

Enhancing collegiate education: inclusive approaches to addressing awarding gaps

This paper presents a progress report for the Senior Tutors' Standing Committee on Education on Levies-funded work within the Cambridge Centre for Teaching & Learning (CCTL). The Levies funding enables CCTL to extend its work in support of commitments on behalf of the Collegiate University in the Access & Participation Plan (APP) to eliminate differentials in assessment outcomes which cannot be explained through factors such as previous education and attainment ('awarding gaps').

This document contains:

- Summary
- Progress report: February 2021 to May 2022
 - Refining the brief
 - Findings of sector and institutional research
 - Staff and student advisory group
 - Six strands of work, May 2022 to July 2023: initial briefs and indicative timelines
- Appendices:
 - Appendix 1: Levies-funded project brief

Summary

Statistical analysis of assessment outcomes in Cambridge over a period of eight years confirmed that being from Black or Asian ethnic backgrounds had a statistically significant effect on attainment; this gap was shown to be larger for Black students than Asian students. The analysis also showed that students with declared mental health conditions were significantly less likely to obtain a 1st class degree when controlling for all other factors. Gaps in attainment for these specific students were shown to be persistent when controlling for other factors. Note: these findings do not indicate that awarding gaps are caused by students' characteristics; rather, they prompt reflection about how students who are affected by awarding gaps experience their education at Cambridge. Finally, the analysis demonstrated that the results of first-year examination were the strongest predictor of final-year assessment outcomes. Note that this finding does not indicate that students' final-year assessment outcomes are determined by their first-year assessment outcomes; rather, this finding indicates that students' experiences during their first year are formative. For this reason, a concerted focus on students' academic induction, education, and experiences during the first year is a priority.

Sector research indicates the interplay between students' educational outcomes and higher education institutional environments, educational practices, relationships between staff and students and among students. Initiatives based on assumptions that awarding gaps may be explained solely or largely as a consequence of students' deficiencies are not effective. Instead, inclusive methods, which benefit all students, along with students who experience disadvantage, are encouraged, as well as interventions which are explicitly directed at one or more group which experiences disadvantage.

During the funded period (February 2021 to January 2024), CCTL is developing research- and evidence-informed approaches to enhancement which are relevant to the distinctive environments

and practices of Cambridge Colleges, building on academic studies as well as institutional research already undertaken for the APP and Race Equality Charter and cycles of student-led participatory action research which CCTL is supporting on an annual basis throughout the lifetime of the current APP. This Levies-funded work is integrated into CCTL's portfolio of activities, including support for Cambridge educators (through accredited teaching development programmes, a new teaching & learning recognition scheme and shorter educational development workshops); promoting and sharing good practice through events (such as the annual Cambridge Teaching Forum and Diversifying Assessment Forum) and publications (such as the Teaching & Learning Newsletter), and informing the development and implementation of longer-term educational enhancement at Cambridge.

CCTL's Levies-funded work starts from the premise that collegiate education and experiences are central to students' education and outcomes; that improving experiences and outcomes involves understanding what currently works well and why, and that initiatives that are co-created with staff and students are more likely to have a lasting impact. These premises are supported by advocacy within sector research that students and staff should be engaged in conceptualising, designing and implementing interventions which affect them.

Factors affecting students' educational experiences and outcomes and / or opportunities to address these may involve individuals, groups / teams, and / or institutions, processes, and cultures. Opportunities to enhance collegiate education and experiences may involve adding to the knowledge base within Cambridge, sharing evidence and practice, and / or pilot initiatives. During the course of the funded period, it is likely that activities or initiatives will be identified which may feasibly be pursued within available resources (time, people, funding). Others are likely to be important and more complex; in these instances, they may be documented and referred to other bodies, where appropriate, or identified as recommendations for future attention.

Co-developed principles: investigating and addressing awarding gaps in the collegiate environment¹

- i. There are unexplained differences in the educational outcomes of Black British students and students with declared mental health conditions
- ii. There is evidence, both in sector-wide research and in research and enquiry in Cambridge, as to what major underlying issues are and how they can be addressed
- iii. In researching and seeking to address inequities affecting particular 'groups' of students, it is important not to assume that these are a result of students' characteristics or students' 'lacking' characteristics ('deficit models')
- iv. Identities are complex, meaning that 'group identities' are in reality blurred and intersectional. We need to constantly recalibrate between investigating and seeking to address particular inequities experienced by 'groups' and more generally developing more inclusive practices and environments
- v. In Cambridge, there are fundamental cultural issues which adversely affect the experience and outcomes of students and examples of behaviours which are permitted to continue and are therefore in effect condoned
- vi. Students' input should be sought on matters that affect them. However, the onus should not be on students who are adversely affected to educate staff or to advocate for institutional

¹ These principles were developed by student and staff members of the project's advisory group.

responses: institutions and individuals with authority in Cambridge should show that they are serious about addressing inequities

- vii. Cambridge is a highly devolved collegiate University. There are, though, clear collective responsibilities, including collective responsibilities for students' wellbeing and education

Six strands of work (2022-23)

Between May 2022 and July 2023, six strands of interconnecting work will be pursued (see below and next page). Initial briefs have been developed through engagement with students and staff stakeholders and are informed by sector and institutional research. Many of these strands of work include scoping phases, which will

- help to develop increased cross-Cambridge awareness of current patterns of activity
- involve staff and students in developing findings, recommendations for further enquiry and pilot activities
- involve staff and students in designing, piloting, and evaluating activities

Two practice sharing events are envisaged (February, late June), with termly progress reports to the Senior Tutors' Standing Committee on Education.

Strand 1: first-year academic experience

Potential outcomes: scoping review across a sample of Colleges of models of academic induction and development during the first year; pilot and formative evaluation of mentoring for students who identify as Black; models of peer learning

Strand 2: the educational contribution of direction of studies

Potential outcomes: scoping review, including focus-group style workshops across a sample of Colleges with DoSs, of educational contributions, perceived barriers and opportunities to address these

Strand 3: supervisors' educational development

Potential outcomes: scoping review across a sample of Colleges and Departments of models of initial and continuing development, informing inter alia wider reviews of training and development as well as the development or improvement of teaching practice development programmes

Strand 4: developing academic knowledge and skills through formative feedback and reflective practice

Potential outcomes: scoping review across a sample of Colleges of formative feedback models, curated selection of formative assessment and feedback tools and activities

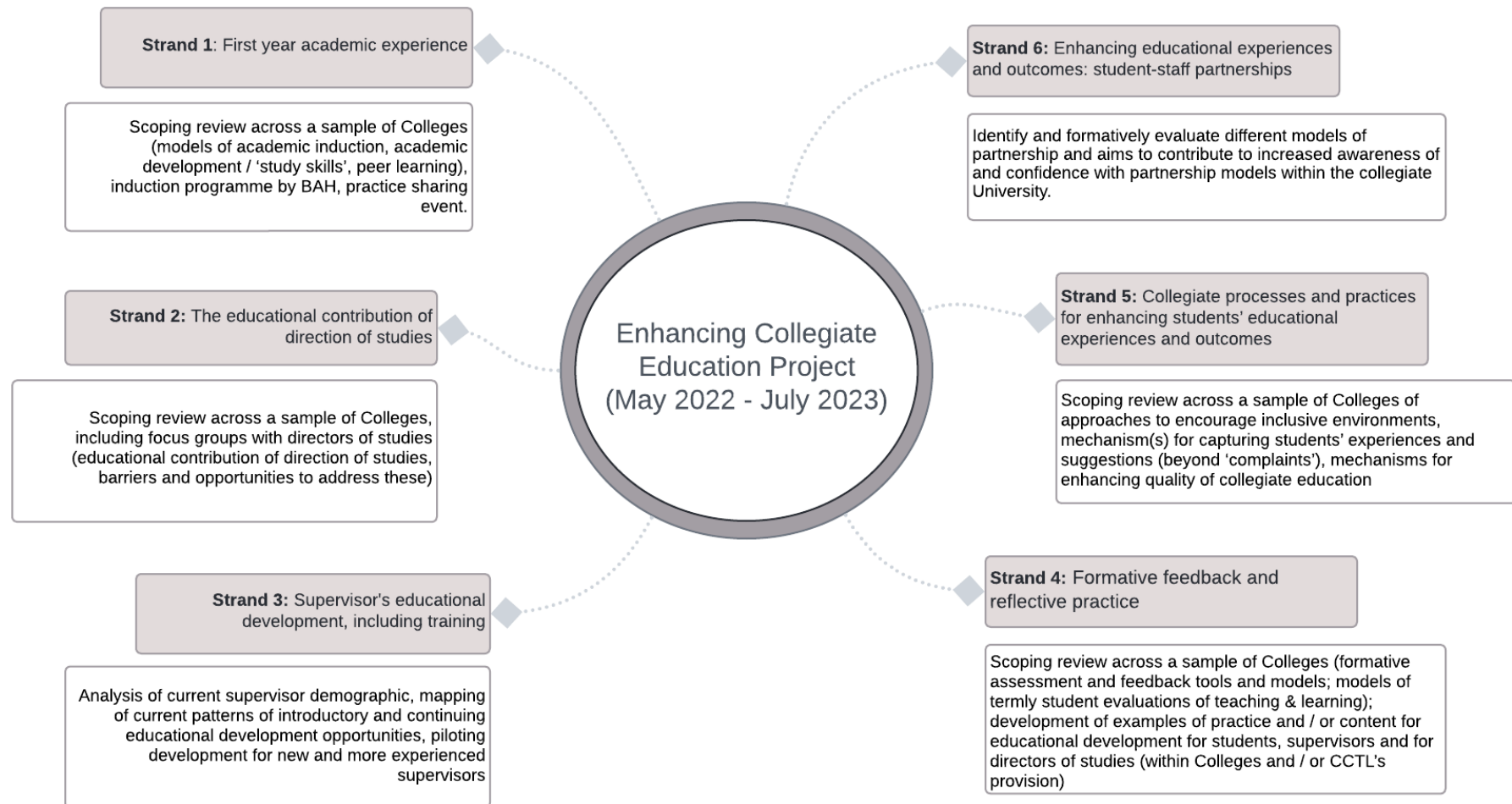
Strand 5: enhancing students' educational experiences and outcomes – collegiate processes and practices

Potential outcomes: scoping review across a sample of Colleges of mechanisms for capturing and responding to students' experiences of their education and environment, including investigating or tracking students experiences and outcomes with reference to equality, diversity and inclusion

Strand 6: enhancing educational experiences and outcomes – staff-student partnerships

Potential outcomes: collation of current models, tools and guidance of / regarding partnership working across a sample of Colleges, Departments, and institutions

Fig 1: Six strands of work (May 2022 to July 2023)



Progress report: February 2021 to May 2022

Refining the brief

The Levies Panel of the Bursars' Committee funded a 36-month project associate to enable the Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning (CCTL) to extend its work in support of commitments on behalf of the Collegiate University in the Access and Participation Plan to

ensure that a representative cross-section of society is represented within its student body, who can access the same opportunities and quality of experience, and can expect the same outcomes in terms of completion, attainment and progression (APP, 2020, p. 19).

In particular, CCTL's project work is intended to contribute to addressing differential educational outcomes affecting groups of students, where these differential outcomes cannot be explained by factors such as previous education and attainment ('awarding gaps'). The Collegiate University has committed to eliminating awarding gaps affecting Black British students and students with declared mental health conditions. (See appendices for Levies-funded project brief.)

The Levies-funded project period is February 2021 to January 2024. The following sections set out the means by which the initial brief has been developed to date, through engaging with stakeholders, and reviews of the sector and institutional research.

Preliminary consultations

Preliminary consultations with a selection of Senior Tutors in the early months of the funded period explored perceptions of priorities and concerns. All Senior Tutors consulted with spoke of **commitments to addressing inequities** in educational experiences and outcomes and commented on the **challenges of developing data-driven approaches** to understanding factors at play, given the **small numbers of students within the 'target groups' within individual Colleges** and Triposes and **complexities of identities and intersectionality**. Senior Tutors commented on the imperative to **recognise students' agency, avoiding categorisations** and approaches which are perceived as **reinforcing stereotypes**.

There was some discussion of the **lack at present of an institutional knowledge base** which could serve as a reference point for CCTL's developing work in this area. The **underlying issues** playing into awarding gaps affecting Black British students and students with declared mental health conditions were felt to be very different. There was some discussion of **fear of using 'the wrong language'**, of appearing to **reinforce stereotypes** through targeted approaches to exploring issues, and in so doing of causing **adverse effects on students' wellbeing and academic performance** ('stereotype threat') and **taking up the time of students who are already disadvantaged**. There was also concern that targeting interventions may give rise to disadvantages in other areas and that **highly individualised support** (for example, for 'study skills') **may be neither sustainable nor the most educationally effective way of addressing underlying issues**. Conversely, it was felt that there was significant potential in exploring the potential **value of a Cambridge education** ('what an undergraduate degree is "for"') and **how educational practices could be enhanced** in order to improve educational experiences and outcomes for more students, balanced by **institutional self-scrutiny** through continuing to monitor **assessment outcomes** and other **sources of data concerning students' experiences**.

Findings of sector and institutional research

Note: This section summarises key findings of the sector and institutional research; a fuller account of both, with reference list, is appended.

Institutional research

In 2020, a detailed statistical analysis of performance in classed examinations in Cambridge over a period of eight years found that

- being from **Black or Asian ethnic backgrounds** had a statistically significant effect on attainment, with the **gap being larger for Black students than Asian students**, and that
- **students with declared mental health conditions were significantly less likely** to obtain a 1st class degree when controlling for all other factors.

The analysis confirmed that

- gaps in attainment for these specific students were persistent when controlling for other factors and that
- results of first-year examination were the strongest predictor of final-year assessment outcomes.

Note: these findings do not indicate that awarding gaps are caused by students' characteristics, nor do they indicate that students' final-year assessment outcomes are determined by their first-year assessment outcomes. Rather, these findings prompt reflection about how students who are affected by awarding gaps experience their education at Cambridge and indicate that students' experiences during their first year are formative.

Sector research

An influential report, commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, on higher education experiences and differential student outcomes identifies **four types of explanatory factors** (Mountford-Zimdars et al, 2015, iii):

- **curricular, learning, teaching and assessment practices**
- **relationships between staff and students and amongst the student body** (sense of **belonging** was identified as a key cause for differences in progression)
- **social, cultural, and economic capital** (e.g., hidden curriculum, lack of social and cultural capital to network and navigate the educational setting)
- **psychosocial and identity factors** (negative group stereotyping, peer mentoring)

The authors noted that

formulations which **account for lower attainment** in terms of '**student deficits**' (academic weaknesses, lack of ability or other individual factors or circumstances) or 'wrong' choices in subject selection have also largely been superseded (p. 25).

Recommendations for higher education institutions include

- encouraging '**pedagogy-driven approaches**', underpinned by 'a **policy framework** at the institutional level which rewards staff for innovating' (p. 53)

- a move away from ‘approaches that aim at “integration” of “non-traditional students” towards a **broadier concept of “inclusive” HE**’ (p. 56), with ‘targeting’ in individual circumstances rather than at ‘groups’, in order to avoid counterproductive perceptions of stereotyping or stigmatising
- **‘embedding’ priorities** of addressing awarding gaps ‘into **institutional decision-making mechanisms** (such as committees and other fora) and **processes** (such as quality assessments)’ (p. 60)
- **promoting and recognising active staff engagement** in the agenda and **sharing resources and practice and celebrating success** within the institution and across the sector (p. 100)
- **encouraging students as partners** to be involved in finding barriers and enablers for inclusive educational practices and experiences (p. 101)
- **considering how the support peer support and learning** among students and student networks (p. 101)

The notion of **‘belonging’**, which is receiving widespread attention within higher education research, draws on sociological and psychological traditions and is connected with feelings of **academic and social integration** (Austen et al, 2022; Mountford-Zimdars et al, 2015; Thomas, 2012). Subsequent reviews of literature evaluating the impact of initiatives relating to access, retention, attainment and progression (Webb et al, 2017; Austen et al, 2022) identify recommendations which are particularly pertinent to collegiate education, for example

- ‘supporting psycho-social-behavioural aspects of learning’ which **encourage students to feel that they ‘belong’ at university**, which **‘affirm values’** and frame learning in terms of a **‘growth mindset’** (Austen et al, 2022, p. 43)
- **‘early opportunities for [formative] assessment and feedback’** which establish a **culture of academic achievement** and “success” (Austen et al, 2022, p. 43)

Research into the educational experiences and outcomes of minoritised ethnicity students draws attention to concern among some staff and students at **‘saying the wrong thing’** (UUK 2019, p. 39) and to the consequences arising from **avoiding open discussion**: in place of investigating and challenging **‘structures and practices** that underpin awarding gaps’, **‘deficit understandings’** of students are perpetuated and individuals who are positioned as **‘sole representatives’** perceive this as an additional **‘burden’** (UUK 2019, p. 39). Noting that increasing **staff diversity** is likely to take time, in the shorter term a pragmatic way forward is for **institutions** to become more **‘culturally proficient’** (Mountford-Zimdars et al, 2015, p. 53).

Research into the educational experiences and outcomes of students with disabilities, including mental health conditions, advocates for **inclusive approaches** such as ‘universal design for learning’, **as distinct to individualised adaptations** (Disabled Students’ Commission, 2021; Hughes et al, 2019; Tai, Ajjawi & Umarova, 2021). A **distinction** is drawn between a **‘positive learning environment** that fosters positive mental wellbeing’ (Houghton & Anderson, 2017) and **mental health provision**.

Identities and experiences are complex, as are the interplays between structures, experiences and outcomes. An **intersectional** approach enables exploration of complexity (Office for Students, 2019); **qualitative** methods are an important counterpoint to **quantitative** analysis as a means of gaining insight into experiences which are associated with negative as well as positive outcomes (Cohen et al, 2018; Mountford-Zimdars et al, 2015; Attridge, 2021).

Student-led qualitative research: the APP Participatory Action Research (APP PAR) Project

The APP PAR Project was developed to seek **students' perspectives** on the barriers that arise in relation to teaching and learning at Cambridge and to develop knowledge and evidence that can inform and catalyse meaningful progress and practical steps forward. This qualitative approach is intended as a means of investigating aspects of students' experiences and perceptions, which may then

- **prompt reflection and self-scrutiny** on the part of individuals, academic institutions, and professional services in order to identify actions which may meaningfully and feasibly address complex issues and challenges, and
- **inform subsequent cycles**, which may extend lines of enquiry and / or refine the APP PAR Project's outcomes.

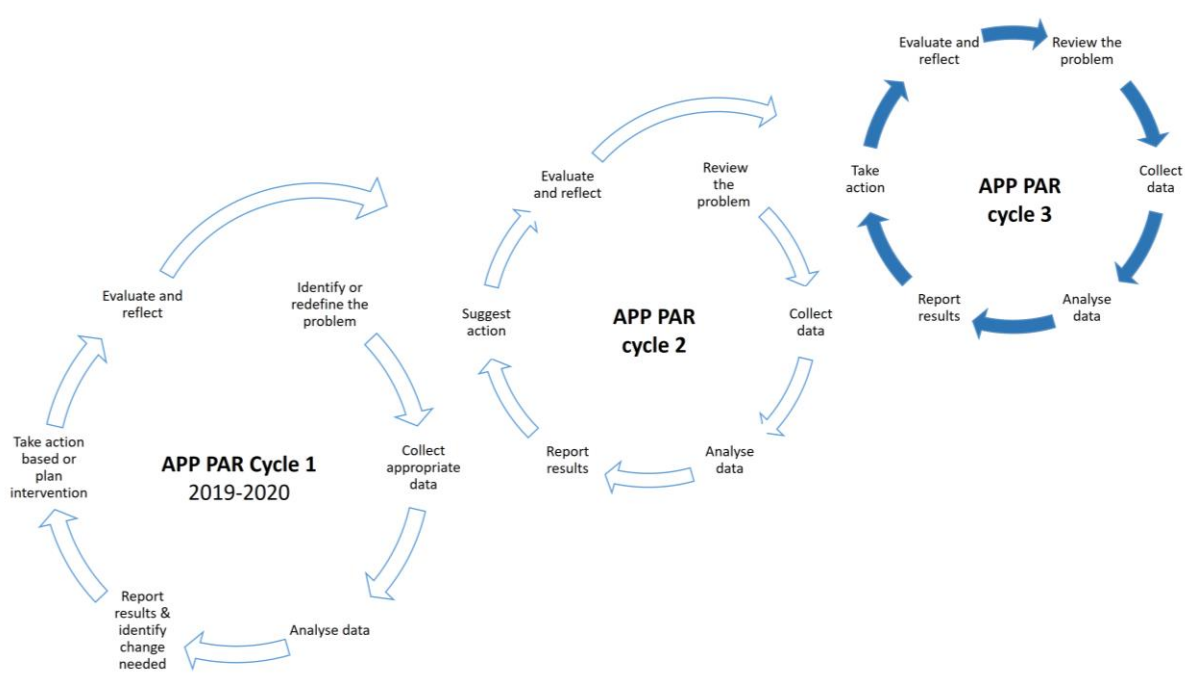


Figure 2: The first three cycles of the APP PAR Project. The third cycle is ongoing.

The APP PAR Project has completed three (out of five) annual cycles of student-partnered research since its conception in Dec 2019 and has sought evidence around systems, practices, and challenges specifically for Black British students and students with mental health conditions at Cambridge (and the intersections between race and mental health).

A range of outcomes arose from the [10 projects](#) which constituted Cycle 1 (2019 – 2020): some led to discrete follow-up projects and outputs, such as the new [Black Advisory Hub](#), and guidance for staff and students on [Content Notes](#); other recommendations focused on broader institutional / policy change or adoption, such as recommendations for institutional support and discussion encouraging [diversification of assessment](#), or a review and updating of existing information for students, for example about [Adjusted Modes of Assessment \(AMAs\)](#) for disabled students.

In cycle 2 (2020 – 2021), the [6 projects](#) focused primarily on faculty/department and college-based practices, including Black students' perceptions of first-year transitions and experiences of supervision; students with declared mental health conditions also explored experiences of supervision and examples of peer learning in Cambridge which support students' mental health and

academic performance. Cycle 3 (2021 – 2022) is approaching its conclusion; student projects include perceptions of decolonisation of teaching and learning; the intersection of race and mental health/disability; diversifying assessment; self-advocacy; formative feedback.

Staff and student advisory group, 2021-22

In consultation with the Secretary of the Senior Tutors' Committee, an Advisory Group was constituted to provide feedback and guidance on the development of CCTL's work on addressing awarding gaps through enhancing collegiate education (for terms of reference and an account of focus for meetings during 2021-22, see appendices). Advisory Group meetings have been designed to serve as a focus group, helping to formulate accounts of project aims and outcomes, methods and strands of work for 2022-23.

At its first meeting, the Advisory Group agreed that

sector research suggests that there is significant potential to improve educational outcomes in processes like supervision and direction of studies and features like small-scale academic & social communities. This means that Colleges represent opportunities for improving experiences and outcomes through developing a clearer understanding of how to 'do these things better' (minute of Advisory Group meeting, 29 October 2021).

The Advisory Group agreed that the following are envisaged under the term 'collegiate education':

- educational activities which are structured and organised by Colleges and staff, including collegiate academic induction and academic development; supervision; direction of studies
- collegiate educational activities which are partly or fully student-led, including peer learning
- processes within Colleges which are associated with collegiate education, including students' feedback on their educational experiences

In the Advisory Group's first meeting, an account was presented of research in the sector and within Cambridge into unexplained differences in students' educational outcomes ('awarding gaps'). The Group discussed important messages or ideas when trying to understand and address awarding gaps and develop more inclusive approaches to education. Discussions during the first meeting contribute to formulating accounts of the project **situation** and **aims**.

In the Group's second meeting, members gave time to reflect on two central aspects of collegiate education which have significant potential to contribute to enhanced educational experiences and outcomes: direction of studies and supervision. The Group identified some barriers to direction of studies and supervision contributing to students' education and potential ways of addressing these barriers. The Group continued to reflect on enhancements relating to direction of studies and supervision at its third meeting, with particular attention to what members of the Group thought may be achievable within the period of project funding and how we think this could contribute to progress in achieving longer-term change. These discussions contribute to formulating accounts of **outcomes** and **longer-term impact**.

During further meetings, the Group contributed towards identifying **activities** (the interventions that we think will help bring about intended change, **outputs** (direct results of interventions which contribute towards achieving outcomes) and **inputs** (the human, financial and organisational resources which are needed in order to implement activities).

Discussions during each meeting of the Advisory Group also contribute toward formulating **assumptions** (the conditions which members of the Group perceive as necessary for intentions to be realised) and an underpinning **rationale** (an account of why one outcome is needed in order for another outcome to be achieved).

At the final meeting of the Advisory Group during 2021-22, members commented that they had found it 'extremely illuminating' to hear 'first-hand the various experiences of both students and staff alike with regards to managing their own experiences of identifying as someone of ethnic minority and / or experiencing mental health illness as well as supporting others and the challenges presented' and 'developing an acute awareness of the diversity of perspectives, initiatives and issues within the collegiate system, as well as listening to the people behind them'.

For the next stage of the project, it is hoped that there will be some continuity of membership. In recognition that some members during 2021-22 will no longer be in Cambridge and / or may not feel able to continue as members, the Advisory Group will be reconstituted for 2022-23, to

- i. inform the continuing development of a research and evidence base for the next stage of the project
- ii. advise on priorities and success measures for the next of the project
- iii. advise on opportunities to promote awareness of and engagement with the project, including the six strands of work
- iv. develop recommendations for the final stage of the project.

Strands of work, May 2022 to July 2023

Six interconnecting strands of work will be undertaken during the next phase of the funded period. The focus and initial briefs set out in this document will be developed through engagement with students, academic and professional staff of the collegiate University, involving cycles of gathering information; analysis and interpretation with samples of students and staff; identifying, agreeing, and acting on next steps; identifying and reflecting on consequences. Termly updates will be submitted to STEC, and we envisage two events (provisionally: February and late June 2023) which will be used to share findings, raise awareness, and provide opportunities to extend the involvement of students and staff in the project.

There are, of course, a range of projects and initiatives underway in Cambridge which have a bearing on students' experiences and outcomes (for example, the development of initiatives by the Black Advisory Hub, with the guidance of the Hub's Steering Group; reforming support for students' mental health and wellbeing; a review of EDI training currently underway across the collegiate University; CCTL's phased introduction of new accredited teaching development activities, and the development during 2023 of the collegiate University's next Access and Participation Plan [2024-28]). The CCTL team will not duplicate project activity but learn from and / or help to inform these, where appropriate.

The six strands of work which are outlined below are necessarily interconnected, as factors affecting students' educational experiences and outcomes and / or opportunities to address these may be identified at one or more levels:

- micro (individuals)
- meso (groups / teams / units / organisations)
- macro (institution, regulations, cultures)

Furthermore, opportunities to address awarding gaps may result in contributions which

- add to the knowledge / evidence base in Cambridge
- aim to share evidence and practice
- form a basis for pilot initiatives

Finally: as project work develops, it is likely that activities will be identified which

- may feasibly be pursued within available resources (time, people, funding)
- are important and more complex, and may be documented and referred to other bodies, where appropriate, or identified as recommendations for future attention

Strand 1: First-year academic experience

BACKGROUND	<p>Sector- and institutional-level research, as well as students' and staff's reflections, indicates that students' academic experience during their first year of study is strongly associated with academic progress and outcomes and with personal wellbeing.</p> <p>Cycles of student-led action research projects, and responses of college educators to findings arising from these projects, indicate particular interest in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> effective approaches to academic induction and the development of academic knowledge and skills during the first year supporting mentoring for first-years who identify as Black, for example, to contribute to developing social and academic networks supporting peer learning, including developing inclusive peer interactions and accessible peer study groups 	SCOPE	<p>Within the scope of this strand of work are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> activity which is co-ordinated across Cambridge (for example: by the Black Advisory Hub, by the Disability Resource Centre), within Colleges (for example: College orientation, support for academic development), within collegiate subject teaching & learning (for example: academic development activities for subject cohorts, academic development activities which are integrated into direction of studies and / or supervision)^[1] activity which may be described as 'staff-led', 'student-led' or a mixture of both <p>^[1]Note crossover: formative feedback, direction of studies, supervision</p>
		POTENTIAL OUTCOMES	<p>Potential outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> scoping review: across a sample of Colleges, collation of models of academic induction and development during the first year, including aims, evaluation, resourcing scoping review: across a sample of Colleges, collation of models of peer learning, including aims, evaluation, and resourcing; research-informed recommendations on inclusive and accessible peer learning pilot practice sharing event, including contributions by college educators, staff and students via Black Advisory Hub: pilot and formative evaluation of mentoring for first-years who identify as Black

Strand 2: The educational contribution of direction of studies

BACKGROUND	<p>Direction of studies, with supervision, is one of the distinctive aspects of Cambridge undergraduate education. Students and directors of studies identify a range of educational contributions, alongside important organisational ones, which they associate with direction of studies, including helping students to settle into their academic lives and develop their academic aspirations and capabilities, both in general terms and with respect to particular experiences.</p> <p>College staff, including directors of studies, also address factors which constrain this potential, including academic workloads and recognition and reward of the role; interplays / boundaries between academic and welfare roles; in some instances, limited department-based co-ordination between directors of studies (DoSes) and communication with Departments.</p>	SCOPE	<p>College staff, including directors of studies, and students participating in cycles of student-led action research projects, indicate particular interest in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reflecting on the educational contributions of the role identifying barriers to the role, including organisational barriers, and opportunities to address these developing increased cultural proficiency and evidence-informed awareness of how to support students' wellbeing and mental health tools, methods and approaches which encourage students to develop their evaluative abilities (see 'developing academic knowledge and skills') initial professional development and ongoing opportunities to share and extend knowledge and practice
		POTENTIAL OUTCOMES	<p>Potential outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> scoping review, including focus-group style workshops with DoSes in a sample of Colleges; initial findings from focus groups already completed include potential to update the DoS 'role description', priorities for and approaches to initial and continuing professional development and ways in which direction of studies can be better supported within Colleges and Departments. (An initial analysis of focus groups undertaken by the time of writing is appended.)

Strand 3: Supervisors' educational development

BACKGROUND	Supervisions are at the core of the educational provision of the Cambridge Colleges. The supervision process is a central means by which students learn to work autonomously, argue and present arguments, handle problems, learn with and from others, question their own assumptions, and manage themselves. Students value the potential of supervision to serve as personalised learning experiences, to learn from and with peers, and with supervisors' academic guidance and mentorship.	SCOPE	<p>A scoping review could include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a snapshot of current supervisors, by role / affiliation, subject, and supervision hours • across a sample of departments and colleges: mapping current patterns of participation in introductory and continuing educational development opportunities • a review of aims and formats, including CCTL's cross-Cambridge provision
	<p>College educators and students identify factors which constrain supervision, including communications between departments and supervisors concerning summative assessment expectations, which may lead to supervision content and activities which are unintentionally unaligned; limited sharing of students' feedback on their experiences of supervision; pressures on academic time and an undervaluing of the role of supervision; limited opportunities for supervisors to develop their expertise; expectations of the role of supervisors and boundaries between academic and welfare roles.</p> <p>Note: there is some overlap between this strand of work and Strand 4 (developing academic knowledge and skills through formative feedback and reflective practice), Strand 5 (enhancing students' educational experiences and outcomes: college processes and practices)</p>	POTENTIAL OUTCOMES	<p>Potential outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of models of development, including aims, resourcing, and evaluation, for new and more experienced supervisors • input into wider reviews of training and professional development (e.g., EDI, Wellbeing) • creation and curation of educational development content, including tools, methods, and reference resources for new and more experienced supervisors

Strand 4: Developing academic knowledge and skills through formative feedback and reflective practice

BACKGROUND	Cambridge's undergraduate education, in particular the processes of supervision and direction of studies, is potentially rich in personalised formative feedback and in encouraging students to develop reflective practices so that during their undergraduate education they become progressively more independent, self-regulating, and prepared to direct their own future learning.	SCOPE	<p>Cycles of student-led action research projects, and responses of college educators to findings arising from these projects, indicate particular interest in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College processes and practices which encourage students to reflect on their own learning progress and priorities, in dialogue with their director of studies • tools and methods which may be used in supervision, so that students develop their evaluative abilities through practising self- and / or peer- assessment and feedback • improving communications with supervisors regarding summative assessment criteria and aligning formative assessment of supervision work <p>Note: there is some overlap between this strand of work and strands on the first-year academic experience (above), supervision and direction of studies (above).</p>
		POTENTIAL OUTCOMES	<p>Potential outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • scoping review: across a sample of Colleges, collation of models of termly student evaluations of teaching & learning, including aims, perceived educational benefits • across a sample of subjects: a curated selection of formative assessment and feedback tools and models, trialled, and formatively evaluated by supervisors / DoSes and students • case studies and / or content for educational development activities (within Colleges and / or CCTL's provision)

Strand 5: Enhancing students' educational experiences and outcomes: collegiate process and practices

BACKGROUND	<p>Across collegiate Cambridge, there is a range of models and mechanisms for understanding and enhancing students' educational experiences and outcomes and for identifying and addressing individual and systemic inequities. Anecdotally, it appears that there is a tendency for 'education' to be considered separately from 'equalities, diversity and inclusion'.</p> <p>Recommendations arising from sector research for institutional action include embedding priorities of addressing awarding gaps and developing inclusive practices into institutional processes and decision making, as well as encouraging and supporting staff and student innovations</p>	SCOPE	<p>College staff and students indicate interest in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • examples of mechanisms for capturing and responding to students' experiences of and / or concerns about collegiate education and environments where these mechanisms move beyond 'complaints' to students' recommendations or suggestions • examples of or opportunities for investigating or tracking students' experiences with reference to equality, diversity, and inclusion • examples of ways in which students' feedback on their experience of collegiate education may be shared constructively with supervisors, directors of studies, etc • examples of ways in which concerns about supervision quality may be pursued and where appropriate shared with other subject-based DoSes
		POTENTIAL OUTCOMES	<p>Potential outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoping review across a sample of Colleges • case studies and / or content for educational development activities

Strand 6: enhancing educational experiences and outcomes: staff-student partnerships

BACKGROUND	<p>Sector research highlights the importance of actively involving students and staff in investigating lived experiences and in designing and formatively evaluating initiatives designed to address inequities and enhance educational experiences and practices. CCTL's approach to this Levies-funded work starts from the premise that initiatives that are co-created with staff and students are more likely to have a lasting impact.</p> <p>This strand of work identifies and formatively evaluates different models of partnership and aims to contribute to increased awareness of and confidence in partnership models within the collegiate University.</p>	POTENTIAL OUTCOMES	<p>Potential outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collation of current models of partnership working across a sample of Colleges, Departments, and institutions • a curated selection of tools and guidance • awareness raising / practice sharing event
-------------------	--	---------------------------	--

Table 1: Indicative overview of timeline: Enhancing college-based education project (May 2022 – July 2023)

Task	Activities	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July
a.	Pilot practice sharing events, including contributions by college educators, staff, and students															
b.	Termly progress reports to STEC: Analysis of findings															
Strand 1 – First-year academic experience																
1a	Ongoing scoping review of study skills support and related academic development initiatives															
1b	Scoping of induction activities in/by Colleges (including DRC, BAH)															
1e	BAH - Scoping of current patterns of mentoring for Black students															
Strand 2 – Educational contribution of directors of studies																
2a	Pilot focus group/workshops and follow-up activities with Directors of Studies (sample of Colleges)															
Strand 3 – Undergraduate supervision: educational development																
3a	Analysis of current supervisor demographic, hours															
3b	Ongoing scoping of current guidance and resources provided to supervisors (sample of Colleges)															
3c	Ongoing scoping of current provisions for professional development and sharing of practice between supervisors (colleges, dept, institutions)															

Task	Activities	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July
3d	Pilot and formative evaluation of tools, methods, reference resources for new and more experienced supervisors (sample of Colleges)															
Strand 4 – Formative feedback and reflective practice																
4a	Examples of practices of models of termly students' feedback on supervision experiences and if they contribute to reflective supervisory practice (sample of Colleges)															
4b	Scoping of departmental communications with supervisors (summative and formative assessment)															
4c	Pilot and formative evaluation of formative assessment and feedback tools and models (sample of Colleges)															
Strand 5 – Collegiate processes and practices for enhancing students' educational experience and outcomes																
5a	Collation of mechanisms for capturing and responding to students' experiences of collegiate education (sample of Colleges)															
5b	Collation of mechanisms for liaison between Colleges and Depts regarding students' experiences of collegiate education (sample of Colleges and / or sample of subjects)															
Strand 6 – Student-staff partnerships to enhance educational experience and outcomes																
6a	Scoping of current models of student partnerships (sample of colleges, dept, institutions)															
6b	Creation of guide for students and staff on effective student-staff partnerships															
6c	Pilot and formative evaluation of partnership activities (sample of colleges, dept, institutions)															

Appendix 1: Levies-funded project brief

The Levies Panel of the Bursars' Committee has funded a 36-month project associate to enable the Cambridge Centre for Teaching and Learning (CCTL) to extend its work in support of commitments in the Access and Participation Plan to

ensure that a representative cross-section of society is represented within its student body, who can access the same opportunities and quality of experience, and can expect the same outcomes in terms of completion, attainment and progression (APP, 2020, p. 19).

Levies funding enables CCTL to

- extend into Collegiate Cambridge work that has been initiated at University level and was previously limited to Departmental teaching, learning and assessment, in support of commitments in the APP
- develop a holistic approach to enhancing education, recognising the interplays between collegiate and departmental practices and the centrality of the collegiate experience to undergraduates' education at Cambridge

Over the 36-month period (February 2021 to January 2024), project work includes

- investigating the experiences and perceptions of Cambridge undergraduates, in particular Black students, and students with declared mental health conditions, and of College-based educators and professional staff, of collegiate education and support
- piloting and formatively evaluating a series of strategically selected initiatives, such as training, guidance and tools for supervisors and directors of studies on inclusive practices and integrating academic skills development into collegiate education; inter-collegiate collaborations and practice sharing

During the funded period, CCTL aims to develop research-informed approaches which are relevant to the distinctive environments and practices of Cambridge Colleges, building on academic studies, as well as institutional research already undertaken for the APP and Race Equality Charter and the annual cycles of student-led participatory action research which CCTL introduced in 2019-20 and which will run on an annual cycle throughout the lifetime of the current Access & Participation Plan. Over time, it is anticipated that benefits will arise students, for College-based educators and professional staff and at College level:

	students	staff	Colleges
research-informed, contextualised improvements to educational practices and student support initiatives	x	x	x
... some of which will result in reduced demands on academic and professional time for additional support		x	x
... and reductions in additional expenditure on reactive arrangements			x
opportunity to reframe political and media discourses concerning systemic educational disadvantage	x	x	x
opportunities to contribute Cambridge knowledge and case studies to evidence bases (academic and professional) concerning 'what works'	x	x	x