



# Diversifying Leadership

## Tackling the under-representation of BAME leaders in HE

**In order to respond to current challenges and opportunities, the higher education sector needs to take full advantage of its wide pool of talent. Institutions must be committed to creating inclusive workforces which have the opportunity to build a robust talent pipeline of BAME staff whilst shaping systemic change. Diversifying Leadership seeks to balance the development of skills for BAME staff new to leadership in the sector with tackling the systemic barriers resulting in the persistent under-representation of BAME staff in leadership roles.**

Participants of Diversifying Leadership are supported to determine their leadership style and given tools and techniques to develop and maintain a proactive career personality as leaders in higher education and beyond. Participants will also explore evidence-based strategies for survival and success.

Alongside this, sponsors undertake a commitment to advocate for their participant by providing opportunities for leadership, for example, access to strategic networks, more visibility through stretch projects and modelling how to navigate organisational politics successfully.

### Overview

The programme consists of four face-to-face days (including one action learning set day) delivered over four to five months:

- + Orientation webinar
- + Module 1: Leadership, 'BAME Leadership' and lessons from the labyrinth.
- + Module 2: Leadership, power and influence: changing the game.
- + Module 3 (Action learning set): Speaking actions into existence.
- + Module 4: Leadership tomorrow: Vision, voice and visibility.



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## Who is Diversifying Leadership for?

**Diversifying Leadership is aimed at aspiring BAME academic and professional services staff who are either new to leadership in higher education and/or have experienced structural barriers to leadership while working in the sector.**

Typically, participants will be working in roles at grade 6-8 and seeking progression opportunities through promotion, stretch projects or increased visibility. This will include but is not limited to lecturers, senior lecturers, co-ordinators and heads of service. Staff in roles either above or below these grades who are committed and able to meet the demands of the course are also encouraged to apply.

## How is the programme delivered?

**Diversifying Leadership has been developed by experienced BAME facilitators who have worked in the HE sector and identify with the lived experiences of the participants. A range of teaching and learning methods are used including discussion, group work, self-reflection and creative storytelling. A facilitated action learning set day is included to provide dedicated time for participants to work through live issues with the support of their peers.**

Leadership is explored intersectionally and primarily through the lens of race, affording participants a rare opportunity to share experiences with colleagues from across the UK. A range of leadership approaches are considered and ideas which are often taken for granted are critiqued, allowing alternatives to be explored.

A unique feature of the programme is the opportunity to work with a **sponsor**, at least for the duration of the programme. Diversifying Leadership sponsors are given guidance and support in the form of a webinar and a sponsor toolkit, which explains why formal sponsorship schemes are needed for BAME staff and contains practical activities for sponsors to complete with their protégé.





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## Programme outcomes

Participants will increase their practical and critical understanding of leadership. They will be able to draw upon their cultural and wider identity capital to remain authentic while seeking leadership opportunities in the sector and beyond. This will include:

- + Continuing to work with their sponsors and other allies to increase visibility.
- + Developing strategic networks to increase visibility in the face of institutional barriers. By developing these networking skills, they will be better able to work with allies including sponsors.
- + Increased confidence to apply for stretch roles commensurate with ability and potential.

## Benefits of having a sponsor

Sponsors help in the development of leadership skills and characteristics such as:

- + **Action-orientated judgment:** by making decisions that moves the participant forward.
- + **Task competence.**
- + **Understanding employees and their needs:** effective sponsors pay attention to their participants and genuinely care about helping them succeed.
- + **Capacity to motivate people:** through inspiring a participant and motivating them to do their best.
- + **Trustworthiness:** participants need to be able to depend upon and trust the person leading them.
- + **Awareness:** sponsors learn how to avoid the 'protective hesitation' that often prevents aspiring BAME leaders from receiving critical performance feedback, enabling participants to adopt a more strategic approach career management.
- + **Adaptability and flexibility:** by developing an ability to think outside the box and adapt quickly to changing situations for the participant.
- + **Creativity:** perhaps most importantly in terms of leadership skills, a sponsor not only possesses their own creativity, they are also able to foster creativity in the participant and ultimately among their staff members.

*“Having completed the programme, I feel refreshed with positive energy; a sudden realisation that in HE, what makes a difference in BAME’s career progression isn’t just achievements or what we know but who knows us.”*

*Kelechi Dibie, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, Newcastle University*





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## Programme structure

### **Module one: Leadership, BAME Leadership and Lessons from the Labyrinth**

Participants explore the meaning of leadership, reflect on their leadership journey to date and consider specific issues that impact on aspiring leaders from BAME backgrounds working in higher education and the wider community. Participants identify their cultural capital and its importance in shaping them as leaders. During this session, participants discuss how to develop a protégé mindset in preparation for their relationship with their Diversifying Leadership sponsor.

### **Module two: Leadership, Power and Influence: changing the game**

Module two explores issues relating to power and influence. Participants are asked to evaluate their political skills and consider how networking can be used more strategically to extend their reach. The hidden rules of leadership are discussed and participants are introduced to different influencing techniques.

### **Module three: Speaking actions into existence (action learning sets)**

Participants have the opportunity to work through a live leadership issue in smaller peer groups. Each group has a facilitator to provide support where needed and to ensure conventions are observed. To prepare active listening skills are modelled and questioning techniques are practised.

### **Module four: Leadership tomorrow: vision, voice and visibility**

Participants give an update on the actions agreed in their learning sets and consolidate the learning developed over the previous modules. The “double bind” of visibility is discussed and participants are introduced to storytelling techniques to articulate their new leadership story in a compelling way. Participants complete their action plan for their onward leadership journey.

### **Leadership insights**

Modules two and four include input (themed talks followed by Q&A) from BAME leaders, mainly in higher education roles including academia, professional services and governance. This gives participants an opportunity to hear from leaders who were once in their position. Diversifying Leadership sponsors and alumni also provide input during Module one.





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## Who delivers the programme?

**Jannett Morgan (Associate Programme Director)** and **Leyla Okhai (Associate Facilitator)** have delivered the programme since its inception and work with a core team of BAME colleagues who have extensive experience of leadership development.


**Diversifying Leadership is an open programme.** This enables participants (many of whom feel isolated in their home institutions) to network with and learn from colleagues from different institutional contexts, sharing best practice and solutions in tackling shared challenges.

## What can participants do next?

In order for opportunities to exist for participants to develop further, institutions must remain proactive in removing systemic barriers that led to the need for Diversifying Leadership to be developed. This may include reviewing recruitment and selection processes, embedding a sponsorship culture, addressing bias and having conversations about race.

Participants, who will feel energised by the programme, can work with their institutions by, for example, sharing good practice and joining BAME networks and other affinity groups, for example. They will also be better equipped to apply for leadership roles in their institutions or elsewhere in the sector. Previous participants have gained promotion, led on projects high profile projects, become principal investigators, been appointed to committee roles and increased their visibility through speaking engagements.

Want to find out more  
about Diversifying  
Leadership?

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