

## **Closing the BME attainment gap**

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Title: Closing the BME attainment gap

## Facilitators

Dr Anne Nortcliffe is the Course Leader of BEng Course. Active LTA practitioner and researcher in developing student learning and experience published internationally and nationally.

Cathy Keech is a Widening Participation Officer with 10 years experience of mentoring programmes and accredited by the PASS National Centre. She has a background in academic skill development and education guidance within HE.

Jayne Evans has 15 years experience managing teams of volunteers, including 10 years in the HE sector. She currently supports a group of 2nd year Computer Network Engineering student volunteers to deliver a PAL scheme at Sheffield Hallam University.

Sherin Rajan, Jack Wordsworth, Jake Ledger, & Phil Watson are second year students on the BEng Computer and Network Engineering Course at Sheffield Hallam University and are Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) mentors to the first year BEng Computer and Network Engineering students.

## Workshop

The national British Minority Ethnic (BME) attainment gap is 16% (Berry and Loke, 2011). BME students frequently report being isolated and lonely (Cotton et al, 2011), and experience derisory support (NUS, 2011). At Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) a pilot Peer Assisted Learning (PAL) programme on an engineering course to aid inclusivity, as at UCL PAL has increased student retention (Angelini, 2011). The initial results at SHU are positive:

*"They [Mentors] kept me on a course and reassured me that we will get to cover what I signed up for somewhere in the future as I felt that the course was not what the university said it would be and was considering dropping out."*

However, the PAL costs are unsustainable to be replicate across all engineering courses. This workshop proposes a World Cafe, Brown (2005), to promote knowledge exchange between conference delegates of academics, students and administrative support to identify what would be required, by whom, and how to make a PAL programme sustainable for all engineering students. A world cafe workshop with table clothes (Fouche and Light, 2011) provides framework for focus groups participants to converse, share and capture the cross-pollinate ideas, realistic and viable outputs Schieffer (2004).

Angelini, M. (2011) Measuring the effects of Peer-Assisted Learning on the development of students in transition to maths-based teaching programs. In *CETL-MSOR Conference 2011* (p. 9).

Berry, J. & Loke, G. (2011) *Ethnicity and Degree Attainment*. DfES Research Report RW92. London: DfES

Brown, J. (2005). *The world café: Shaping our futures through conversations that matter*. Berrett-Koehler Store.

Cotton, D., George, R. & Joyner, M. (2010) *The Gender and Ethnicity Attainment Gap Project: Executive Summary*. Plymouth: Teaching and Learning Directorate, Plymouth University.

Fouché, C., & Light, G. (2011). An Invitation to Dialogue 'The World Café' In Social Work Research. *Qualitative Social Work*, 10(1), 28-48.

NUS. (2011). *Race for equality. A report on the experiences of Black students in further and higher education*. London:

Schieffer, A., Isaacs, D., and Gyllenpalm, B. (2004). The world café: part one. *World*