

Evaluating the ‘Achieving Race Equality in Higher Education’ programme

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Abstract

Advance HE’s sixth Research Insight evaluates whether their ‘Achieving Race Equality in Higher Education’ programme is effective in improving participants’ familiarity with terms related to race equality and their confidence in engaging with race equality.

Introduction

This Research Insight provides equality and diversity practitioners with a useful example of how to evaluate the impact of a programme or intervention, by employing a repeated-measures design. As an example, it evaluates whether attending a race equality training programme (delivered by Advance HE) improved participants’ confidence in engaging with race equality and their familiarity with race equality terminology and concepts. For additional information on methods, see our [Research and Data Briefing on impact evaluation](#).

Participants consisted of staff from higher education institutions (HEIs) who attended the 2-day programme in April 2017, October 2017, March 2018 and June 2018.

The course was delivered by Advance HE’s training and learning team and aimed to:

- + Increase participants’ confidence in engaging with race equality.
- + Increase participants’ competence in engaging with race equality.
- + Increase participants’ understanding of racial inequalities.
- + Enable participants to advance race equality within their institution.

The programme included two full-day sessions and used a variety of methods including self-reflection, independent reading, participative exercises, presentations, videos and quizzes.

Method

To investigate whether attending an introductory course to race equality improved participants’ confidence and competence in engaging with race equality, the current Research Insight employed a pre- and post-intervention design (also referred to as a repeated-measures design, see our [Research and Data Briefing on impact evaluation](#) for an overview of this method). For this evaluation, we created a pre- and post-programme questionnaire for participants.

The pre-programme questionnaire (time 1, or T1) focused on participants’ reasons for attending, course expectations, knowledge of race equality terminology, and confidence and competence in engaging with race equality. The post-programme questionnaire (time 2, or T2) surveyed participants’ knowledge of race equality terminology, confidence and competence in engaging with race equality and course satisfaction.

This briefing focusses specifically on items of the questionnaires related to the programme’s effectiveness. These included ten items on participants’ familiarity with race equality terminology and concepts, such as critical race theory or institutional racism. For each of these items, participants were asked to rate their familiarity from 1 (*I have never heard of this concept before*) to 5 (*I am fully familiar with this concept and can give several relevant examples*). An additional ten items were used to assess participants’ confidence in engaging with race equality (eg *I am confident discussing race equality with people from the same ethnic group as me, or I know who to engage to facilitate race equality in my institution*). Each item asked participants to rate their confidence from 1 (*Not at all confident*) to 5 (*Extremely confident*).

Both the T1 and T2 questionnaires were administered via the SurveyMonkey platform. Out of the 69 members of staff that attended the

programme between April 2017 and June 2018, 22 participants completed both the T1 and T2 questionnaires in full. The majority of these participants identified as female (90.9%) and white (59.1%). On average, participants were 42 years of age but participant age ranged from 24 to 63 years old).

Results

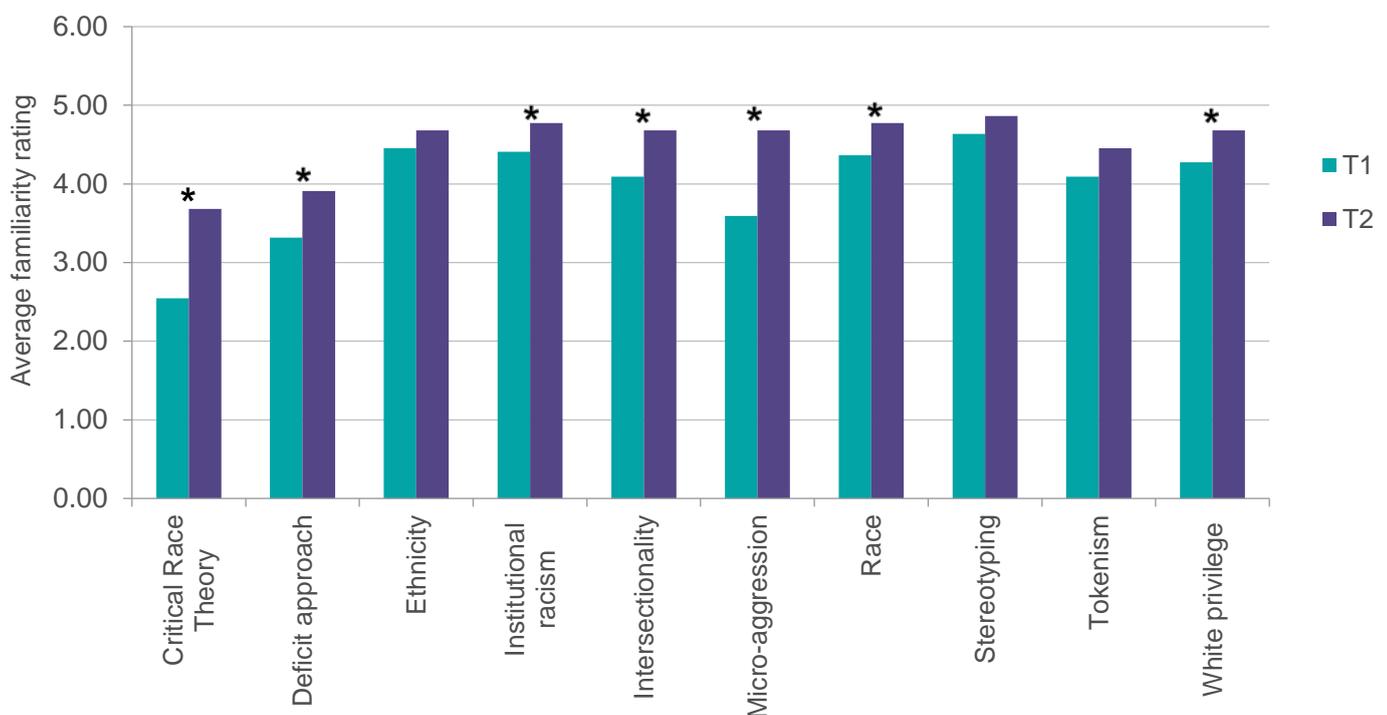
The repeated-measures design allowed us to explore whether there were statistically significant changes in participants' responses at T2 compared with their responses at T1. Individual repeated-measures Analyses Of Variance (ANOVAs) were run in SPSS 20.0 for each of the 20 items related to programme effectiveness. In a repeated-measures ANOVA, time is considered the predictor (or independent variable) while the outcome (or dependent variable) is defined as the change in ratings from T1 to T2. Whether time is a statistically significant predictor of change is determined by the F-statistic (provided by SPSS in the results of an ANOVA). Due to the relatively small number of participants, the ANOVAs did not

statistically control for other factors that may be related to participants' familiarity or confidence in engaging with race equality (such as their age, ethnicity or race, motivations for attending the programme).

Familiarity with race equality terminology and concepts

Figure 1 summarises the average ratings of familiarity at T1 and T2, and whether the difference between these two averages were statistically significant. For these items, a score of 1 was defined as being not at all familiar with this term or concept, while 5 reflected a high degree of familiarity. As such, improvement on these items would be measured by how much the average ratings increased from T1 to T2. These analyses revealed significant improvements in participants' familiarity with seven of the ten items covered in the race equality questionnaire, including critical race theory, deficit approach, institutional racism, intersectionality/intersectional, micro-aggression, race and white privilege (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Average ratings of familiarity with race equality terminology and concepts across time points.



Note. * indicates statistically significant differences at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 1. Average ratings of confidence in engaging with race equality across time points.

Items related to confidence	T1 Average	T2 Average	Difference (T2 - T1)	Statistical significance (p-value)
I am familiar with race equality legislation in the UK.	3.45	3.55	0.10	n.s.
I am confident discussing race equality with people from the same ethnic group as me.	3.77	4.05	0.28	n.s.
I am confident discussing race equality with people from different ethnic groups.	3.45	3.59	0.14	n.s.
I can name several different benefits of race equality in UKHE.	3.50	4.05	0.55	n.s.
I understand why achieving race equality is a lengthy process.	3.55	4.09	0.54	n.s.
I can name several reasons why universities do not yet have race equality.	3.18	4.00	0.82	< .01
I know where to find more information and resources about race equality.	3.09	4.00	0.91	< .001
I can name several successful approaches to achieving race equality.	2.55	3.18	0.63	< .01
I know who to engage to facilitate race equality in my institution.	3.05	3.27	0.22	n.s.
I know what concrete steps I need to take to facilitate race equality in my institution.	2.18	3.09	0.91	< .01

Confidence in engaging with race equality

Items relating to participants' confidence were positively scored, or in other words, a higher score such as 5 reflected a high degree of confidence while a lower score of 1 reflected a low degree of confidence. As seen in Table 1, the average ratings on the questionnaire items related to confidence tended to increase from T1 to T2, suggesting some degree of improvement.

However, the degree to which participants' confidence in engaging with race equality improved from T1 to T2 tended to be quite small and was, for the most part, not statistically significant. Of the ten items listed in the questionnaire, only four showed significant improvement across time (see Figure 2). Notably, significant improvement tended to be seen in items related to taking action and moving forwards.

Figure 2. Statistically significant improvements in participants' average confidence ratings.



Conclusion

On average, the participants who completed the two rounds of the survey showed significant improvements in a number of important areas, including their familiarity with terms related to race equality and their confidence in engaging with race equality.

Specifically, participants were more familiar with the terms:

- + Critical race theory.
- + Deficit approach.
- + Institutional racism.
- + Intersectionality/intersectional.
- + Micro-aggression.
- + Race.
- + White privilege.

In addition to becoming more familiar with terms related to race equality, participants' confidence and competence ratings increased in four areas between the pre- and post-programme surveys. After attending the programme, participants were more likely to:

- + Be able to name several reasons for why universities do not yet have race equality.

- + Know where to find information and resources about race equality.
- + Be able to name several successful approaches to achieving race equality.
- + Know what concrete steps to take to facilitate race equality in their institution.

Together, these improvements suggest that the programme helped make participants more able and better prepared to engage in race equality within their institution.

However, while employing a repeated-measures design reduces the amount of 'noise' (or extraneous variability) in our data, this approach does not allow us to infer *causality*. In other words, we cannot without doubt say that the 'Achieving Race Equality in Higher Education' programme *caused* participants to feel more confident in engaging with race equality, or to become more familiar with these terms related to race equality. Moreover, the relatively small sample size in the current research meant that we were unable to statistically control for other characteristics or background factors, such as attending another training session or programme, or participating in their institution's Race Equality Charter self-assessment team, which may also

explain the improvements seen between T1 and T2.

Finally, while we were able to see improvement in a number of areas, the inclusion of only two time points in this research limits our understanding of whether these improvements last over time. Research that includes additional follow-up surveys of participants, typically 6- to 12-months later, are better placed to see whether a programme or intervention has had a lasting impact.

While the above paragraphs note some of the limitations of this research, it is worth noting the strengths associated with the current longitudinal design. By including the same participants at both time points, we have reduced the amount of

variability in participants' background experiences. This approach is particularly useful when a between-groups design (such as those employed in a randomised control trial) is not feasible. Additionally, while considered a relatively small sample in terms of quantitative statistics and statistical power, the current sample included approximately one third of the participants who have attended the 'Achieving Race Equality in Higher Education' programme overall, which is a fairly high response rate for this kind of evaluation. Including a high proportion of the total number of potential participants means that the results uncovered in the analyses above are more likely to be generalizable and reflect true changes in the participants' familiarity with race equality terms and confidence in engaging in race equality.

Additional resources

- + Advance HE (2018). Research and data briefing 5: monitoring and evaluating impact. <https://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/monitoring-evaluating-impact/>

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