Black Access:

A Student Collaboration to Develop and Deliver programmes for Black Students

Nice to meet you!

**Soul -
Black Access Intern**

**Laura -
Black Access Officer**

Today we will cover…

➜ Landscape in the UK for Black students
➜ An introduction to Black Access and how we started
➜ The importance of 'for and by' programmes
➜ Staff working as allies
➜ Black Access team structure
➜ Challenges we have faced (and overcome)
➜ Benefits of Black Access to all those involved
➜ Our recommendations to you
➜ Q&A

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Current UK landscape

My Experience as a Black Student at a PWI

- Finding it difficult to find my 'community'

- Frustration with feeling my voice wasn't heard as a Black student before Black Access- who is my ally at this uni?

- Feeling alone in my struggles

The birth of Black Access...

➔ Black students make up **2% of each UG intake** at UoY

➔ September 2020: A&O staff began to explore how we can **improve the inclusivity for Black student**s at UoY

➔ October 2020: **Research into the current landscape** in the UK - what's the experience and barriers for Black students?

The birth of Black Access...

➔ November 2020: **Focus groups** with current Black students (eg. BAME Officers, Student Ambassadors, ACS members etc)

➔ January 2021: The idea of a WP programme specifically for Black students was born, alongside school workshops (**2 key strands emerged**)

➔ February 2021 - November 2021: **Programme development**, **Student Team** recruitment, Participant **applications** open

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What is Black Access?

Strand One:

➔ Progressive programme, from first year sixth form/college, ending after 1st year UG (if opting UoY)

➔ Participants have chance to receive alternative offer of up to 3 grades below the standard, plus opportunity to receive scholarship (on completion)

➔ Focus on 3 main themes: Applying to university, Exams and study skills, Transitional support

What is Black Access?

Strand Two:

➔ Supporting schools with talks and workshops delivered by Black students

➔ Primarily online so far

➔ Student Team talk about: Being Black at York, Applying to university, Black Access programme

Our first cohort...

➔ January 2022: **Launch for new programme students**
  ◆ 64 students in cohort
  ◆ 13 student staff

➔ By August 2022, we delivered:
  ◆ 7 events (6 online, 1 in person) for Black Access
  ◆ Plus, chance to attend YESS residential, complete online course, 1 to 1 chat AND focus groups

➔ 65% cohort unlocked additional benefits eg. reduced offer and 92% attended 2 or more activities

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Our key themes

Our 6 key themes underpin every aspect of Black Access...

1. Black students visible
2. Honest and raw
3. Access to role models
4. Importance of social media
5. Student life
6. Study support

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Activity:
Would you be able to answer questions that a Black student may ask you about your university?

The importance of 'for and by' programmes

Authenticity

- Highlighting the diversity of Blackness
- Sometimes education and empathy is not enough
- Distrust towards predominantly White institutions (hitting quotas, using POC students as marketing, tokenism)
- We are honest about our experiences as Black students at a PWI

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The importance of 'for and by' programmes

Role models

- Black youth don't get as many role models as their White peers, especially in academic spaces
- You can't be what you don't see- blazing a trail for the next generation of Black students
- The importance of specific and tailored advice- understanding cultural barriers such as familial pressure

The importance of 'for and by' programmes

A safe space and community

- Black students have to leave their community behind when they go to university
- Programmes like this show students there is a community waiting for them when they get to university
- Creating a space free from code-switching and ignorance
- Community creates safety which creates honesty

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Being an Ally

- Empowering the student-led nature and advocating for the Student Team

- Continual self-improvement, learning and active listening

- Supporting and advocating for change

Being an Ally

- It's not just about Black Access…
  - Providing a safe space
  - Building a bigger Black community at York
  - Forming bonds and friendships
  - Enabling Black voices to support change across the wider University
  - Supporting our UoY students to build skills, confidence and experience
  - Boosting representation of Black voices

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Student Team Roles

- Project Interns (x3)
  - Lead on social media
  - Lead on marketing
  - Ran events such as live nights and school talks
  - Meet for Advisory Board strategy meetings

- Ambassadors (x9)
  - Speak to students on online platform
  - Support with content creation and delivery

- Planning coordinators (x7)
  - Meet for Advisory Board strategy meetings
  - Design and develop Black Access
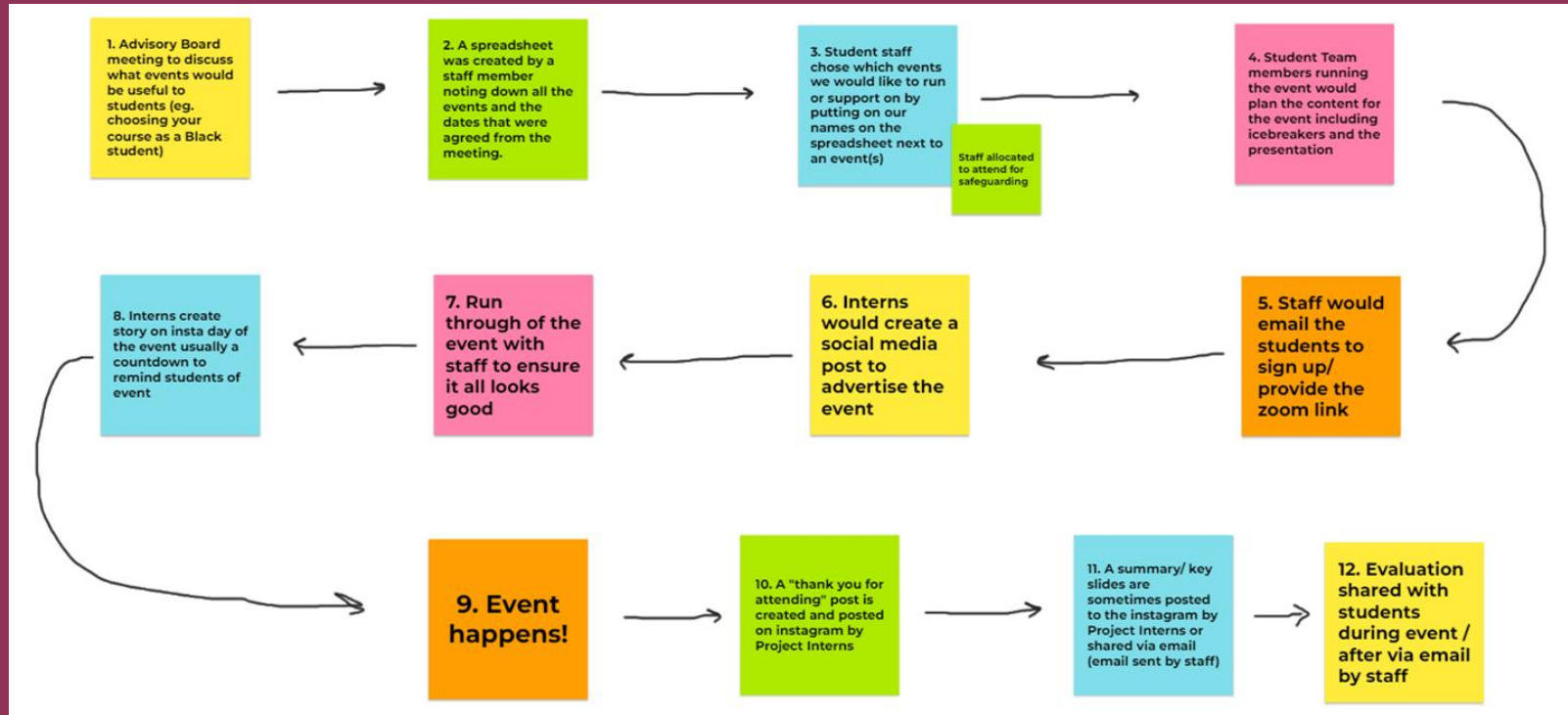
Staff Team Roles

- Manager
    - Overall project manager
    - Safeguarding lead
    - Budget holder

- Officer
    - Line manager and support for Student Team
    - Supporting Student Team

- Graduate Coordinator
    - Supporting Student Team eg. marketing emails

- Administrator
    - Managing the inbox, bookings and organising student data

Running an event (in practice)

1. Advisory Board meeting to discuss what events would be useful to students (eg. choosing your course as a Black student)

2. A spreadsheet was created by a staff member noting down all the events and the dates that were agreed from the meeting.

3. Student staff chose which events we would like to run or support on by putting on our names on the spreadsheet next to an event(s)

Staff allocated to attend for safeguarding

4. Student Team members running the event would plan the content for the event including icebreakers and the presentation

5. Staff would email the students to sign up/ provide the zoom link

6. Interns would create a social media post to advertise the event

7. Run through of the event with staff to ensure it all looks good

8. Interns create story on insta day of the event usually a countdown to remind students of event

9. Event happens!

10. A "thank you for attending" post is created and posted on instagram by Project Interns

11. A summary/ key slides are sometimes posted to the instagram by Project Interns or shared via email (email sent by staff)

12. Evaluation shared with students during event / after via email by staff

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Discussion:

What do you think may be some of the challenges that come with running a programme like this?

Staff Challenges

In Summer 2022, 10/13 of our team graduated

- Documented action plans / content ideas
- Creation of Alumni Network
- Handover from Interns to new Interns
- Existing Student Team support with recruitment and training to ensure we have consistency across teams
- Recruiting multiple roles within 1 recruitment cycle, as opposed to separate cycles previously

Student staff challenges

A large amount of freedom meant it took us some time to find our footing on terms of things like:

- What to post and branding
- Communicating with each other
- Collaborating on projects
- How our roles intertwined

Student staff challenges

Overcoming Challenges:

- Communication and planning was key
- Creating group chats for: Interns, Interns and Uni Staff and Black Access Student Team to communicate
- Creating documents to track what we as Interns were working on
- Creating a posting schedule
- Having weekly meetings with our managers
- A little bit of luck

Discussion:

What do you think may be some of the benefits to running a programme like this?

Benefits - Student Team

- Gaining career skills and confidence which projected us into the next stages of our lives (eg. career, personal statement for masters in education policy)
- Being able to act as the academic role models many of us didn't get the chance to have
- Being able to make an impact
- Finding community within each other

Benefits - Programme Participants

"It's really **empowering** to see these opportunities provided."

"I enjoyed **hearing the stories** from Black students about their **experiences** at university, as it was something I was extremely concerned about"

"I enjoyed the **community** sense of it all! Everyone was so friendly and we were all in the same boat."

"Meeting other Black young people and **making friends** with them."

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Benefits - Staff

- Support Student Team to develop both personally and professionally
- Better equipped to understand and support our Black students (across all of our programmes)
- Rewarding, unique and supportive programme to work on

Benefits - Wider University

- Improving inclusivity and diversity of campus for the Black community
- Student Team support other teams eg. Marketing, International
- Student Team advising on wider university issues eg. Reporting tool, Race equality
- More support for Black students = Black students more likely to apply

Our recommendations to you…

- Build your offering based on your own students' feedback, issues and needs

- The 'for and by' nature of the programme has been our most effective tool

- Do your own research and learning, and lots of listening!

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Reflections to take away:

What's the current landscape for Black students at your institution?

How could you implement the 'for and by' nature into a programme at your institution?

Thanks for listening!

Get in touch: black-access@york.ac.uk

Visit our website: york.ac.uk/schools-and-colleges/post-16/black-access