

Unequal Opportunities: Graduate Employability and Progression

The number of students progressing to graduate jobs or postgraduate study is highly differentiated by class, ethnicity and gender. This event draws on research findings to describe some of the material and cultural mechanisms that maintain inequalities and explore strategies for addressing them. The day includes expert talks, practice examples from NERUPI members, a panel discussion and an afternoon workshop with Liz Thomas to explore employability initiatives using a Theory of Change.

Programme

- ◆ **9:45** **Virtual Coffee & Registration**
- ◆ **9:55** **Welcome, Annette Hayton, NERUPI Convenor**
- ◆ **10:00** **Transitioning from University into the Graduate Labour Market: the Challenge of Class and Gender Inequalities**
Dr Richard Waller, Associate Professor of the Sociology of Education, UWE Bristol

The phenomenon of people's access to, experience of, and outcomes from higher education being informed by their social class position is nothing new. Yet despite years of policy initiatives and interventions, significant inequalities remain between working- and middle-class young people regarding their chances of going to university, the type of university attended, and their graduate outcomes. Paired Peers was a two-part longitudinal study (2010-2103 and 2014-2017) funded by the Leverhulme Trust which tracked 90 undergraduates studying at either of Bristol's two universities. The project matched pairs of students by class, gender and subject discipline both within and between the two institutions, following them from induction to graduation and for several years beyond, exploring their post-university lives and careers. The project highlighted not just what class-based inequalities existed in access to university, experiences of university and transitions into the workplace, but also surfaced the often hidden processes by which these inequalities were established and maintained.
- ◆ **10:30** **BAME Employability Prospects and Opportunities: Challenging Inequalities**
Karen Kufuor, Principal Lecturer, School of Organisations, Economy & Society, University of Westminster

This paper explores strategies employed at Westminster Business School to boost employability prospects for BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) students. It specifically examines initial findings from a three-year Quintin Hogg funded BAME employability project aimed at boosting BAME employability prospects and reducing the gap faced by University of Westminster students. Working in partnership with Everything D&I (equality, diversity and inclusion careers) and top graduate recruiters determined to improve diversity within their organisations, the programme provides a variety of real-world work-based employability experiences, aimed at improving work readiness and boosting confidence and sense of belonging among BAME undergraduate students.

- ◆ **11:00** **BREAK**

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- ◆ **11:15** **Practice Examples**
Yasmina Mallam-Hassam, Head of Employability Services, St Mary's University
Be SMART– An Access and Participation Plan Initiative: This case study will talk through our Be SMART initiative to support the employability and progression of BAME students into graduate employment. It will discuss the rationale for the initiative and the considerations for its inception. We will discuss the impact measurement and the lessons learned from the process.

Dr Georgina Binnie, Manchester Cancer Research Centre & Cancer Research UK Manchester Centre, University of Manchester
Barriers and Routes into Postgraduate Research: Exploring Diversity in the Cancer Sciences Training Lifecycle: Cancer Research UK have recently shared diversity data for their funding schemes for the first time, acknowledging the importance of diversity and inclusion in the cancer sciences research community to ensure equality and help to beat cancer sooner. The CRUK Manchester Centre have had 'Major' Centre status since 2015 and are committed to opening up conversations about equality, diversity and inclusion in the postgraduate researcher (PGR) training lifecycle. This presentation uses diversity data in PGR applications to the CRUK Manchester Centre (2019-21) to explore barriers and routes into postgraduate education from undergraduate and postgraduate taught study, advocating for the need for equality at PGR level to improve health inequalities and outcomes.

- ◆ **12:00** **Discussion Groups**
Small group discussion and preparing questions for the panel

- ◆ **12:30** **Panel Discussion**
With Richard Waller, Karen Kufuor, Yasmina Mallam-Hassam and Georgina Binnie

- ◆ **1:00** **LUNCH BREAK**

- ◆ **1:30** **Theory of Change Workshop: Employability**
Professor Liz Thomas, Edge Hill University
Run by Liz Thomas, this workshop will explore Theory of Change and Logic Chain tools to help in the planning and evaluation of employability and progression interventions.

- ◆ **3.30** **Close**