Students' Experience of Identity and Attainment at UAL

Final year 4 report of a longitudinal study
for the University of the Arts London

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Acknowledgements

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Summary

This report illuminates the causes that underlie inequality in students' attainment: black and minority ethnic students are 21.7% less likely than white students to gain first or upper second class degrees (UCPU 2017). Based on qualitative data from the third and fourth years of a four-year longitudinal study, the findings explore the experiences of undergraduate students at UAL from different ethnic backgrounds. The premise of the study is that creative arts students' multi-faceted identities are intrinsic to their practice, and so the differences between students' experiences and attainment outcomes can best be explained at the interface between what the students bring and the environment within which they operate at UAL and beyond. This study aims to increase understanding of students' experience and identity as a basis for changes in taken-for-granted practices that underlie the gap in attainment.

The final year sample consists of 49 undergraduate students, interviewed twice, drawn from all four UAL colleges and from graphic design, fashion, fine art and text-based subjects. This qualitative data is situated in statistical analysis of students' characteristics (ethnicity, fee status, SES and gender), participation, and attainment outcomes. The findings in this report should be read alongside those reported in earlier phases of the project. This is because causal mechanisms are cumulative, and develop in cyclical, linear and sometimes unexpected ways throughout a student's time at UAL. This report is about the ways in which these mechanisms culminate in the final year.

Familial support for students' identity as creative practitioners continues to be a significant influence on their university experience. It is not, however by itself a determinant of their attainment. The nature of interactions with tutors is the most powerful factor in students' creative and intellectual growth. Interactions that build students' identities as practitioners are characterised by informality, reciprocated respect, and mutual interest in both the substantive content of the students' work and in his or her progress. Interactions that are detrimental to students' identity formation include experiences of unfulfilled promises, unjust treatment in comparison to others, sparse contact, and feeling unknown and unheard.

Inclusivity in the curriculum is explored in relation to self-directed projects and the ethical questions that tutors face when supervising projects that are distant from their areas of expertise. On the one hand there is a need to maintain students' intrinsic motivation and autonomy, and on the other, a wish to ensure that there is sufficient common ground for meaningful critical conversations.

When students perceive assessment to have been unjust, they locate the problem in the shortcomings of the support they received before submission. As evidenced in NSS responses, some students also believe the assessment process itself is unfair, and influenced by tutors' favouritism, and personal or professional interests. The marking criteria are well known and used by some students but not believed to be a dominant factor in assessment outcomes. The positive effect on attainment of participation in the Diploma in Professional Studies is evidenced in students' accounts: engagement with industry offers a context of professional recognition and promotes a sense of clarity about priorities for the final year.

The ways in which students' work is shown in degree shows varies widely across colleges. Whilst not determining attainment, the degree show is a significant site of overlap between the students' UAL world and their familial and social contexts beyond the University.

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Introduction: why focus on identity to understand inequality in attainment outcomes?

This research was commissioned is order to increase understanding of the causes of inequality in students' attainment outcomes at UAL. In 2016-17 at UAL white home students were 21.7% more likely than their black and minority ethnic peers to gain a first or upper second class degree (UCPU 2017). This shows a widening of the gap of 1.4% on the previous year. The gap between International and Home students in 2016-17 is 14.4% and this has fallen by 2.16% since the previous year. Institutions are being held to account for this 'attainment gap' through periodic media coverage and the consequential threat of reputational damage; they are incentivised to address the gap through initiatives such as HEFCE's Catalyst Fund; and it has been the subject of many student campaigns (for example, Liberate my curriculum at UAL and Decolonising the curriculum at SOAS). There is wide recognition that this is a matter of social injustice.

Following Nancy Fraser (2003), the causes of this injustice can be conceptualised as, on the one hand, a matter of misrecognition and lack of value attached to non-dominant cultures in our society; and, on the other, a historical mal-distribution of resources. The student campaigns relating to inclusive curricula relate to addressing misrecognition: they argue that what is presented as 'the canon' in design, fine art, fashion, performance and cultural theory is inordinately structured by the largely white Eurocentric, or even white London-centric, cultural milieu of their teachers. Their aim is to diversify reading lists and cultural references in their curricula. The causes relating to mal-distribution include, for example, concerns about the necessity for students to undertake paid work throughout their University life, thus limiting the amount of time they can spend on their university work, in comparison to their more affluent counter-parts who are able to rely on the financial support of their families for living expenses and the cost of materials.

This research has primarily explored matters of misrecognition rather than mal-distribution but the role of differences in material resources is heavily implicated in value misrecognition. For example, curricula may be heavily weighted towards white European perspectives through processes that entail both cultural appropriation and misrepresentation as well as a concentration of resources. This concentration of resources includes the production of text books that define relevance; the curation of artefacts which invite the public gaze; and investment in pedagogies which reproduce cultural value. Recognition is the engine of identity formation (Honneth 1996) and creative arts students' identities are profoundly intrinsic to their practice. They can often trace their motivation for choosing the arts to childhood interests and predilections (See Sabri 2012 for more on this) and so the context of recognition or misrecognition to which they are exposed spans a much longer period of time than their university experience.

This is the conceptual terrain within which this study explores the experiences of students with diverse identities and sheds some light on taken-for-granted practices within the University that impede some students from fulfilling their potential while fostering others to do so. Rather than conceiving of identity as an essential personal set of qualities or characteristics, it is understood in this project as socially and historically constructed in an interplay between what students bring and the environments within which they operate. In Hall's terms, the subject is both 'hailed' and invests in a position through 'articulation' (Hall 1997: 6).

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Furthermore, within this project identity is analysed in relation to a particular domain of social life: becoming and being an art and design student at UAL. Following Hall, 'identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites…' (Hall 1997: 4). So the context within which we must understand students' development is the long-term construction of curricula and the wider formation of the creative arts in our society.   In the realm of day-to-day interactions identities are built through certain acts of recognition. As Honneth (2004: 358) argues 'Because we live in a social order in which individuals owe the possibility of an intact identity to affective care, legal equality and social esteem, … [it is] appropriate … to make the three corresponding principles of recognition the normative core of a conception of social justice.' These principles of recognition are (i) empathy (also sometimes referred to as love) (ii) respect and (iii) solidarity. In the sphere of empathy (or love) we build self-confidence by 'eliminating those role clichés, stereotypes and role attributions that structurally stand in the way of the possibility of mutual adaptation to the needs of others.' Respect, which engenders self-respect, is about equality before the law and the application of institutional principles of equality. Solidarity, which engenders self-esteem, entails being able to relate positively to our particular traits and abilities. It can mean 'radically questioning those cultural constructions' which in the past have validated some practices or occupations and not others (Honneth 2003: 362).

A useful, and perhaps more immediately accessible, way of conceptualising recognition is to think of it in terms of micro-affirmations. These are ' …apparently small acts, which are often ephemeral and hard-to-see, events that are public and private, often unconscious but very effective, which occur wherever people wish to help others to succeed' (Rowe, 2008:4). Micro-affirmation can be practised, in Honneth's terms, as a form of recognition, an act of respect, a show of solidarity, or a mark of esteem shown to students. It is an affirmation of a student's identity as a Designer, Artist or Performer. It takes place in all contexts: within familial contexts, among friends, within the university, in community and industry settings.

This analytic framework provides both a way of understanding the causal mechanisms that underlie the inequality in students' attainment, and a means of formulating some interventions that can reduce and then eliminate that inequality. There was an assumption in the commissioning of this research that such an understanding will inform changes in taken-for-granted practices which may be contributing to that inequality. The University's determination that this should happen is expressed in its Academic Strategy and targets for 2022.

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Research design and methodology

The year 1 report (Sabri 2014) sets out the research design and methodology for the longitudinal project as a whole in some detail. Here I provide a summary of the methodology and details of the sample that are specific to the fieldwork of years 3 and 4.

This research deploys qualitative methods of interviewing and observation to illuminate historically persistent statistical patterns of inequality in attainment. Alongside longitudinal qualitative fieldwork, statistical analysis of the UAL population of undergraduate students over nine years has been completed in the light of emerging insights from the qualitative data. This combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis, conducted iteratively, establishes a relationship between the statistics and a qualitative understanding of the causal mechanisms that underlie them (Clarke et al: 2014).

Students have been invited to an interview twice a year throughout their undergraduate course and for one year afterwards. During their undergraduate years they were encouraged to bring examples of their work or images of it as a basis for discussion. These were semi-structured interviews in which students were asked about all aspects of the University life and the networks of relationships that contextualised their entry to UAL and progress to graduation and beyond. All interviews with students were recorded and transcribed. There were also some observations of teaching, visits to degree shows and interviews with tutors. These were selected to offer an overview of pedagogic intent in the participating courses including some insight into current discussions of 'the attainment gap'. In total 27 interviews with tutors were held, 22 of these were recorded and transcribed. Contemporaneous notes were made of the remainder. The sample of tutors was composed of 15 men and 12 women; 3 black, Asian or minority ethnic staff and 24 white staff. All of the tutors were employed on fractional or full-time contracts and 11 of them were course leaders. The tutor interviews took place over the period of the project from September 2012 to September 2016. These interviews are not systematically analysed but fulfil two functions; first, they provide some context for the interviews with students from those courses; second, they offer a means of understanding the current state of the discourse about attainment, and informing directions of analysis and presentation of findings.

Changes in the sample of students

This final report is based on a sample of 49 students who were interviewed up to four times during the third, fourth and fifth years of the project. This allowed for students who had undertaken a Diploma in Professional Studies during year 3 to be interviewed during their final year and in the year following graduation. In addition, there were some students who repeated a year and therefore completed within four years. The Fine Art students who joined the project after year 1 were due to graduate at the same time as the rest of the students in the sample who had taken four years to complete their course. The final round of interviews took place between April and September 2017, a full year after most of the Fine Art students and DPS students had graduated.

There were 16 students from Fashion courses, 15 students from Graphic Design, 11 from Fine Art and 7 from text-based subjects. There were between 3 and 6 students from each of the 10

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participating courses. Students came from all four colleges: 16 from CSM, 14 from LCF, 11 from LCC and 8 from CCW. The largest ethnic group was of 21 white students; 8 were Chinese (including Singapore, Hong Kong); 5 were black (African and Afro-Caribbean); 2 were Asian (Indian and Pakistani); 4 were Middle Eastern and a further 9 were from other ethnicities (a wide-ranging group that includes Central and South American, Japanese, Thai, and Korean amongst others). With respect to fee status, the sample is composed of 29 UK home students, 13 international students and 7 EU students. Ages ranged from 18 to 56. First generation entrants to higher education numbered 15 and the remaining 34 students had at least one parent with experience of higher education either within the UK or elsewhere. No student had a permanent mobility disability, one had a sensory disability, six were having dyslexia support and at least 7 were receiving treatment to support their mental health at some point during the fieldwork.

A note on the attribution of quotes

In this report quotes are attributed to an interview number followed by demographic information. Students' anonymity is regarded as paramount to ensuring that there is no possible effect on their relationships with staff. Where identification is deemed possible, incidental details have been altered or demographic information omitted.

Each quote is attributed as in the examples below:

[S01-2a – F Wh-H] signifies: Student 01, year 2, first interview, female white home student

[S06 – 2b- M – Ch- Int] signifies Student 06, year 2, second interview, male, Chinese international student.

Abbreviations for demographic information
H – Home
Int – International

F – Female
M – Male

As – Asian
Bl – Black
Ch – Chinese
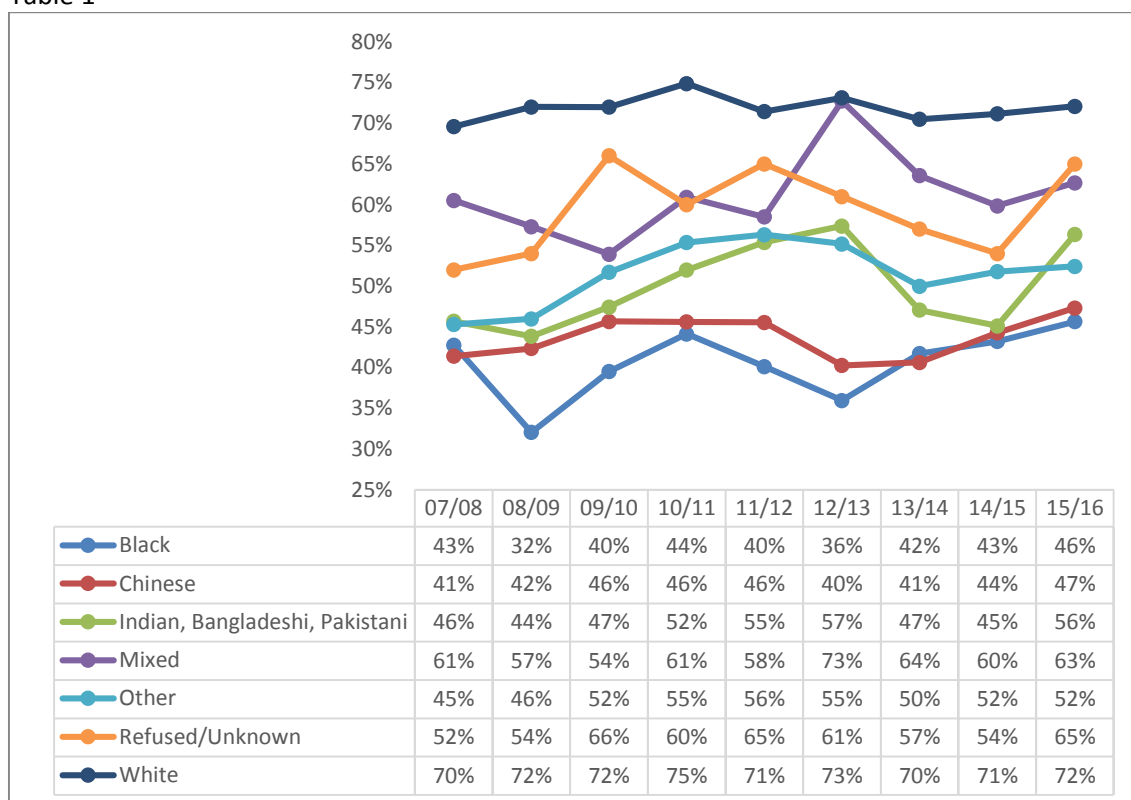Mx – Mixed ethnicity
Wh – White

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Findings: The Final Year

This section is introduced with an overview of the statistical analysis of students' attainment over nine years, conducted by Adam Elston and contained in full in a separate report. These statistics provide a context for the qualitative findings that follow, which address the underlying causal mechanisms. Using the analytic concepts of identity formation, recognition and micro-affirmation, these sections describe the advantages that some students acquire through their familial context, and social and academic experiences at UAL; and conversely the disadvantages that can restrain students from fulfilling their potential.

PATTERNS OF ATTAINMENT: THE STATISTICAL EVIDENCE

The graph below, plots the proportion of students with a First or Upper second class degree over the 9-year period. This table includes all undergraduate students. Analysis of the highest and lowest outcomes over the period show that the range appeared to have narrowed slightly in that period. The most recent statistics for 2016-17 (not included in the graph below) show an increase in the gap in attainment between white students and BAME groups though it is not yet known what the attainment rates are for each group.

Table 1

	07/08	08/09	09/10	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Black	43%	32%	40%	44%	40%	36%	42%	43%	46%
Chinese	41%	42%	46%	46%	46%	40%	41%	44%	47%
Indian, Bangladeshi, Pakistani	46%	44%	47%	52%	55%	57%	47%	45%	56%
Mixed	61%	57%	54%	61%	58%	73%	64%	60%	63%
Other	45%	46%	52%	55%	56%	55%	50%	52%	52%
Refused/Unknown	52%	54%	66%	60%	65%	61%	57%	54%	65%
White	70%	72%	72%	75%	71%	73%	70%	71%	72%

Elston (2017)

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Table 2 Ethnicity, fee status and attainment 2007/8-2015/16

	BAME	White	BAME	White	BAME	White
	EU		Home		International	
First/2.1	57%	71%	51%	73%	46%	61%
Lower second/third	43%	29%	49%	27%	54%	39%
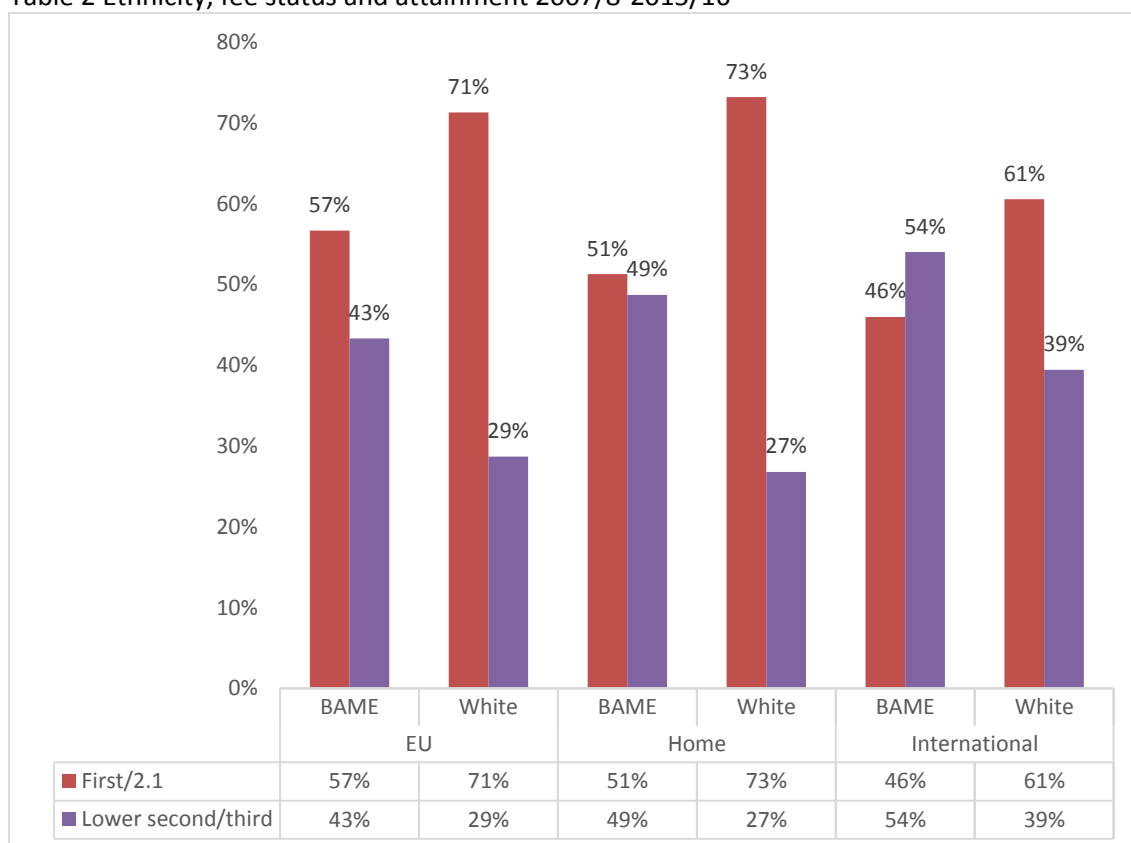
Elston (2017)

The table above compares the attainment of white and BAME students within fee status groups. It shows that BAME students' attainment of first or upper second degrees ranges from 46% among international students to 57% among EU students.   Conversely the range for white students is from 61% among international students to 73% among home students.

Table 3: This table shows the degree outcomes among the students sampled in this project.[1]

	First class	Upper second	Lower second	Third	Fail	Total
BAME	3	14	6	5	1	29
White	4	13	3	1	0	21
International	1	5	2	3	0	12
Home	5	17	6	1	1	30
EU	1	5	1	1	0	8
Total	7	27	9	6	1	50

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[1] There is a discrepancy between the number of interviewees in the final year (49) and the number of students with results (50). This is because there were two students in the interview sample for whom results are not yet available, and three students in the project sample as a whole who were not interviewed in their final year. Therefore the results of 50 students are shown here.

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While these numbers are small, it is notable that the patterns of attainment match those in the wider population of UAL students. Some 59% of BAME students within the sample gained a first or upper second compared with 81% of white students. Exactly half the International students in the sample gained a first or upper second, while 73% of home students did so, and 75% of the EU students did so. An analysis of the experiences of students attaining each classification is within the section on Assessment.

RECOGNITION AND IDENTITY WORK IN FAMILIAL CONTEXTS

As has already been established in earlier reports, the degree of support that students can draw upon from their families varies widely. The most common refrain among students is that their families are 'supportive' at an emotional level but 'don't really get it' and this can be said with respect to fine art, fashion and graphic design practices. What we can also see from the year 3 interviews is variation in how keenly the impact of cumulative support and understanding (or their lack) is felt by students. Some students with significant support within their familial context may under-estimate its significance or take it for granted, while others become increasingly conscious of it in their final year:

> I stayed with my mum over Christmas. And we were talking a lot about, you know, the things I was doing, what I was getting on with and trying to get her to read my dissertation, which she didn't have time, which was probably fair enough. But yes, I do talk to them a lot about it. And particularly, you know, if I need inspiration on anything, it's kind of nice to have people to ask those sorts of things…[S01 3a F-Wh- H]

Very few international students felt that they could share their work with their family members and have a conversation about it. One student said that her family are 'not fashion people'. There was not necessarily a sense of loss or disappointment in the absence of understanding:

> But you know like when you asked me like do I share like do I ask their opinion, I don't really care about the opinion of my family because they don't understand it, like they don't wear interesting stuff. They don't understand it. [S77 3b F-Ch-Int]

In contrast, the next quotation is from a fine art student who feels this absence of understanding more keenly:

> I sometimes send them pictures of my work, and there's absolutely no response. 'That's nice. What's it about?' My mother does ask me what it is about, and I can't explain. Because when I start explaining the concept of it, she has no clue. She doesn't get it. I think her question is more on the lighter surface of the concept. I try not to let that affect me, but it does. [S121 3a F-As-Int]

Some students who missed understanding of their work within their family context could observe clearly the advantage its presence conferred on other students:

> I know some people who like, their mum used to be a graphic designer or their grandparents have a print studio, so they have that range of trying out things without thinking much through the cost. But for me, like, printing costs so much. You know, you have to buy the right paper for different printers, and you, kind of, really have to talk to [technicians] about what paper works with what printer and all these little details. [Having not grown up with that] I didn't know anything about graphic design before coming to do the Foundation and then coming here. So, yes, I think that people might have an advantage if they kind of had a passion at a younger age or … were doing graphic design, you know, growing up. [S03 3b F-Ch-H]

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As we have seen in previous reports, the financial support that some parents can provide enables some students to concentrate fully on their university work without having to undertake paid work that is unrelated to their studies. In the final year, those students who have had to undertake paid work feel under particular pressure. They want both to maximise the amount of time they can spend on their dissertations and final major projects, but continue to need the income from paid work.

> … this year it's been quite a struggle financially, I mean I, that's why I'm like continuing to work and teach on the weekends and stuff….My parents give me a bit of money but they can't really afford to finance everything so I've got a loan and then I'm working as well.   …but it's quite tight though ... I'm having to like really count my spending I guess. [S02-3b M-As-H]

Familial support and understanding comes into play not just during university experiences but also as students start to make their way in the creative industries. Some students can rely on familial support to help them situate their practice, to challenge them and to offer encouragement:

> obviously I talk to them quite regularly, and I'm always being asked what I'm doing. I'm always hassled about why I'm not doing more... My mum's actually been pushing quite a lot because I'm not doing something that's graphic design [in my internship] and I haven't really done anything … like pure graphic design, yet this year. And I think she's worrying for me that I'm not doing the right thing by doing stuff to do with textiles. She's like, but you're not doing a textiles course. It's like, yes, but it doesn't matter, because it's about what you're interested in. It's skills you can apply to anything. She's like, I know, but you've got to do graphic design. Which is quite annoying, but I see her point of view. And I think that has sort of encouraged me, you know, how I said earlier I want to do something more with graphic design. That's sort of encouraged that. [S43 3a F-Wh-H]

Some families also offer opportunities for students to collaborate and continue to expand their practice:

> Well, we talk about our work a lot, every time we meet up, and certainly, she has her stuff on Facebook and everything, about things we've done. But I haven't had the chance to collaborate yet. It's a [possibility] because I don't really do illustration, and I don't draw. I'm very typographic. I think it's something that can be quite interesting, when I need to do a book that has illustrations. I think it can help me break out of my boundaries a bit, in how to design for illustrations. You know, designing type around illustrations rather than images is incredibly different. So I think having her provide illustrations for something will make it a bit more interesting to design. [S51 3a M-Wh-H]

This kind of in-depth substantive and critical support of students' professional identities within familial contexts was most common among home white students who were more likely to have family members who had themselves participated in arts education (Sabri 2014: 11).
On the other hand, where there is no experience of HE or of creative careers (more commonly among international students and Asian and Chinese home students), the onus is on the student graduate to explain her or himself, and to justify continually the particularities of the career path she or he is choosing:

> … I think it takes explaining. Like, the other week, we had a conversation… I guess I was trying to explain to them the importance of trying to get that balance of staying true to what you want to do, and not just working or using your talents for other people's profit. So they get it. But I think it's hard for them to connect on a more nuanced level, in terms of being able to discuss, you know, even just, like, practical things of, how would I do this or do that? Or just things about breaking into certain circles or, kind of, industry related stuff, because they're not from that kind of business background or anything… they're, like, purely 9:00 to 5:00, office work. [S023b M-As-H]

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International students often felt the absence of familial support for their practice after graduating. At this point many of them had left the UK and were making efforts to find a context for their practice – setting up their own enterprises or in employment – often with very few resources to draw upon, especially to sustain their morale. As one student reflected, on returning to her home country:

> It was probably like a reverse culture shock, and initially it was very, very hard because my heart was still in London, probably part of it is still there, and I really just didn't want to come back. And I was thinking, maybe I'll go elsewhere, I just didn't really want to stay here, because it felt a bit like regression after venturing out and doing what I want and then coming back and, I don't know, not living on my own again, not having that full autonomy, and knowing that I have to find a job here…It was tricky as well because most of my close friends are overseas. My closest social circle has been dispersed in the widest way possible. [S124-4b-F-Ch-Int]

When students' familial support is viewed alongside their eventual degree classification result, it is important to note that the presence or absence of familial support and understanding does not seem by itself to determine students' attainment. Familial support has to be understood as acting in concert with the relationships that students build with staff and their peers at UAL. Nonetheless, the question that presents itself is: what can the University do to aid familial support, or to compensate for its absence? This question bears more examination than is possible in this report. However, as a thought-starter, it may be useful to consider:

- To what extent it is easy for students to contact UAL alumni in their field within their localities after graduation?
- Is there potential for UAL alumni networks to offer mentoring support and opportunities for collaboration?
- What opportunities are presented by open days and degree shows to facilitate support within familial contexts? (see the section on degree shows in this report for more on this)

RECOGNITION AND IDENTITY WORK IN INTERACTIONS WITH TUTORS

It is instructive to consider the contexts of family life and interactions with tutors concurrently using the same analytic lens of recognition and identity. What becomes apparent is that recognition experiences in these contexts are related in a number of ways. Sometimes, familial recognition is seemlessly re-enforced in university life. Conversely, there were students who managed to complete with apparently very little experience, as practitioners, of respect, esteem and empathy. At other times recognition in one context can have a compensatory effect for its absence in the other.

Some students benefited from a significant level of reciprocal recognition from their tutors. Occasionally, this is first triggered by a common connection – familiarity with the students' hometown, common personal contacts or mutually held interests in social or political causes:

> … where we gelled, was the fact that she also grew up on a farm, which I didn't know when I first had her as a tutor… I have spoken to [another tutor from a previous year] recently because she came to the show. So I had a chat with her. I also did one of her…[collaborative projects]. …I'd said to her that, out of all my tutors, that she was the one who understood my work the best. I know that she had exhibited at one point with… [a mutual acquaintance] [S111 3a M-Wh-H]

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In this instance above, the student is not only receiving professional recognition but also offers it to his tutors in return. Informality is often intrinsic to expressions of solidarity and esteem, as the following quote also shows:

> Yes, [tutor] is pretty good … because he's not in a way so to the book with the academic side of stuff and I mean in the end like we have to do all the stuff anyway. Like with the portfolio and what not and obviously he has to tell us to do the research …blah blah blah. But there's also the other side of him which is like much more loose and kind of he talks to you more on the level I guess… just as a fellow creator. And not as a student which is really nice because yes, you just talk about things much more honestly and it's not covered up by language that [others might be] afraid to use as a tutor. And [another tutor] is good as well… It's advice for your work but it's personal as well because somehow the advice we get for our work it links into life, your life problems or whatever. And it's stuff that you can apply to things outside of work as well and not just your creative practice. So I think yes, those two tutors have been quite good to work with.
> Researcher: What like?
> I don't know just really simple things like not being afraid to take risks with making decisions about your work and just kind of letting go of things and not thinking too hard about stuff. Just kind of doing and not thinking and little kind of tips like that that they always give us ... I think it's quite good for your whole life.
> [S02 3a M-As-H]

Informality, intimacy and respect characterise such relationships. This student rightly assumes that tutors care about him and his work and that he and the tutors share interests. The impact of his interactions with tutors is beneficial both to his creative work and for his professional and personal development as a designer. He enjoys these interactions and feels relaxed in his tutors' company. As well as being aware of tutors' regard for him, he has an awareness of the professional environment within which his tutors are operating and observes a difference between formal instruction and informal chat, and he prizes the latter.

In some courses it was evident that international students felt that their tutors were interested in what they brought to the course and the relationship between their cultural identity and the course environment:

> I liked that the tutors tried to engage with that as well, asking me about my background and how I might relate to the setting in London and how am I fitting in, what can I bring from my culture into the course and my practice as well. And as an international student, it wasn't difficult to talk to other international students and local students as well. [S124-4b-F-Ch-Int]

However, this international student is very much an exception in the sample. Most international students did not benefit from such relationships and it was rare for black and minority ethnic students to do so too. Reports of such positive interactions, especially if they were frequent, were most often experienced by white home students. However, it is important to note that not all white students found empathy and recognition from tutors:

> I actually feel like [the tutors] don't really know what I'm really doing. That's like, that's been the, my general feeling throughout, kind of. Like, we are such a big year group. And, they don't have, unless you are the kind of person that approaches them all the time, which I am not really, they don't know you.
> Researcher: Why is that?
> I think I am not so good at asking for help, actually. I want to do it on my own. And, I also have my friends that give me feedback as well, so... But …I would like to have that contact with the tutors, it would be good. [S04-3b-F-Wh-Eu]

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This kind of account was more in evidence in the large graphic design and fashion courses than in medium or small ones. There were also instances when students had particular crises where they sought help and sympathy from tutors. This first example is from a student who felt poorly treated:

> I got a little frustrated with the tutor for this one. ... From the prototype it was fine at the first crit. …the tutor liked the idea, and then for the second week, I actually was really ill. I had a fever, so I couldn't make it to the final crit. …. So I worked quite hard on that project and tried to get all my prototypes done and, kind of, finished. And I emailed him that morning really early, and said, 'sir, I'm really sorry. I can't make it, but I have a pdf file of my work. Is it okay that I can send you that?' And he was like, 'yes, fine, send it to me, and I'll ask the group for feedback and report back'. .. I waited that day, the next day, and he didn't give me any feedback, and then I saw... Because the tutors have to fill in feedback on Moodle and the comment was 'insignificant work done or none at all'. Yes, I guess it was like a default feedback. …And just like initial reaction, I guess, because of all the stress of work and just I'm a big worrier. I just broke down because I didn't know what was going on. Because he told me he was going to give me feedback but he didn't. And I asked a friend that was in that tutorial, and apparently he didn't show my work. So I got even more mad. Well, I emailed that tutor and I cc'd it to my own personal tutor, just so she can see it as well. And he just, kind of, replied, 'I can't give you feedback right now. I'm very busy and I'm traveling, try this date, because I'm busy with shoots, but I can't guarantee I can give you feedback'. And he was just like, if I don't get back to you, email me again. And he put 'try' in the quote marks. …So, like, I just felt this tutor doesn't seem he even care or be bothered. It was like he was making me beg for feedback, and it just made me feel really small, like, as a designer.
> [S03 3b F-Ch-H]

This student has more than one experience of this kind where she is attempting to gain empathy for her efforts as a student – in circumstances when she is not able to give of her best. In each instance she is denied the benefit of any empathy from tutors and her self-esteem is undermined. There seems not to be a recognition of the particular barriers she's experiencing. In the instance she recounts above, the first act of disrespect seems to be the tutor's failure to fulfil his promise to show her work to the other students and report back with feedback. The tone and content of his email exchange positions her as unworthy of his esteem or respect. He seems uninterested in her and her work. The effect on her is profoundly damaging to her professional identity: she feels 'small… as a designer.'

Sometimes students' experiences of misrecognition are heightened when they are set within a context of unfavourable social comparison. The example from the following student is also part of a cumulative and consistent pattern of experience:

> I didn't see my pattern cutter [except] once or twice and she was very strict about the fact that I only had 15 minutes with her. So when my 15 minutes had passed she didn't even want to respond to any of my questions anymore. She left but I have seen her so many times spending up to 45 minutes with students. So I think that's a bit of like treating the students differently and I don't support that in any way. I think that's really, really bad. I think I just took distance from it and did my own thing because I don't think anyone really takes you seriously if you try to express… like certain [feedback in] meetings sometimes and the few times I tried to get a word through, like people, don't really listen, they do a lot of talking and talking over you. [S14-3b F-Mx- EU]

This is an interaction in which one would expect the student to experience some form of professional affirmation. Her actual experience is that her professional development is measured in exacting minutes. The observation that others get more time in this context is galling. There is no way to ascertain the particular circumstances within which the technician

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to whom the student refers is operating; and the student account raises questions about the relationship between time allocation and different students' needs; and the ways in which a rationale might be communicated to students. The students' experience should also be understood as part of a recurring pattern of interaction in which other students are perceived to be favoured. Moreover, as a student she feels stifled and does not even feel she is able to make a complaint in the very forum that is intended to enable her to do so.

Jensen and Jetten (2017: 10) point out that some students have difficultly initiating the social interaction that would result in recognition. For example, the student quoted below recalls how he cultivated 'a kind of bravado' which actually prevented him from doing the work itself, and therefore displaying the characteristics that usually invite recognition. He explains:

> It's just… It's my personality. … I think it's probably just tricking myself into thinking that everything's fine. Or like trying, …like a mask, isn't it? I think it's quite normal, people do it, but I'm quite dramatic as well. So it's probably like this kind of quite an obnoxious persona probably. But in my head I thought I was just trying to be liked, but I was probably quite heavy. If that makes sense? And I think people picked up on it and didn't like it. So I felt a lot of hostility. I didn't realise [at the time]. [S84- 4b-Bl-H]

In fact, this student was struggling to situate his practice within the course curriculum. Progressively, over his time at UAL, he came to realise that his interest ultimately lay in an aspect of the course that was peripheral to the interests of tutors. He struggled hard to maintain his motivation, and found avenues to pursue his interests but his efforts were not reflected in his grades or in his relationships with tutors whilst on the course.

Below is another example of a student who looks back on his time at university and gives an account of rather limited interaction with tutors:

> I had no complaints, they weren't mean, but I just didn't really get to know them, I genuinely didn't get to know them – I would be surprised if they knew my name.
>
> Researcher: But also, it sounds like you weren't having conversations with tutors, alongside producing that work, because some people would go in informally and see the tutors about work, as it was progressing, and chat to them, and it sounds as though you were somebody who did the work, but you did it very independently, and didn't seek ongoing conversations about it. Would that be right?
>
> Yes, I'd agree with that. If I was stuck on anything, the only time I would get in touch with anyone in the university was the odd friend in the class, I would ask, 'Is this right? Am I doing this right? What would you do?' But that's as far as it went, I was very independent – and maybe I was wrong in doing that, because I didn't get the best grades for my practical work. I don't know, I went in there as a lone wolf, and I kind of came out as a lone wolf, I didn't really want to mix too much – and I'm not an anti-social person; I just didn't want to be distracted by anything. But I mean, I kind of contradict myself, because even though I didn't get distracted by anything, I ended up getting just bad grades. So, I don't know… [S53 4b M-As-H]

Both of the students quoted above internalise the reasons for their constrained interaction with tutors. Both of them give accounts in which they appear to repel tutors' interest in their work: the first through cultivating a kind of bravado, and the second by avoiding conversations about his work. The first of the students above, explains in another part of his interview that he does not know whether anything he has experienced is structured by race or ethnicity and his own relationship to these concepts is still unfolding. Nevertheless, he observes that:

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It's not easy to be an ethnic minority, in general, especially when … it might be made worse when you're just in like a stressful situation like university or something, because it can affect all types of things. Like it can affect self-esteem, it affects like confidence and things like that. I'm just talking generally. Perhaps like all education facilities need to be more aware that that is possible. Yes, that certainly wasn't kind of addressed at all. [S84-M-Bl-H]

The two students quoted above draw attention to the need to situate tutor-student interactions in the context of wider social contexts where misrecognition and unfair distribution of resources have been integral to the experience of many black, Asian and other minority ethnic students. Repeated experiences of discrimination often structure subsequent and seemingly unconnected interactions.

Finally, in this section we consider the impact on students of feeling that they are held in high esteem as professionals, as they leave their university. The first student quoted below recounts what it is like to receive micro-affirmations from multiple sources:

[My course leader] said I'm like a … professional practitioner, not a graphic design student. And I think that is why the course works so well. … It's a really good buffer year for giving you a chance to catch your breath and get out there … [another tutor] said that a few times to me, that I'm not really a student anymore, that I'm ready to be out there and working. And so, [third tutor] as well, previous course leader. She said to me and three other people … that we're the best … designers she's seen.
Researcher: That's fantastic. How does that make you feel?
Successful. [S51 3a M-Wh-H]

In sharp contrast:

I had like a five minute tutorial just before we finished school and you know what? It was not so helpful because you see the teachers speaking to other people and here you see the difference-making. If someone's English, and someone's not English, depending on what sort of person you are, because I might be more quiet and focussed in school than the people who seem really outgoing and loud in school. They all play it different to people. I got told that I probably had to work really hard and I probably would have to continue working in a department store for a long time before I could find a job whereas I heard the same teacher sitting and talking to another student telling her how great chances she has at getting a job, but really her work isn't … Not even on the level of mine. I don't think that's okay. I don't know if it's something to do with nationalities. … Because it's often the British students who get treated a bit better, or Americans. They can totally achieve much more and you know what? There's also a lot of people who got set up for interviews through the school … these people are chosen to go to the interview with this brand or that brand. I was never one of them. So it's not really fair that the school has the power to help the students out and set them up for interviews but not everyone gets the chance. [S14-3b-F, Mx- EU]

In developing a sense of her future professional life, this student feels tutors have low expectations of her and she has a powerful sense of injustice. She does ultimately retain a belief in her own professional identity but this is sustained despite rather than because of her interactions with staff.

Whereas recognition in the familial context is not a determinant of students' attainment, recognition in the realm of interaction with tutors is very much so. The students who gained first class degrees and most of the students with upper-second class degrees had frequent experiences of respect, empathy and esteem from multiple sources in the university environment. The four students with upper-seconds who had few if any experiences of recognition felt that with better support they might have achieved first class degrees. Three of

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those students were of minority ethnicities. We explore what characterises the trajectories of students with different attainment results in the section below on Assessment.

INCLUSIVE CURRICULUM

In previous reports (Sabri 2014, 2015 and 2016), the findings have drawn attention to the variation in how students find their way around a brief or context of work; the problems and possibilities in 'signing up to the intellectual project that is the course'; the extent to which curricula are perceived to reflect the identities of the course team members; and the extent of their relevance to students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Interventions relating to the development of inclusive curricula have so far focused on the content of reading lists, and to some extent the content of lectures. This is important work, especially when it involves students in seeing the contestability of curricula and the scope for interrogating their own positionality in relation to them.

When asked how they responded to students who wanted to pursue topics or concepts that came from a culture that was unfamiliar to them, some tutors argue that international students came to study at UAL because they 'wanted to learn about London and British culture'. The evidence often cited for this argument is 'they are here.' There are several fallacies embedded in this argument. First, there are numerous reasons a student from another part of the world would choose to study here: the particular credential value of an institution such as UAL in comparison to local universities; a need to study in English; and prior personal connections in London, to name but a few. While many international students may wish to learn about London and British culture, there is no reason to suppose that this is their only or primary aim. Indeed, their choices of dissertation topics, industry experience and research relating to final major projects manifest interests in their own cultures and in the relationships between diverse cultures. Most will also go on to practise in places beyond London and the UK and expect their education to prepare them for this eventuality. Nevertheless, to explore this issue more fully, let us assume that some international students have said that they wish to learn about London and British culture. It should go without saying that there is much to explore with them about what is meant by 'London', 'British' and of course 'culture', and in problematizing which aspects of 'London' and 'British' tend to be foregrounded in our society. Furthermore, there is a great deal to be done in creating appropriate scaffolding that would enable international students to access and see the relevance of those aspects of London and British culture which may be under discussion.

Discussions of inclusive curricula have focused less often on the interplay between students' identity work and their making work and choice of dissertation topics. In their final year, students tended to have to produce a dissertation or design report and a final major project. We focus here on both writing practices and making/design practice with the central questions: what is students' experience of 'self-directed' projects? We end with some ethical questions for tutors about their responses to students who wish to focus on a topic or concept with which they are unfamiliar.

An important curriculum-defining site is the feedback conversation. How a tutor responds to a student's work creates boundaries and proscribes what students come to believe is worthwhile work. In these conversations, tutors are often heard to say 'I don't understand',

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but the phrase is meant and interpreted in many different ways. In this next extended quotation, the student recounts how she goes about explaining her creative intention and the way in which she interprets 'I don't understand'.

> Researcher: I'm just wondering whether you feel that the tutors, when talking to you about this work, whether they understood your intention, your creative intention?
>
> I think they do. Because it's been, like, a long way. Because you have to talk to them clearly, otherwise, they will be saying, 'I don't understand.'
>
> Researcher: So you work quite hard to explain your intention?
>
> Yes. More visually explain. Yes, because sometimes, when they see your portfolio, they will say, 'okay, I get it'. But sometimes, they will say, 'I don't get it'. Then, I will just have to work really hard on the visual thing. Because verbally, I don't have any advantage. I have to focus more on the visual thing.
>
> Researcher: Why don't you have any advantage verbally?
>
> I feel like I'm not good at explaining. So it's better to write it down, or to show it to them. …because sometimes, when [the tutor] was saying, 'I don't understand this, I don't understand that'. I was like, 'okay then, you don't understand'.
>
> Researcher: And that inability to explain verbally, is that to do with language? Or is it more a question of temperament? Or that some things just can't be articulated? If you were explaining it to somebody who spoke Mandarin, you still wouldn't be able to explain it, or is it that it's English?
>
> Yes. I think both of these reasons. Probably, using English might be easier, because all the inspirations, they are all from the English. So if I have to use Mandarin to explain to someone else, I have to translate in my head, so it might be slow. But I think, yes, probably both, to be honest. Yes.
>
> Researcher: Right. And when your tutor says, 'I don't understand,', do they say that to all students?
>
> I think not all the students. But sometimes, like, especially at the beginning of the project. …Sometimes, we can't get the direction right. So they will be like, 'It doesn't make sense to me'. Then, no matter what you're going to say, it's going to sounds like an excuse. So if they already decided they don't understand, so you just don't need to explain anything because they will just fight back, you know, debate. … there's no point to do any explaining, I feel like.
>
> Researcher: So when they say that, is it a, kind of rejection of what you've done?
> Yes. [S74- 3b-F-Ch-Int]

There are several issues raised in this short exchange. The first is that it was very common for students to have difficulty explaining their intention and many, like the student above, developed and honed their capacity to do so over the years. The extent to which language facilitates or inhibits engagement in a curriculum is also raised by this student. She feels she is hampered partially by having to explain in English but she is also having to traverse a conversation about English cultural references with an English tutor who is saying 'I don't understand'.

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The phrases, 'I don't understand', or 'I don't get it,' crop up often in students' accounts of their conversations with tutors. They seem to occur more often in the experience of international students than home students. Of course it is impossible to know the intention of the tutor in this reported exchange or in many others. Different intentions are conceivable: to start a stimulating discussion, to challenge muddled thinking, to close down an exchange, as a substitute for more precise inquiry about a student's work, or as an expression of utter tiredness on the part of the tutor at the end of a long day. Nonetheless, it is a powerful phrase. In the above example, the student experiences it as a rejection of her work and as a comment on the quality of her presentation of it. She feels powerless to engage in a verbal exchange once the tutor has declared 'I don't understand'. 'No matter what you say, it's going to sound like an excuse'. In this instance, 'I don't understand' is not being interpreted as 'I'd really like to understand your work'.

In the following quote, a student describes an empathic exchange with a tutor who helped her gain confidence:

> Usually, we talk through the work, or thinking, the thoughts we have, to see what we are actually trying to achieve. And then once we get to that point, then we discuss. How shall we execute your ideas? In what ways? And she and I, we had the conclusion, because at one point, I was quite confused because my practice was very multidisciplinary. I was going from performance, to film, to puppet making…. I was also telling her, you know, in my spare time, I draw … and I don't know why. So this diagram she drew was… when she sees my practice, it seems… Myself and my experience is at the centre, and all the conceptual thinking is the same. It all comes from the culture, the body. And she told me, each work does root from the same thoughts, but only they are in a slightly different angle and slightly different part of the subject that I want to talk about at that moment. And just having that conversation, sort of, released me from trying to narrow down my practice… I think she's very good at digging out … the most important value [of my work]… [S121-3b-F-As-Int]

In this student's experience the effort to decipher her creative intent is highly collaborative within the conversation with her tutor. In this tutor's practice the notion of 'inclusive curriculum' is bound up with the creative and intellectual value she places on the student as a person, coming to an understanding over time of the specific cultural concepts the student deploys, and establishing with her a shared frame of reference for making sense of her work.

Another dimension of self-directed work in final major projects is the extent to which the student's choice is built on the techniques and interests that she or he has been developing:

> So far I think it's going well, I'm enjoying it, I really do enjoy my course actually, I think this year has been totally different to the first and the second year because it's on another scale… I guess it's an amalgamation of all my experiences I've had in the past years, and now I'm putting them all together into these three different projects. We had nine briefs to choose from, and the way I saw how I was going to choose three briefs out of those nine was what I was going to do in the future and what I've enjoyed in the past. So the work that I'm doing is mostly around culture I guess. [S44-4a-M-As-H].

Although this student sees year 3 as 'totally different', the difference is only possible because it builds on his past achievements and interests. Students who did well in their dissertations such as the one just quoted, often chose to write about a topic or question that had been a long-term interest. There was often also a consonance between what they wanted to do and what their supervisors validated as appropriate topics:

Researcher: Did any conversations with tutors help you refine your focus?

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> Yes, definitely. [Tutor] was the one who, like, just kept reinforcing me to follow it through and just read more and more and more. And by reading more, you find new tangents you want to investigate. And he said that, if I come up with a question that I find interesting, I'm going to investigate it. And he said, if the question was: what is [topic]? It could be as simple as that. Interesting. I've stuck with that question ever since. And that's the title of my dissertation. [S51-3a-M-Wh-H]

The next quote is from a student who wanted to research the representation of a minority ethnicity within a sector of the creative industries but was guided to look at minority ethnicities in general. The advice she received seemed, to her, somewhat arbitrary:

> Yes, I [wanted to research representation of my own ethnicity]. I think everything just keeps changing depending [on] what tutors I get. Because first I had [one tutor], so he guided me the way to do the [particular sector] route. But then after speaking to the new tutor, he was like, 'oh, maybe you should look at other ethnicities as well', not just [your own]. So I think, yes, there would have been... It would be quite nice to have just done [my own ethnicity], but I think. Yes, I don't know. Well, it's too late now.

The tutor who advised this student may have wished to help her develop a sense of impartiality by moving away from focusing on her own ethnicity. Assuming her account of the advice she received is accurate from the tutor's point of view, it is worth reflecting on the many other directions she could have taken by focusing on the distinctive aspects of the representation of her own ethnicity, and whether her initial idea might have led to a more original and in-depth piece than she was able to produce. For example, she may have looked at the intersection a particular ethnic group with social and economic structures, the particular stereo-types at play, their expression in popular culture and so on. Her regret at having been guided to 'broaden' her focus suggests that something of her intrinsic motivation was lost, and it is not clear to what extent the guidance was offered from a place of expertise in or discomfort with the student's interest.

Ethical questions

What is the responsibility of individual lecturers when students choose projects that are beyond their expertise? On the one hand, practice-based lecturers and dissertation supervisors will be keen to retain a student's intrinsic motivation in a subject which is so crucial to driving their learning and completion. On the other hand, they wish to be able to offer proper critical feedback, and there are limits to the extent to which this can happen when it is the student who has the advanced knowledge and the lecturer has none at all, and possibly, little interest in developing it. Is it better to find some common ground, or does the lecturer have a duty to take an interest and develop his or her expertise in the student's area of interest?

The second ethical question mirrors the first but sets it in the context of longer-term strategic planning. When course cohorts are consistently diverse in their composition, where say there is a regular intake of students from China, Korea, India or the USA, what is the responsibility of the course team in ensuring that their curriculum is relevant to the course cohort? This is not an argument to produce curricula that lack coherence and 'cover' topics from all over the world. The question is about establishing relevance and providing appropriate scaffolding for students from these backgrounds, whatever the curriculum design.

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Assessment: the final reckoning

Previous reports have explored the dynamics that surround formative assessment (Sabri 2014, 2015 and 2016) as an engine of educative development and attainment. In this final report the focus shifts to two questions: how did students respond to their final degree results; and what explanations did they have about how these came about? These questions are significant because they tell us something about students' beliefs about assessment and are suggestive of possible interventions. The degree outcomes of students within the research sample are summarised in Table 3 within the Introduction.

Many students, including some with upper-second class degrees believed that the work they had produced in their final year was unrepresentative of their ability and potential. A small number believed their relationships with tutors unduly influenced their final degree results. For example,

> …there was a girl who got a first and I just felt a bit, 'oh, she got one? Is it…? …could it be something to do with my tutor not liking me a little bit?' … could it still be that funny feeling I had about my teacher just not liking me? … I think that made me feel a bit like… about the experience. [S122-3b-F-Wh-EU]

It is worth noting that while 74% of white students at UAL believe that assessment and marking are fair, only 61% of black students do so (UCPU: NSS 2017). Within this research sample, few students located an injustice in assessment practices but rather in the nature and extent of the support they received in producing their work. In the case of one student, it seemed that she never had an honest conversation with tutors about her work. She felt misunderstood and that she could not reveal her creative intention, which centred on her faith stance, to her tutors because she believed that they would not take it seriously. Another student felt that she had been allocated a dissertation tutor who spoke in such complex academic terms that she could not understand her. The student asked to change supervisors and was not allowed to do so. She then managed to have a short informal conversation with another tutor that she knew from a previous stage to give her some guidance. The student eventually got a c+ for her dissertation but was certain that she could have got a higher mark had she had good tutor support.

Many students believed that tutors' assessments were influenced by their own interests and proclivities:

> I think, she marked me more strictly than most of the other tutors. In that year, I started off with a B and ended up with a B+. So it was like a little bit up. And so that was like. But, out of all the tutors, she understood my work better than any, and that includes [another tutor]. I think, [the other tutor], her interests are a bit different. She's into film and video in a bigger way, although I did sort of experiment with some aspects of that. I just think that my subject matter is probably not the sort of thing that she's that interested in really. [S111-3a-M-Wh-H]

Asked about the role of the assessment criteria, this student felt that he did have to fulfil the criteria, and he did look at them but he did not think that they fully accounted for the variation between students' marks. Tutors' own interests and the prior relationship of student and tutor are seen to be significant. This finding is consistent with the research on assessment criteria conducted some five years ago (Sabri 2012).

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A few students, particularly among those who got lower second and third class degrees, gave an account of their final year that was characterised by big changes in their personal motivation and interests on the course. Sometimes, this was because they had a focus on careers that lay outside the creative industries but more often the change in their focus was simply something that they had not found a way of talking about with tutors:

> … I wasn't a very good pattern cutter, and I wasn't a very good designer. I remember distinctly not even really knowing what a silhouette was, which is insane for a final year. But at the same time, I really [tried to] train [so] that I had that knowledge. … they liked my stuff at the beginning, and I did a really good presentation. And I'm very good concept-wise. I'd like deconstructed [an aspect of fashion design]. So at the beginning it was great, but then when my tutor was like, 'oh you should put that there, you should make a jacket out of this', I just became really uninterested. And so it just it made me realise what I do like to do. … [my new interest] didn't really work with the tutors. And then, you know, consequently I didn't get a very good grade. I just passed. Yes but yes, throughout I'd always fail. Like most of the modules I failed and had to resit, which was horrible. I was constantly behind. [S84-4b-M-Bl-H]

A small number of students – some with third class degrees but also one with a first class degree – came to see grades as unimportant and ultimately a distraction from their practice to which they felt committed for its own sake:

> Researcher: Did you feel that you did the best that you could do in that final year? For the final major project and so on?
> Yes. Now I don't even remember what grade I got but I was not so happy with it. For me that's not creative and so I don't think… I've always had a problem with like I don't think you can grade… You can grade very straightforward design maybe, like communication design, I guess. … Yes, I had decided anyway not to get so influenced by that. [S04-4a-Wh-F-Eu]

The student above cannot remember her grade (lower second) but recalls her emotional reaction to it. She found in the final year that tutors seemed not to have time for her but she developed good working relationships with technical staff and became absorbed in her work giving little attention to formal assessment criteria or to explicitly demonstrating that she had met them. In in her case, the process of assessment seemed superfluous other evaluations of her work which she considered more meaningful.

Almost all the students recounted last-minute crises of one kind or another – with respect to final major projects and dissertation hand-ins. Sometimes these involved them in recasting or completely constructing new work within a short time. Crises were more common and seemed to have greater implications among students with lower-second and third class marks. In some students' circumstances, gaining a lower second was a remarkable feat. For example, one student was made homeless; another unexpectedly fell out with her collaborator; a third lost the only electronic copy of his dissertation. In their final year, students' different resources within and outside the University would help them avert or would exacerbate these crises.

The report on students' engagement with industry (Sabri 2017) established that students' engagement with industry, and in particular participation in the Diploma in Professional Studies (DPS), has a positive effect on students' attainment and on closing the gap in attainment. The ways in which the DPS seems to propel attainment is described in this student's comments:

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> I loved DPS, I really loved having that year out … it really helped prepare me for the final year to be more confident and calm and knowing what I wanted to do and more focused in being okay with … whatever I wanted to do as long as I was happy with it. I didn't really mind so much about the grade. I was quite concerned about 'got to get a first, got to get a first', in the first and second year and then through having the year out and it really made me realise that actually the most important thing coming out of university is to have a really strong portfolio, to be proud of what I've done, and to have learnt as much as I possibly can. Because they never ask what grade you got, no-one every really asks which university you went to, it's a lot more focused on your portfolio and you as a person. [S43 4b F-Wh-H]

The discipline and motivation that had become habitual in a year alone also stood this student in good stead, as she quickly adjusted to a lighter timetable in which she was expected to drive her own work. Her insight about university grades and the greater significance of her portfolio in comparison to them is also a common one among DPS students. What the student above describes can be understood as the impact of experiences of recognition in a professional environment, and the ripple effect this has on her identity as a student.

THE DEGREE SHOW AS A SITE OF RECOGNITION

The degree shows post-date submission and assessment and so cannot be said to be part of a causal mechanism in relation to attainment. However, it is worth exploring what the degree shows tell us about how students and their work are recognised. After all, the planning for the shows and students' preparation for them reaches back into the final year.

Practice in the way that students' work is exhibited varied widely across colleges. In some courses, notably at CSM and Chelsea there were courses that exhibited every student's work in roughly commensurate conditions. At CSM in particular, students felt that they had adequate space to show their work and that processes for space allocation and for getting involved in organising the degree shows were transparent and fair.

In other contexts, notably at LCC and LCF, some courses were selective about which students' work was exhibited and how much of it. Many students at LCC and LCF experienced selectivity as arbitrary. The only exceptions to this experience were those students who were actively involved in the organisation of the degree shows.

Not having one's work exhibited had an impact on the extent to which students felt recognised. One student who understood that his work would not be shown, decided not to invite his family to the degree show since 'there was no point'. In the event his work was shown but the detrimental impact on his familial context was already made.

Finally, it is worth reflecting on what is being foregrounded in the different ways in which degree shows are organised. At CSM, it seemed to the researcher that individual students and their work were at the centre of the shows, and business cards or labels enabled visitors to get in touch with the graduating students. Similarly at Chelsea and Camberwell, students' individual work was at the forefront, and so too was a narrative about the course as a whole and the cohort of students in that year. At LCC, the course, and specifically the range of work that is possible to do in a given course, seemed to be foregrounded. The context was one in

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which prospective students could have a conversation about the characteristics of the course. However, it was difficult, in these courses, to attribute work to particular students or to have a means of getting in touch with them. The LCF show also emphasised the creation of an impression of the kind of education and practices on offer: LCF itself was the focal point, particular courses less so, and selected student work offered examples of the possibilities rather than featuring in its own right.

It is unsurprising that there should be variation between the degree shows – their location in different buildings with different limitations of space alone would dictate this. However, there are here differences in the way that students' final work is valued, and how that value is recognised in relation to the work of others. Moreover, the degree show is a site of overlap between the students' UAL world and their familial and social contexts beyond the university. It is from these contexts that their main sources of support will come in the coming months. The degree show is a space where students could show family members something about their practice, and demonstrate the respect that it has from their tutors, college and other practitioners.

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Conclusions and recommendations

There has been inequality in the attainment outcomes of white and black and minority ethnic students for many years: this report refers to statistical data going back 10 years (9 years in the Elston analysis and the most recent year from UCPU). Inequality has been constant despite several initiatives to raise awareness among staff and formulate interventions to address it. Why has the inequality persisted and even increased in 2016-17? Some might say that the University simply reflects the inequalities in our wider society (Equalities and Human Rights Commission: 2016). However, the attainment gap nationally stands at 16% (EHRC: 2016) and several other universities (Kent, Coventry, Kingston and Derby for example) have succeeded in recent years in narrowing inequality in attainment for their students. This is cause for hope: this work is possible.

Some of the work needed is underway at UAL but has yet to come to fruition. For example, the new dashboards that present the statistics relating to attainment (among many other useful data) are up and running. It remains to be seen in the coming months how much they permeate staff's awareness and whether they become an integral part of course management and development. Furthermore, there are intellectual, ethical and affective dimensions in engaging with these statistics. When individuals see the difference between the degree awards to white students, and black and minority ethnic students, to what extent is it understood as an injustice rather than simply a disparity?

The qualitative evidence from this longitudinal study describes in some detail over five reports (of which this is the fifth) the factors that underlie the statistical correlations. This evidence is suggestive of the kinds of interventions that can be taken by individuals, courses and programmes to ensure all students fulfil their potential. Engagement with the findings has been slow, sporadic and sparse; though the planned improved accessibility of the reports online may help to sustain more systematic use of them. Workshops and meetings relating to attainment have been numerous (from the Academic Leaders Forum to Changing Mindsets, Learning for All, Shades of Noir initiatives and SU Arts activities). However, these events reach a regular core of already engaged staff and only slowly are enlarging their number. As such, it is not yet evident that inequality in attainment is being widely discussed or is yet seen as everyone's problem. The problem seems entirely avoidable for the majority of UAL staff.

Concurrently the prioritisation of addressing the attainment gap has risen to prominence at an institutional level, but it remains to be seen whether this renewed sense of urgency results in a widening of the debate that includes a critical mass of staff who influence the day-to-day experience and identity formation of students. The process of conducting this research including the tutor interviews, some limited experience of communicating its findings, and working alongside a range of colleagues at UAL suggest three guiding principles:

1. Colleagues new to this problem of inequality in attainment – or new to its discussion - have to define it and understand it for themselves.[2]
2. Some aspects of attainment – in particular matters surround inclusive curricula – necessitate renewed genuine debate and collaboration with students.
3. The discussion of inequality and injustice is never a purely intellectual one when the context is one's own professional practice: this is a sensitive and highly emotive area

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[2] I am grateful to John Seth for this observation.

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of work. Grandstanding (as explored by Tosi and Warmke 2016) results in increased cynicism, outrage exhaustion, and group polarization. It requires leadership, particularly on the part of programme directors and course leaders, to create an environment in which respectful and constructive discussion can take place.

This report is consistent with earlier conclusions that the four most promising sites of intervention are:

Site of intervention	Evidence and resources from the Identity and Experience project
Reflection on and development of **tutor student interaction: the concepts of micro-affirmation, identity formation and recognition** are recommended as tools for reflection, analysis, discussion and change in day-to-day practices.	This report – section on recognition and identity work in interactions with tutors; section on degree shows. Case studies from (2013) Students' experience and identity at UAL: Year 1 report (2015) Students' practice and identity work in art and design: Year 2 report
Formative assessment as the engine of students' attainment.	(2013) Students' experience and identity at UAL: Year 1 report- section on feedback and reception. (2015) Students' practice and identity work in art and design: Year 2 report – section on being understood and making sense of feedback and assessment (2016) Fine Art students at UAL
Students' engagement with industry as a means of developing practitioner identities and improving attainment particularly for disadvantaged groups.	(2017) UAL students' engagement with industry and communities of practice: Year 3 report (2012) Students' engagement in industry projects at UAL: tensions between enterprise and educational imperatives
Inclusive curriculum: attending to both the substantive content of curricula and to the support of students' self-directed projects; including addressing the ethical questions raised in this report.	This report – section on inclusive curriculum. (2013) Students' experience and identity at UAL: Year 1 report – Conceiving and making work. (2015) Students' practice and identity work in art and design: Year 2 report – section on developing creative and intellectual interests. (2016) Fine Art students at UAL http://shadesofnoir.org.uk/ - especially but not only the Education section.

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Interventions in each of these areas should be tailored to particular course contexts. This report of findings seeks to inform course leaders and programme directors in particular who wish to understand the causal mechanisms that lie behind the statistics they see on the dashboards, and go on to audit their curriculum and day-to-day practices with a view to formulating interventions to close the attainment gap. These are some of the elements that are set out in a general methodology for undertaking interventions set out in the University's Addressing Inclusive Attainment page:
http://www.arts.ac.uk/about-ual/teaching-and-learning/shared-practice/inclusive-teaching--learning/inclusive-attainment-/addressing-inclusive-attainment/
Importantly, this methodology also refers to the evaluation of interventions, a crucial element if those undertaking interventions are to maintain their motivation, use scarce resources as effectively as possible, and be able to inform successful interventions across UAL.

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