

# Be More Empowered (BME) for Success

## PGR Advocate pilot: Impact report

**Aim:** To recruit a cohort of BME Postgraduate research (PGR) Advocates to co-create initiatives focussing on improving community connectedness and feelings of belonging among Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority PGRs across the university.

**Pilot timeline:** March 2022 – August 2022.

### Advocate initiatives:



**Title: Coffee connect**

**Date:** Monthly (June, July & August)

**Overview:** Matching Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority PGRs to meet online/in-person, each with a coffee voucher to use on campus.



**Title: Women of Colour in Academia**

**Date:** July

**Overview:** A facilitated panel of academics from The University of Bristol, University of Cardiff and University of the West of England shared career journeys and tips, followed by networking time.



**Title: Minority Movie Night**

**Date:** Monthly (May, June & July)

**Overview:** Movie screenings on campus, focussing on Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority stories and open to all PGRs, followed by refreshments and a facilitated discussion of the main themes.



**Title: Conversation Café**

**Date:** Monthly (June & July)

**Overview:** Supportive discussion group for Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority PGRs to discuss articles on topics such as imposter syndrome and burnout, with refreshments and time to connect.



**Title: Creative writing workshop: More than words?**

**Date:** June

**Overview:** Opportunity for PGRs to try out creative writing techniques. The session was co-led by an empowerment-focussed poet, who performed her work to attendees, drawing on childhood growing up in Jamaica.

# Impact

We ran a final workshop with all five BME PGR Advocates in August to identify the main impacts the programme had on them and the wider PGR community.

## Impact on PGR community:



### **New experiences:**

Exposure to new ideas, opportunities to learn new skills (e.g. creative writing) and learning from people with a range of lived experiences.



### **Community building:**

Time to network enabled attendees to share their experiences of academia.



### **Voice:**

Opportunities to share their ideas openly, in a safe environment alongside peers with shared experiences.



### **Tackling social**

**isolation:** Events provided attendees with opportunities for peer-support, which helped to tackle loneliness.

## Impact on PGR Advocates:



### **Skills development:**

Formal training and practical experience developed their skills in event organisation, leadership, and public speaking.



### **Connection to PGR**

**community:** Broadened professional networks. Advocates reported feeling better connected to their peers.



### **Being listened to:**

Advocates described feeling listened to and feeling like their perspectives were valued.



### **New ideas:**

Opportunities to learn about other cultures and explore their own identity development.

# Quotes

We collected feedback from attendees throughout the pilot to explore experiences of PGRs engaging with the programme.

## From event attendees:



It was flexible and had both online and offline options, so it was nice that I could be a part of it. (Coffee Connect).



It was a safe space and people could discuss their experience openly. (Conversation Café).



I've found that my department and student cohort doesn't have a lot of diversity so meeting other minority ethnic researchers really improved my sense of belonging at the university. It was also nice to talk to someone who could empathize with my feelings and provide advice on how they dealt with it. (Coffee Connect).



Thoughtful, reaffirming, pleasant. (Conversation Café).

## Quotes from PGR Advocates:



One attendee didn't realise how easy it would be to start writing creatively, and felt like it would help with writing during their research degree. (Creative Writing and Poetry facilitator).



The academics themselves said that they had never been invited to do a talk like this before and they enjoyed sharing their experience and also providing tips to PGRs. (Women of Colour in Academia Facilitator).