University of Leeds
Research Culture Awards 2021-22
Application Form

Please email nominations/self-nominations using this form to Holly Ingram
H.L.Ingram@leeds.ac.uk by Wednesday June 1st, 5pm

Information section

This section covers information about the lead applicant and the team as well as the chosen category of award. Expand the sections as necessary. The maximum number of people in a team is set to 10 for event planning and personal prize budgeting purposes.

1. Select the nomination type

- Self-nomination

2. Lead applicant and team

Provide details about the applicant and the team (including external partners if applicable), and their contribution to the initiative. The lead applicant will be the contact person for the management of the award application.

Lead applicant name:
Lead applicant contributor role:
Lead applicant Service or School / Faculty:
Lead applicant role/post:
Lead applicant career stage: ECR, Mid-Career, Professor, Professional / Technical staff

Team member name (include lead applicant)	Contributor role	School/Service/external organisation + role/post	If member deserves special mention, state reason (optional)
Paul Taylor	Co-Chair	Student Education	
Louise Banahene	Co-Chair	Educational Engagement	
Katie Livesey	Co-Chair	LITE	

Expand table as necessary; the upper limit for a team is 10 members.

3. Select the award category that best fits the research culture activity:

- Equality, diversity and inclusion in research

Case for Award

The Application form from this point on (= Case for Award) should not be longer than two pages in total (11pt Calibri). **Please write clearly, free from jargon, for a non-specialist reader.**

1. Title

Belonging and Success research group building a more equitable future for all

2. Summary

Outline the initiatives that seek to improve our research culture, and explain how the application fits within your stated award category (100 words max)

The Belonging and Success Research Group brings together colleagues from a wide range of disciplinary perspectives across the institution who have a shared interest in the group's theme. Participation includes academic and professional services staff at all stages of their career alongside students in a supportive environment. A key focus of the group is providing opportunities to collaborate and develop. We can't address this within silos. This has included the inception of student research internships enabling undergraduates to contribute to scholarship, develop skills and networks. We specifically welcome students under-represented in higher education.

3. Why?

What problem, issue, or challenge in research culture does your initiative or activity seek to address?

Belonging and success is relevant to every dimension of the higher education experience. There is clear evidence that a sense of belonging leads to better outcomes for students and that students from underrepresented groups are less likely to feel they belong. More research on belonging and success is needed to understand the structural barriers and so address inequity and exclusion. Research aimed at solving this problem requires a multi-disciplinary approach and amplification of those with lived experience of under-representation. There have been limited opportunities for intentional collaboration, development of new opportunities and a space for scholars, regardless of status, to interact, share and support. Traditional research cultures may not be sufficient to meet this need.

4. What?

Please describe your research culture initiative or activity. How is it organised, who was involved, and what did they do? What is the timescale?

The group brings together staff and students at all levels with a research interest in belonging and/or student success. It is designed to be non-hierarchical and a space for colleagues to share work and collaborate. Alongside the presentation of research findings and development of grant proposals, the Group is continually invited to reflect on how it organises itself, how best to make all voices heard, what its research culture should be.

The Co-chairs and Convenor are well known for encouraging participatory approaches. Paul Taylor has published on the application of critical management theory to higher education settings ('Critical reflection on organizational practice in a UK university through scholarship of teaching and learning.'

'The Palgrave Handbook of Academic Professional Development Centers', forthcoming) and this is presenting a workshop at EuroSoTL (Manchester, June 2022) entitled 'New Leadership Models for

Hopeful Higher Education Communities'. Louise Banahene has presented at conferences , including for AdvanceHE, on participatory approaches through the lens of belonging and inclusion. Katie has spoken at conferences about the impact of integrating targeted student research internships into a research group with a focus on belonging and inclusion.

The research group meets every six weeks with regular contact via TEAMS. The role of LITE is crucial in grounding the work in our institutional approach to teaching excellence.

5. How?

How does it / will it improve this problem? What are its specific objectives? What do you hope will be the impact?

Over 30 members of staff and students meet on a regular basis. There are representatives from every faculty across professional services. Staff and students at all stages of their educational or career journey join to discuss, reflect and collaborate. This brings a truly inter-disciplinary and intersectional lens to the group.

The group drafted the terms of reference collaboratively and agreed that the opportunity to share research at all stages of development was crucial. It was also agreed that it was also important to model the behaviours known to support belonging and success, including inclusivity, respect, celebration of diversity, and truly create a new kind of research group.

Already we can see that Group members are responding to the different approaches and methodologies they are hearing about and adapting their ongoing research to become more interdisciplinary and hopefully more impactful. A specific objective for the immediate future is to secure resources to fully establish the Group on a sustainable basis, both from internal strategy funding and from external sources. One small grant proposal has already been submitted by the Group and we have been selected to host the 2023 RAISE student engagement conference at Leeds.

Longer term, we believe the Belonging & Success Research Group, with its unique participatory culture, will help the University deliver on its commitment to "Collaboration, Compassion, Inclusivity and Integrity", improve outcomes for under-represented groups and raise the University's profile in the field, attracting further resource and recognition.

6. So what?

What have been / will be the outcomes? How have you / will you evaluate your initiative against your objectives? Please include evidence or indicators of change, success, and impact described in Q5. This might include changes to others, to processes, to policy, etc. but also for yourself, your research, your relationship with colleagues or in relation to your set objectives.

Given the theme of the group, ensuring that this is facilitated through a safe space where members feel they are valued and can thrive has been a key area of focus. In just one year, it has enabled partnerships to develop research proposals, collaborate and share methodologies. This has broken down boundaries with academic supervisors and researchers from the professional services as well as vice versa.

'The belonging and success research group has been a wonderful vehicle for change in the institution. It has brought together disparate expertise from across the institution into a network ruthlessly focused

on improving the lives of our student body. The focus on belonging and success is an affirmative focus on the experiences that all students should have. The groups' activity is thus resolutely directed towards removing barriers to these experiences. The work of the group fills me with a sense of pride at working at the University of Leeds, as we work to dismantle elitism within higher education and build a welcoming and inclusive university.'

Tom Campbell, School of Sociology and Social Policy

A second important outcome has been to enhance the range of opportunities for students from minoritised groups to participate in related research and the group. This enables students to develop research skills, form new networks with academic supervisors and to see how their research shapes change across the institution. 23 students from minoritised backgrounds have been recruited to undertake research through the Belonging and Success research internship programme. The first 9 in 2019 have spoken at the group and conferences. Outputs include research into religion and student success; embedding belonging and the colonial history of the institution.

7. What next?

What are your plans for future activity? How could you extend this initiative to other areas? What do you need to achieve these future plans?

The group will be exploring and implementing further opportunities to enable collaboration with a focus on development of teams bringing together a range of skills, expertise and diversity. This will include enhancement of the existing student research internships and bidding for PhD studentships. We will continue to celebrate achievements both individually and collectively.

The group will also develop opportunities to support staff earlier on in their career aligning with models in the Horizons institute.

8. What challenges did you have in planning/organising/running/evaluating your initiative and how did you overcome these?

Please share challenges and solutions here. The reason for the question is to highlight the efforts and perhaps creative solutions that are necessary to create meaningful engagement that leads to culture change, and could include the importance of working as a team.

The Chairs and convenor of the group intended to create a truly inclusive group where colleagues and students feel comfortable and completely confident in contributing in contrast to some more traditional research frameworks. To support this intention, the group members co-created the Terms of Reference with the areas of focus as outlined earlier in this document. This really helped to ensure that all members could share their research and critique others' in a supportive environment.

Ensuring that all had opportunity to engage was a key priority and was considered in terms of how we meet and the conversations that took place formally and informally. The group used digital platforms to maintain engagement with smaller groups convened to drive collaboration, grant or proposal development. This has ensured high levels of participation and engagement. The group was also encouraged to share research at any stage of development and this has ensured that members haven't felt they needed to present the 'end' product and could share challenges. This has been effective with colleagues sharing plans or methodology plans as well as outputs.

9. Was there something particularly innovative/creative about your initiative?

This might be something you did to pre-empt an anticipated challenge, or you changed your practice based on experience, being inspired by someone else, etc.

The group is particularly innovative in centring belonging at the heart of this group. It acknowledges the importance of being valued, respected and creation of an environment where all students, regardless of background, can thrive.

'For a long time research into sense of belonging was seen as somehow separate from research investigating inclusive practice and research into student mental health and wellbeing. The [belonging and student success research] group has bought together belonging, community, wellbeing, and inclusion scholars. It's been fantastic to see the group grow and to be part of something that is making a felt difference to student and staff experience. The group is truly multidisciplinary and includes colleagues and students from across the entire University. The synergies between our findings have enabled us to concretely illustrate how belonging, wellbeing, and inclusion are intertwined - and all are core to realising our vision to ensuring equitable outcomes for all students. The group has been a constant source of encouragement and inspiration as I continue to work to transform the HE sector into a more compassionate place for staff and students.' Bridgette Bewick, School of Medicine

As outlined in the document, the group recognises that it is crucial to have diversity across the group. This is valued and celebrated with diversity of characteristics such as class as important as ethnicity or gender.

10. What makes your activity a notable example of culture change?

Please tell us why you think your initiative is of high quality and what is it that makes you particularly proud of it.

The outputs of the group and the way in which work has been shared has enabled recommendations or actions to be embedded into practice. This has included changes to assessment, diversity in postgraduate study and work to embed belonging. This impact is both institutionally and across the sector. For example, work on diversity in postgraduate students was completed by an undergraduate medical student and this has informed a strategy blueprint developed by a national special interest group. Similarly, work undertaken on belonging has been shared and embedded at Leeds but also several universities across the sector.

The group is looking forward to working with the Horizons Institute to progress the outputs and success further.