates, that examines issues of plagiarism and more, [online] available at: http://www.biblioland.org/

11.9 ITT team members, full-time and part-time, are provided with the opportunity to reflect upon different academic traditions.

- A CPD event might be arranged to support this process. Trahar’s discussion paper, available on the ESCalate website at: http://escalate.ac.uk/3559 covers some of this territory.

11.10 There is further endeavour to achieve a more ethnically diverse staff team, in relation to both full-time and part-time staff.

- Consideration might be given to establishing a reserve pool of part-time teacher educators, advertised through minority ethnic networks as well as through conventional channels.

11.11 Consideration is given to a further research project designed to explore and evaluate trainee experience of ITT provision at Bolton, both White and minority ethnic. This should include a focus upon the experience of trainee-staff and peer interaction.

Additionally, it is recommended that the University:

11.12 Ensures that monitoring, review and evaluation of University support activities involves the recording of take-up by minority ethnic status.

References


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Leask, B. (2006) Plagiarism, cultural diversity and metaphor—implications for academic staff development, Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education. 31 (2) 183 – 199


Ofsted (2005) Raising the achievement of bilingual learners. London: Ofsted


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Module</th>
<th>Number referred</th>
<th>% Minority ethnic</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning, Implementation and Assessment</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learners, Learning and Tutoring</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>Teacher as Researcher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum Development and Innovation</td>
<td>26</td>
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<td>Research and Reflection into Practice (H3)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>142</strong></td>
<td><strong>29%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹Note: This does not represent the number of trainees, but the number of referred module results. A number of trainees were referred in relation to more than one module.

University of Bolton Post-Graduate Certificate in Education/Certificate in Education: Referred module results (2nd Attempt) Full-time study 2006-07