Exploring student perceptions of the inclusive curriculum:
a student-staff collaborative research project

Project Team: Denise Lee, Phil Carey, Emma Smith, Elena Zaitseva

Student Researchers: Deshan, Diana, Jasmine, Keji, Kinga, Milad, Rachel, Shayan,

Always equal but never the same

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

LIVERPOOL
JOHN MOORES
UNIVERSITY

bluenotes
group

bn

- Faculty research grant provided by Explorance.

- Opportunity to use Bluepulse as part of the Explorance initiative to support universities during pandemic.

- Excellent support provided by Matt Claridge (Customer Success Manager) and Stephanie Smith (Bluepulse Product Specialist).

Project team
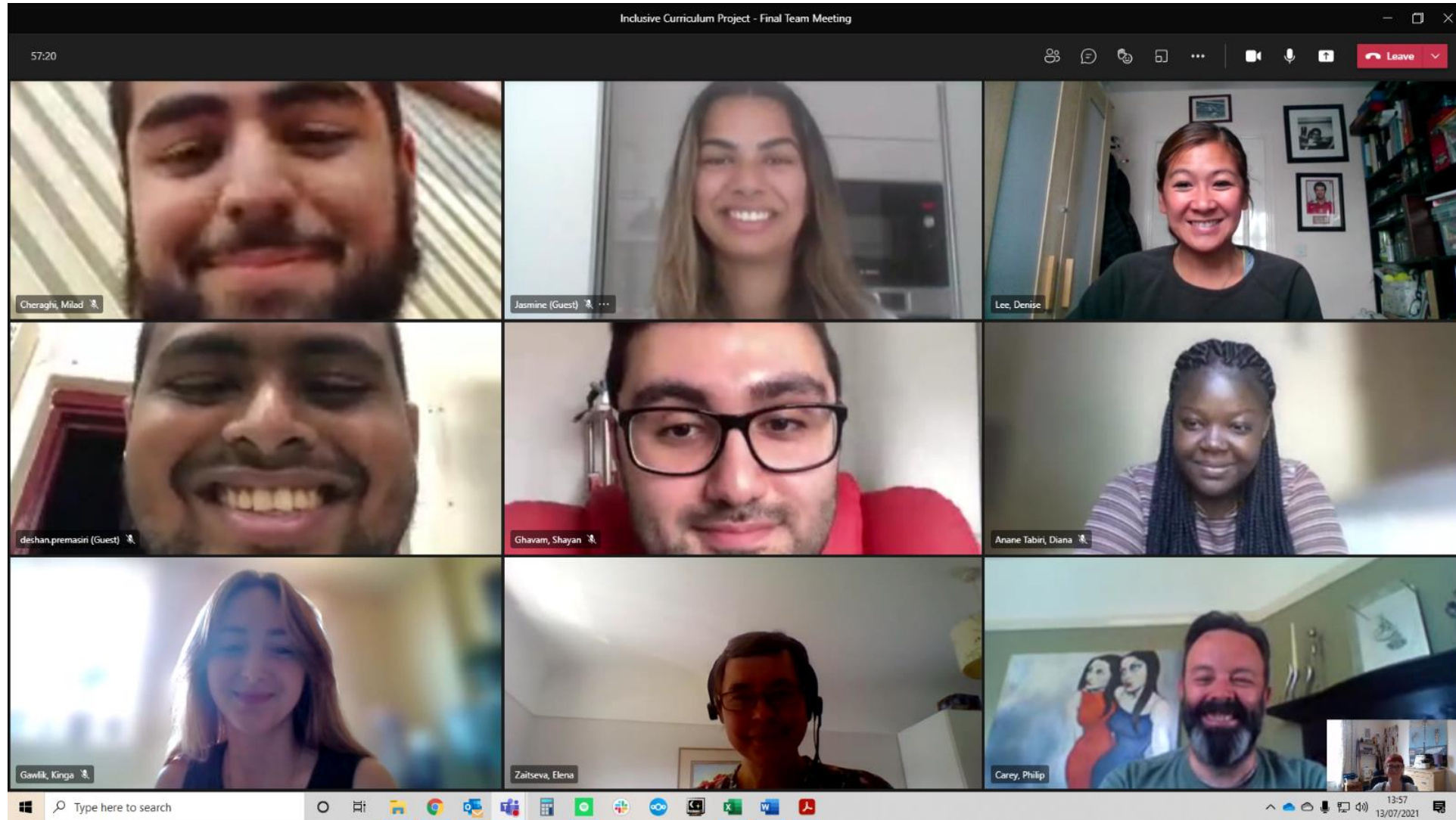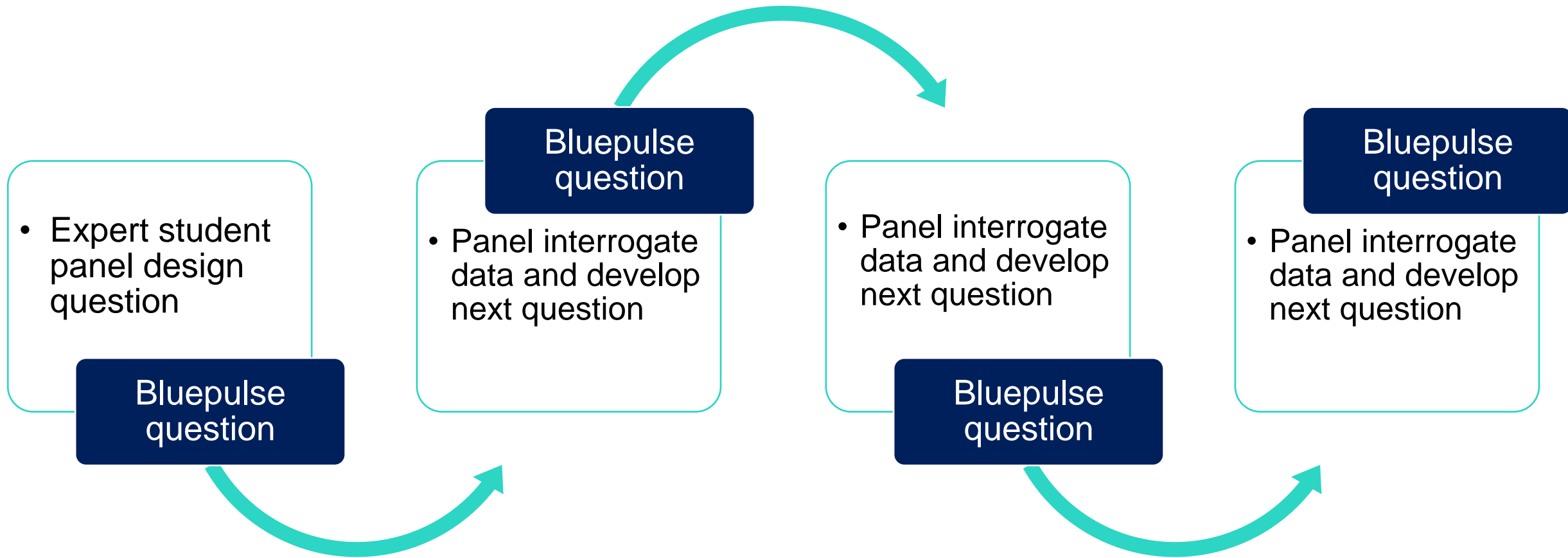
About Liverpool John Moores University

- Based in the City of Liverpool, North-West England
- 200 years heritage in providing Higher Education
- Strong emphasis on widening participation
- 22,000 students (11.5% from Black and Minority Ethnic backgrounds)

Project aims and objectives

- Understanding student priorities in relation to inclusive curriculum, with specific focus on decolonising the curriculum

- Exploring if there are there any statistically significant differences in student perceptions of the inclusive curriculum based on demographic characteristics, such as race/ethnicity or subject area, and determining which factors are influencing student priorities

- Identifying where colonial modes of thinking are more likely to be reproduced through curriculum content and design, and how it could be challenged

- Exploring how progressive changes towards inclusive curricula in Engineering could be specifically supported

- Expert student panel design question

Bluepulse question

Bluepulse question

- Panel interrogate data and develop next question

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Bluepulse question

Bluepulse question

- Panel interrogate data and develop next question

Adapted from the Delphi Research Method

Bluepulse questions

Question one: Rate and comment

- How inclusive is your curriculum?

Question Two: Comment only

- When do you feel the strongest sense of connection to your programme?

Question Three: Comment only

- 'If you could change anything about your course to make it more inclusive for you and others, what would you change?

Question Four: Rate and comment

- Have you ever felt left out on your course or at the University?

Analysis

All students sent Bluepulse question*.

Engagement via Bluepulse app or e-mail link.

Demographic and other characteristics captured.

Student-researchers review data (numeric and text) in 2 teams.

Full student panel meet with project team.

Quantitative data statistically analysed by student characteristics.

Qualitative data thematically analysed.

*Reports for previous questions provided to encourage engagement

- Had an opportunity to pilot the platform in Semester 1

- Used it as an institutional tool rather than for course level communication

- Easy and quick set up from administrative perspective

What could be improved/developed further:

- Type of responses (e.g. can't use yes/no with comments; emoticon scales are not intuitive)

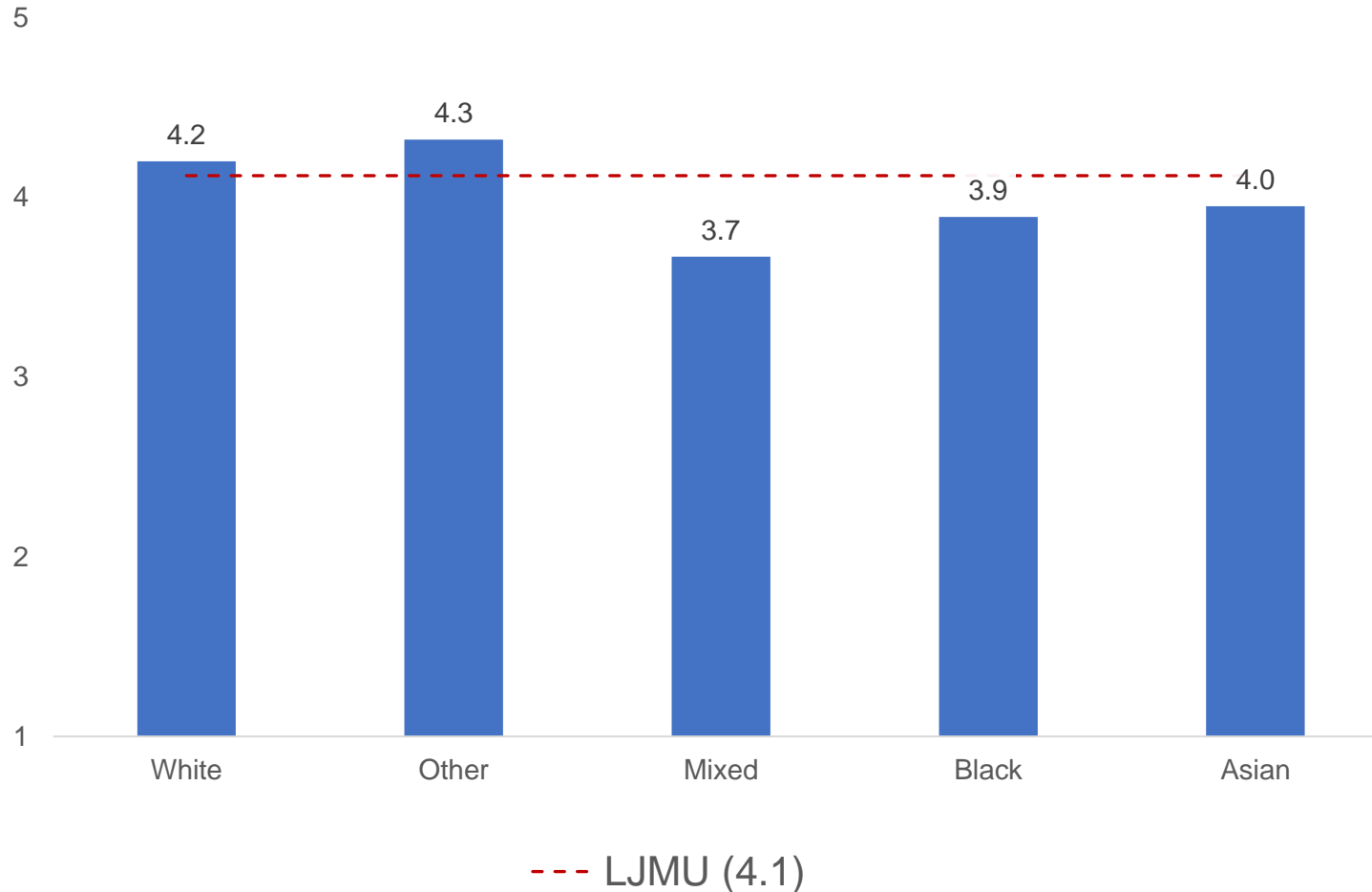- Personalisation of notification emails.

Bluepulse question response

Question	Total
Q1	452
Q2	315
Q3	83
Q4	297

Findings: quantitative analysis

Q1: How inclusive is your curriculum?

(5 point rating scale)

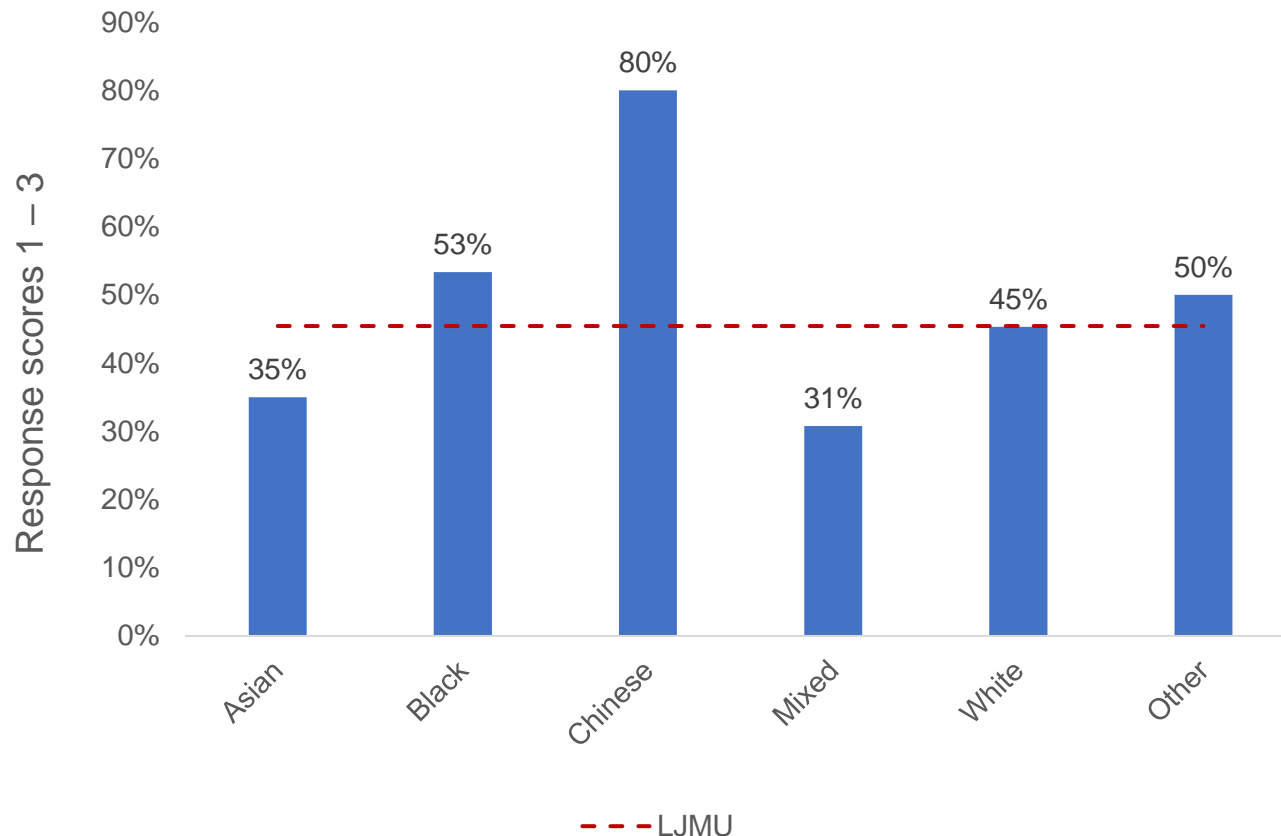No significant differences between responses of students by demographic group

Mixed ethnicity students gave the lowest rating

Male students had a slightly higher mean than female (4.20 vs 4.11)

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Q2: When do you feel the strongest sense of connection to your programme?

Differences between responses of BAME and white students identified by semantic analysis:

BAME students: often mention lectures, engaging content, being connected with peers. Importance of practice based learning/workshops, doing assignments and making progress with the studies.

White students: included references to wider university experience, including placements. Being 'able' is often mentioned in white student comments – a self-reflection on own progress and ability to achieve.
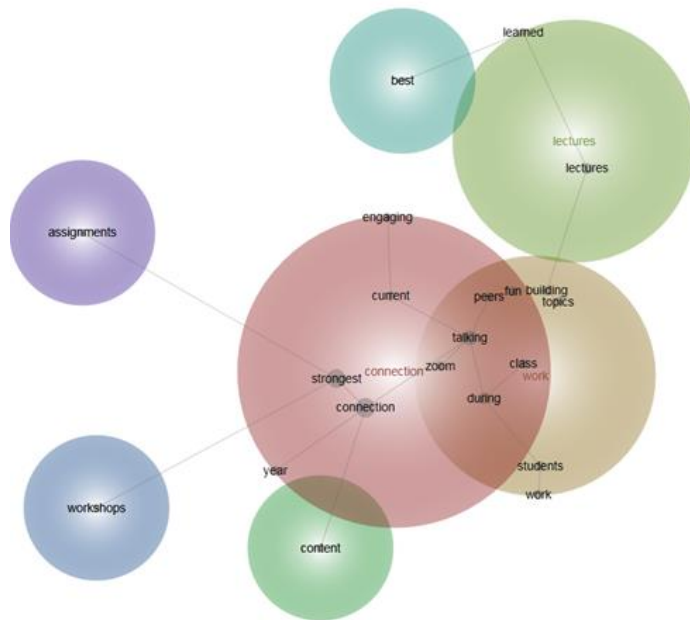
Q3: If you could change anything about your course to make it more inclusive for you and others, what would you change?

BAME: group work, module 'voice', assignments, lectures

White: student support, social time, having people from more diverse backgrounds, changes related to inclusivity

General:

Many students seemed to struggle to distinguish between inclusion and representation

Greater diversity in assessment, inclusivity training for students and staff; more inclusive content and case studies mentioned.

Overarching themes

- Inclusive curriculum was associated with feeling valued, having a voice and feeling included in the learning process

- Curriculum content tended to be seen as less problematic

- Representation of self or others in curricula was rarely noted
  - Students from minority groups appeared more interested in this than their white peers

- Potential negative impact of pandemic-induced changes to the curriculum and student experience on mental health

- References to communication, isolation and detachment appear to be driven by pandemic restrictions

- Staff development
  - Enhancing/raising cultural awareness
  - Curriculum content and management
- Student allyship
  - Ethical behaviours
  - Ongoing conversation
    - Student Union involvement/campaigns
    - Case studies from/for students
- Student resources
  - Prayer rooms
  - EDI webpages & training materials for induction
- Processes and procedures
  - Incident reporting
  - Evaluation
  - Validation & review

- Further research to unpick reasons for some ethnic groups feeling more left out than others
- Difference between inclusion and representation articulated more clearly to students
- Decolonising the curriculum – content and delivery.
- Measuring impact of the interventions is a paramount (and a very challenging) task
  - Bespoke module evaluation & institutional surveys
  - Student feedback – national and local processes
  - Curriculum renewal activity

Thank you
Any questions?