



,Evaluation report on cohort 2 of the Accomplished Study Programme in Research Excellence (ASPIRE)

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Acknowledgments

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Contents

1. Executive summary	4
1.1 Summary of the process evaluation findings	4
1.2 Summary of the impact evaluation findings	5
2. Evaluation design	6
2.1 Data collection	7
2.2 Data analysis	9
3. Results	10
3.1 Demographics	10
3.2 Process evaluation findings	10
3.3 Impact evaluation findings	18
4. Conclusion	30
5. Appendix	31
5.1 Appendix A: programme outputs	31
5.2 Appendix B: recruitment promotional materials for ASPIRE scholars	32
5.3 Appendix C: recruitment promotional materials for ASPIRE scholars	33
5.4 Appendix D: listening room guides	34
5.5 Appendix E: scholar pre and post survey questions	38
5.6 Appendix F: supervisor pre and post survey questions	61
5.7 Appendix G: skills questions	89
5.8 Appendix H: diary questions	97

Evaluation Report on Cohort 1 of the Accomplished Study Programme in Research Excellence (ASPIRE) Programme

Dr Griffin-James

1. Executive summary

This report outlines findings from an evaluation of the Accomplished Study Programme in Research Excellence (ASPIRE). ASPIRE is a reciprocal teaching programme, designed to provide research mentorship and wellbeing to improve graduate outcomes and access to doctoral study for Black and Black heritage students.

The report details the process and impact evaluation of the ASPIRE programme over its second year and second cohort of scholars, supervisors, and mentors. Cohort 2 ran from February to June 2023 with 16 scholars, 15 mentors and 14 supervisors. The evaluation involved a mixed method, difference-in-difference design including a pre- and post-survey with programme scholars, a survey with a control group, and pre- and post-surveys with supervisors. The mixed methods approach also included listening rooms (a specialised informal paired interview aimed at removing interviewer bias) and interviews with two ASPIRE programme delivery members.

1.1 Summary of the process evaluation findings

What worked well:

- + **Strong relationships:** having a shared lived experience (meaning a shared Black or Black heritage background) led to strong mentor relationships.
- + **Skill development:** the programme provided opportunities for skill development for scholars in a range of areas including research and writing skills, communication skills, networking skills
- + **Real-world experience:** the internships facilitated scholars to develop real world experience and skills for future employment.
- + **Behaviour change:** the anti-racism workshops enabled mentors to apply their learnings to practice.
- + **Inherent value:** the programme was highly valued by scholars and mentors.

What needs improvement:

- + **Communication:** around the different roles of supervisors and mentors and between them to join up their working, ensure that scholars, mentors, and supervisors receive the same information.
- + **Timing:** flexibility in timing and commitment requirements to support those with external commitments such as family or employment, clear expectations of timing requirements for scholars, mentors, and supervisors so that commitments are maintained.
- + **Recruitment/engagement:** Consistency in the presence of the lead evaluator attending the initiation event for scholars, supervisors and mentors, offering them the opportunity to sign up to the evaluation process directly, sharing the goals of the evaluation and emphasising the importance of accurately producing the unique code for analysis,

surveys to be shortened for accessibility and ease of completion, consider expanding qualitative data collection methods for the next cohort.

1.2 Summary of the impact evaluation findings

- + From pre- and post-survey results, we saw the following changes for the scholars:
 - Improved in confidence and resilience over the course of the programme.
 - An increased sense of belonging to a community of Black scholars and within academic spaces despite prior experiences of racism.
 - Improved knowledge and understanding of various aspects of doctoral study, including doctoral funding, writing doctoral applications, and life after PhD.
 - Work readiness/preparedness improved in relation to their confidence talking to employers, their skills and work experience, requirements for employment and their understanding of job applications and interview processes.
 - Improved skills in research and academic writing, including the use of data analysis software and qualitative and quantitative methods.
- + In the listening rooms several scholars reported successes in PhD applications and employment which they attributed to the programme.
 - Moreover, 88% of post-survey respondents indicated that they are interested in doctoral study, with three scholars having submitted applications and four planning on submitting applications the following month.

2. Evaluation design

As with cohort 1, this year's evaluation used a difference-in-difference design (a quasi-experimental research design to study causal relationships between the programme and outcomes) and focused on examining both process and impact evaluation. An evaluation plan was designed to focus on three key areas:



The purpose of each stage of the evaluation plan is outlined below:

1. **Process evaluation** provides insight into what makes a successful mentoring programme, such as what works well and aspects which require adaptation or change.
2. **Impact evaluation** provides insights into whether the ASPIRE programme – focused on confidence and resilience/work-readiness for Black and Black heritage students – works to improve:
 - Experiences (of Black and Black heritage students, staff, other students)
 - Engagement (of Black and Black heritage students, staff, other students)
 - Future study or career prospects (of Black and Black heritage students who take part in ASPIRE).
3. **Qualitative research** provides additional insight into the process and impact of the programme and identifies the structural barriers that exist for Black and Black heritage students.

Research questions were developed to address each of the key areas and were divided into primary, secondary and process evaluation questions.

Table 1. Research questions for the ASPIRE evaluation

Research questions	
Primary research questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Does the ASPIRE programme increase confidence and resilience in Black and Black heritage students? 2. Does attending the ASPIRE programme improve doctoral applications among Black and Black heritage students? 3. Does engagement with the ASPIRE programme increase Black and Black heritage students work-readiness for doctoral level study?
Secondary research questions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Identify the structural barriers that exist for Black and Black heritage students (via listening rooms). 5. Does ASPIRE increase confidence/resilience more in Black and Black heritage female students (and any other groups)?

Process evaluation research questions	6. Was the ASPIRE programme delivered the way we expected? 7. Does the ASPIRE programme address identified structural barriers? 8. Are we targeting the right students? 9. What is the cost-effectiveness of the programme? 10. Are Black students (and all staff) in the region more aware of ASPIRE programme and its benefits?
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2.1 Data collection

Our mixed methods approach adopted a wide variety of data collection methods including listening rooms (a specialised informal paired interview perfect for removing interviewer bias), interviews and surveys.

Table 2. Overview of data collection with cohort 2 target samples.

Method	Total number
Pre-survey	16 scholars, 0 supervisors
Skills-survey	11 scholars, 6 supervisors
Post-survey	8 scholars, 3 supervisors
Matched control	19 students, 0 academics
Listening rooms	4 scholars, 2 mentors
Interviews	2 ASPIRE programme team members

2.1.1 Surveys

A difference-in-difference design was developed to evaluate the ASPIRE programme. Both ASPIRE scholars and ASPIRE supervisors had three surveys to complete.

Scholars and supervisors were able to complete the survey anonymously by generating a code at the start of each survey by responding to three questions:

1. What are the first three letters of your mother's first name?
2. What are the first three letters of the street on which you currently live?
3. On what day of the month were you born?

For example, if a person's mother's name is HANNAH, they live on Main Street and were born on 18 January, their code would be: HANMAI18. This code meant that each response was tied to an individual without revealing their identity.

The scholar (student) surveys aimed to gather insight into:

- + The learning aims of the programme, including confidence, resilience, grit, work-readiness capitals (Ugiagbe-Green, 2020) and preparedness

-
- + Process evaluation (e.g., satisfaction, what worked well, what needs to be adapted/changed)
 - + Knowledge of doctorate funding, applications, and life after completing a PhD
 - + Experience of structural barriers
 - + Sense of belonging
 - + Academic skills in writing, research, employability, critical thinking, and speaking
 - + Demographics.

The staff surveys aimed to gather insight into:

- + Supervisory style, career and role
- + Selecting doctoral candidates
- + Process evaluation (e.g., satisfaction, what worked well, what needs to be adapted/changed)
- + Perceptions of Black and Black heritage students' confidence, resilience, sense of belonging
- + Understanding of Black and Black heritage students' experiences and barriers
- + Improving access and exposure to race-related issues (eg race equality training, contributions to Access and Participation Plans, etc)
- + Confidence confronting racial justice
- + Demographics.

Staff and students within Sheffield Hallam University and Manchester Metropolitan University were asked to voluntarily complete many of the same questions as a control measurement. In total, 19 students completed the control survey, which comprised the same questions that the scholars completed in the pre-survey and skills survey.

As shown in Table 2 response rates for the surveys were limited, particularly for the post-surveys, reducing the amount of post-programme data. Ideally the post-survey responses would be matched and compared with the pre-survey and control group survey responses through statistical testing to show causal relationships. However, looking at the codes generated at the start of the scholar surveys, only 4 of the codes from the scholar pre-survey matched those from the post-survey. Some scholars must not have entered their unique codes correctly, whether this was by choice or due to an error is unclear. This and the low response rates for the post-survey limited the type of quantitative analysis undertaken as there was little matched post-programme survey data to compare against. Instead, through

analysis of frequencies/percentages and comparisons across surveys some insights into potential impact were explored.

For the evaluation to be a success it is critical that we address the code issue and low response rate to the post-ASPIRE survey, so we can evidence whether the ASPIRE programme is an effective intervention. Including a more simplistic approach to matching (e.g. asking scholars to enter an email address or their name rather than creating a unique code) may be an option for reducing complications with code creation.

2.2 Data analysis

2.2.1 Analysis of survey

Due to limited numbers of respondents to the post-survey and issues with the unique codes matching was not undertaken and instead each survey was analysed using Excel for the production of descriptive statistics (e.g. frequencies, percentages). Where possible comparisons were made across the pre- and post-surveys and with the control group. To optimise the sample sizes, we created dichotomous variables for each of the survey items breaking the data down into ratings of 4 or 5 on the Likert scales [1] versus ratings of 3 or lower [2]. Where analysis of frequencies in the surveys suggested differences existed, Chi-square analyses were then used to identify whether there were significant differences in these dichotomous variables between (i) scholars' pre-survey ratings and the control group of students, and (ii) scholars' pre- and post-survey ratings (without pairing the responses of individual participants and treating these as separate groups).

2.2.2 Listening rooms and interviews

Listening rooms were supported by Dr Francis Awolowo and carried out by participants. Two additional interviews were carried out online via Microsoft Teams by an Advance HE researcher. Data was inductively, thematically analysed by an experienced researcher from Advance HE. Following data familiarisation, transcripts were descriptively coded to develop an initial coding framework, refined through iterative discussion and coding rounds. Data was imported into ATLAS.ti to support data management, and the coding framework was applied to all transcripts. Supported by research notes and discussion, the researcher actively sought themes reflecting relevant key patterns within and across the interviews. Themes were defined, described and labelled, and patterns have been discussed in the report.

3. Results

3.1 Demographics

The demographics of the scholar participants who completed the pre-survey are as follows:

- + **Ethnicity:** All of the scholars described their ethnicity as Black or Black heritage.
- + **Sex:** 81% of respondents were female (n=13), 19% were male (n=3).
- + **Age:** On average participants were 35 years old (standard deviation 6.6), with ages ranging from 20-45 (with age rounded to the nearest five years to protect identity).
- + **Impairment:** None of the scholars disclosed having an impairment (n=15) with one scholar leaving this blank.
- + **Student status:** Of those who responded (n=6), 67% were studying full-time (n=4) and 33% part-time (n=2).

Looking more closely at the types of students, of those who responded (n=9) equal numbers were undertaking a Bachelor's degree (44%, n=4) and a taught Masters (44%, n=4), with one respondent undertaking a Higher National Certificate (HNC) or Higher National Diploma (HND) (11%). A large proportion of scholars were from the discipline of business and management (33%), and subjects allied to medicine (33%). Other disciplines represented include social sciences (13%); psychology (7%); engineering and technology (7%); computing (7%); education and teaching (7%); law (7%); and language and area studies (7%). Considering the challenges that were experienced and reported around recruitment to the programme, within the programme directors' own discipline of business and management, they were very successful at recruiting scholars on their own programmes.

3.2 Process evaluation findings

The process evaluation outlined which aspects of the programme worked well and which areas need improvement or adaptation for future cohorts.

3.2.1 What worked well

Overall satisfaction with the programme

100% of Aspire scholars who completed the post-survey (n=8) were either satisfied or very satisfied with the following:

- + Accessibility of the resources
- + Amount of support available
- + Applicability of content

- + Coaching
- + Format of lectures
- + Learning online
- + Listening rooms
- + Mental health and wellbeing sessions
- + Mentorship
- + Programme content
- + Programme delivery
- + Quality of the resources
- + Use of PebblePad

For the following, the majority were also either Satisfied or Very Satisfied, with a small number selecting Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied:

- + Amount of effort to complete the programme (88% Satisfied or Very Satisfied)
- + Amount of hours of work required (88% Satisfied or Very Satisfied)
- + Asynchronous training (88% Satisfied or Very Satisfied)
- + Digital storytelling (88% Satisfied or Very Satisfied)
- + Use of case studies (88% Satisfied or Very Satisfied)
- + Networking sessions (75% Satisfied or Very Satisfied)
- + Reflective diaries (75% Satisfied or Very Satisfied)
- + Talking heads (75% Satisfied or Very Satisfied)
- + Use of FutureLearn for teaching content (63% Satisfied or Very Satisfied)

100% of the supervisors who completed the post-survey rated the following statements as true:

- + The course was well organised
- + The course ran smoothly
- + The online resources were well organised
- + I was able to access course specific resources
- + The workload on the ASPIRE programme was manageable

Additional comments made by the scholars in the post-survey on the programme and its longer-term impact suggest that the connection with 'like-minded individuals' was useful and has enabled the increase of scholar confidence and knowledge, as well as preparing scholars for their professional lives:

"The ASPIRE programme has provided me with a network of like-minded individuals that improved my knowledge and various aspects of my life".

"I have gained lots of knowledge, skills, experience and the right network to support me through my doctoral journey and beyond, I cannot see the feasibility of me gaining all the aforementioned without the ASPIRE programme."

This suggests overarching satisfaction with the programme was high for both the scholars and the supervisors who completed the post-surveys.

The listening rooms also revealed high levels of overall satisfaction with the programme. With participants referring to the programme as 'a thing of joy', 'it's really blessed me', 'it has really shaped me' and 'it has given me belief in myself'.

Career goals

Scholars were asked how beneficial certain aspects of the programme were to their career goals rated from Very Little to Very Much. Those rated the highest include growing networks (100% Very Much) and learning how to apply for a doctorate (100% Very Much).

Following this with all but one respondent rating as Very Much (88% for each) was: accessing opportunities for Black or Black heritage people; improving academic skills; improving doctoral opportunity prospects; improving job prospects; improving research skills; improving writing skills; internship; learning about doctoral study and receiving mentorship.

Aspects of the programme which scholars ranked as the least beneficial for their career goals included accessing psychologically safe spaces (25% Very Little, 75% Very Much) and reflective diaries (25% To Some Extent, 25% Quite a Bit, 50% Very Much), although the majority of participants still rated these quite positively.

Scholars' positivity was echoed in the listening rooms in participants' descriptions of the skill and career goal development opportunities presented by the programme. Scholars referred to skill development in terms of academic writing and research, communication, and networking.

"So my key moments will definitely be the qualitative analysis class with Dr [#name], that was an amazing class. Very down to earth, very enlightening, very eye-opening and very inspiring." (ASPIRE scholar)

"I was able to bring it to fruition by the skills, the training, the networking – you know, the material, the resource." (ASPIRE scholar)

"The opportunity that this programme gives you helps you to engage in scholarly activities, discussions, workshops, reflections and networking. All of this is just to help you in the work readiness ... education, going for

the PhD or the Master's, it just helps you to build yourself." (ASPIRE scholar)

Additionally, the programme aims to prepare scholars for either a PhD or employment and scholars found this dual aspect worked well, supporting scholars with differing goals.

"Those that wanted to go to the academic side and those that wanted to go to the professional employment side of the programme – it is quite structured to meet all our demands. So, although I am not going into academia, to follow the PhD programme, we all benefitted from the blocks and the structure that the programme is made of. Those that are going to the academic side, they benefitted from the employment side of the programme. They are all interconnected." (ASPIRE scholar)

Additionally, the internship aspect of the programme was mentioned by several scholars as particularly helpful in relation to the development of practical skills for future employment.

"The internship programme on the Aspire programme has really, really helped me as we had to come up with ideas and help to create a podcast, so it really, really helped me to be able to broaden my research. It also shaped my communication skills because it involved a lot of communication, coming up with ideas – so deep thinking." (ASPIRE scholar)

"We are being put in a position where we are prepared to face the outside world, we are very equipped through the programme, the internship was really interesting. Although you can learn something theoretically, putting that in to practice, that was really valuable." (ASPIRE scholar)

The practical, hands-on experience that the internship aspect of the programme provided scholars with was perceived as a valuable part of the programme by scholars, offering them real world industry experience. In the evaluation with cohort 1, the internship was considered valuable but there were issues with a lack of available internships for all scholars. Learning from this feedback, the programme delivery leads were able to offer internships to all scholars who wanted to do one, with ten scholars taking up the opportunity.

Coaching and mentoring

Overall, the survey results suggest that the scholars found the coaching element of the programme beneficial, all rating both the group and individual coaching as either Quite a Bit or Very Useful. Comments on the coaching suggested that the personal and interactive nature of the coaching were beneficial, as well as the practical advice and solutions it provided.

Mentoring was also considered to be a particularly beneficial element of the programme, for both the scholars and the mentors. Listening room data revealed that the shared lived experiences between mentors and mentees enabled positive relationships to develop between them. Rapport and trust were considered to be vital for successful mentoring relationships, allowing mentees to open up and discuss their personal goals and supporting their wellbeing.

“The first time meeting my mentor I had a dark cloud over my head and when we spoke, after our discussion, she knew what I needed and through regular meetings, I could tell that my confidence was coming alive” (ASPIRE scholar)

“She was somebody that listened to my thoughts and she shared lots of examples that made me gather my thoughts together, comparing that example and what I've experienced. It gave me a sense of direction” (ASPIRE scholar)

“Without empathy, without trust, without all those qualities of leadership, one cannot be a good mentor, because mentorship has to do with conveying some important personal issues to you which you're going through and hoping that you will be able to at least give them some pointers on what to do and how best to go about it.” (ASPIRE mentor)

Additionally, shared experience and background allowed mentees to see mentors as role models, having overcome certain challenges and achieving their goals despite them, providing inspiration to scholars.

“Role modelling, so you know your mentor, you think ‘Ah, this person has done it’ and it is part of being a role model to you and an exchange of that knowledge.” (ASPIRE scholar)

“She was once a student, she was once an immigrant, and now she is in a better position.” (ASPIRE scholar)

“Even the fact that she shares her life experience with me and I can resonate her journey with mine. So that helped me to say ‘Oh, if she can go through that and become somebody and make something positive out of the journey that she went through, there are possibilities and there are hopes, you can achieve’” (ASPIRE scholar)

The mentors also discussed the training they received, suggesting that this improved not only their knowledge and understanding of mentoring for the programme, but how it also contributed to their wider inclusive practice.

“One aspect I found very useful was the training that we had for mentors. Like if you remember the training that we had, you were also there with the training around inclusive practice and how we can apply it in our mentoring and supervision of students.” (ASPIRE mentor)

Specifically, the anti-racism workshops were considered to be a key element for mentors, enabling them to support students from different backgrounds, challenge racism and apply their learning to their practice.

“So I have learnt that being quiet about this is also supporting racism in itself, so I think that workshop really gave me that confidence, you know, to explore the materials that were covered and applied in practice.” (ASPIRE mentor)

Despite the positive experiences of mentoring, it was noted by mentors that there may have been an element of luck relating to the matching of mentors to mentees with similar

experiences or disciplinary backgrounds and it was not always clear what the matching process was.

“I am not quite sure whether there was any set of criteria for matching mentors to students. I got somebody doing something in social work, which was a different department and also a different field of study.”
(ASPIRE mentor)

Similarly, it was noted that the development of shared goals and expectations by mentees and mentors supported the sense of mentoring as a successful activity. Having agreed goals, timelines and an idea of roles and responsibilities meant that mentors and mentees were able to work together more effectively and achieve the goals they had set.

“And another was agreeing the key things– what are the goals, what are the objectives? And then plan that we would meet twice a month and then we begin to tick off the milestones that we’ve achieved.” (ASPIRE mentor)

3.2.2 What needs improvement/adaption

Recruitment/engagement in the evaluation

The numbers of scholars in this cohort was half of the amount of scholars who participated in cohort one (32 in cohort 1¹, 16 in cohort 2). Relating to this, as with the previous cohort, the evaluation surveys had low response rates. The post-surveys for both scholars and supervisors had particularly low response rates, impacting the level of post-programme data. To address this, we recommend that the number of surveys and their length are thoroughly reviewed and reduced to avoid survey fatigue. Additional efforts to improve the amount of post-programme data available include embedding the post-survey into the final sessions of the programme and asking participants to include their name or email address to facilitate matching to their responses to the pre-survey results.

Similarly, compared to cohort 1, there was limited qualitative data for cohort 2. Fifteen interviews were completed in the evaluation of cohort 1 (scholars 9, supervisors 2, mentors 4), as well as eight listening rooms², compared to only six listening rooms and two ASPIRE lead interviews for this cohort. Additionally, there were no listening rooms conducted between supervisors, limiting data on supervisor perceptions and experiences in this cohort. Although listening rooms are a novel approach to collecting qualitative data, allowing the participants to share their lived experiences in a mutual conversation and reducing interviewer bias, they rely more heavily on participants to commit and engage. However, there was limited engagement in the interviews with mentors and supervisors in cohort 1,

¹ It should be noted however that cohort 1 included international students (i.e., non-UK domiciled). The Office for Students stipulated that only UK domiciled students should be included in all subsequent cohorts, thus reducing the sample of eligible scholars for the ASPIRE programme.

² The listening room data from cohort 1 was unable to be used for the evaluation as the majority of scholars participating in these were non-UK domiciled. There were also issues with the prompts and structure of the conversations, which were remedied in the listening room procedure with cohort 2.

and so we decided to reduce the number of data collection methods that participants were asked to participate in. Specifically, we opted to forego interviews with the programme participants and collect qualitative data solely through the listening room activities. It appears however that this did not improve engagement from supervisors and mentors in the evaluation, and we will review the procedures for collecting feedback from these two groups in advance of cohort 3.

Communication

Some issues with communication were discussed by mentors in the listening rooms. It was mentioned that some mentors felt they were not given as much information as the scholars in advance of the mentoring, finding that scholars were sharing information with them that they believed they should have had prior awareness of.

“There is always room for improvement to make sure that things get better in terms of communication to us mentors. That the same information that the students get, the mentors also get as well, so that we are on the same page when we come to our mentorship meetings and we can also support the student better” (ASPIRE mentor)

Additionally, some mentors felt that the communication between themselves and supervisors could have been improved in order to link up the support scholars were receiving.

“So maybe we should be having these supervisors or get to know or link up with them much earlier so that we can be able to build that relationship.” (ASPIRE mentor)

“That was all the communication that was had, so it seems to me that some supervisors did not know that the meeting that they have with the mentees, there should be three persons there.” (ASPIRE mentor)

As mentors are more likely to share lived experience with scholars as they have similar backgrounds it may be beneficial for them to support scholar relationship building with supervisors. Similarly, clarification about the roles and responsibilities of mentors and supervisors could ensure that everyone is on the same page about their role within the programme.

Despite the issues noted by mentors, generally the listening room participants suggested that there was a good sense of clarity and understanding about the programme, its structure and roles and responsibilities. This suggests communication improved for the second cohort, as there were additional issues identified for the first cohort relating to communication and lack of information which were not noted by participants in this cohort.

The interviews also suggested that communication improved since cohort 1 of the programme, by introducing Kristina as a single point of contact for the programme.

“So I think that’s why some communication got missed because of different PIs and there not being one place for scholars to ask questions. So I think

having me in place helped to improve the communication because I was a central point of contact with the mailbox.” (Kristina, Senior Administrator)

Despite the improvements in communication, Francis noted some additional areas for improvement moving into the next cohort, specifically communication with supervisors to ensure that support is linked up between supervisors and mentors, as suggested in the listening rooms. He suggested that the project team would communicate clearly with supervisors prior to their engagement in the programme the level of commitment required and how being involved in ASPIRE could support them with their personal and professional development.

“A lot of them still don’t know that we have all the information they are asking for on Teams, because we have a Teams channel for them. Or because maybe when you run coffee mornings, maybe three supervisors are present, so it’s a lot difficult. And I appreciate them because they have every teaching commitment, every administrative commitment as well, so they are trying to juggle so many things. But what I’m saying to them for this next iteration is: this has got to be your priority if you’re going to participate in ASPIRE.

And with the university now being very strong on EDI and PDR meetings, I think they will have the opportunity to use ASPIRE as part of their EDI contribution.” (Dr Francis Awolowo)

Timing

The post-survey asked both scholars and supervisors what could be improved about the programme. For scholars much of the responses were around ability to engage with the programme due to the required time to participate. The same issue was mentioned by the supervisors with their ability to engage with the programme sessions being affected by their workload and availability.

Scholars were asked if they had considered for any reason leaving the ASPIRE programme. Two of the scholars (25%) had considered leaving, with additional comments revealing that their reasons for considering this were due to competing priorities such as university and professional work. Again, this suggests that time is an issue for scholars and could potentially cause of lack of engagement or drop-outs from the programme.

This was also reflected within the listening rooms, where both scholars and mentors referred to having enough time fully engage with the programme and attend each of the elements.

“I think one thing needed is maybe taking into consideration whether the students or the mentees, do they really have time to give the attention that this requires?” (ASPIRE mentor)

External factors such as family and/or work commitments affected scholars’ ability to engage with the programme.

“So I could see that there were a lot of external things that also impacted on her ability to follow through and on time” (ASPIRE mentor)

“For me I would consider a system whereby if they could have something like a block format, on maybe a weekend or something so that those that are working full-time can be able to have an opportunity to take time off work and concentrate on these blocks.” (ASPIRE scholar)

Similarly, it was difficult for some scholars, mentors and supervisors to align their time and their schedules in order to meet regularly.

“We could not fit our time, fit our schedules in the week in the same way.” (ASPIRE scholar)

As with the previous cohort, issues with the time and commitment requirements for the programme may have resulted in a drop off in engagement, or put off potential scholars, mentors and supervisors from joining the programme. It is worth noting that for this cohort all scholars who started the programme completed it, compared to 8 scholars not completing the programme in cohort 1. This suggests retention has improved since cohort 1, although levels of engagement, particularly in evaluation activities are still mixed. Engagement was particularly difficult for supervisors, given their other work commitments such as teaching. Flexibility with timings and improved accessibility for those with differing external commitments could improve engagement for the next cohort.

There was an awareness of the issues with time and commitment by the programme lead and senior administrator, with both suggesting in the interviews that this is an area they are hoping to improve, particularly by limiting the face-to-face requirements of the programme and streamlining some of the programme activities.

The interviews also showed the amount of time and effort that was required by the programme delivery team in order to make the programme a success. It was noted that a genuine shared belief in and passion for the programme and its aims enabled the commitment of the team.

“We were not after glory, we were not after making a name for ourselves, we just want to see system changes. We want to see a culture that shifts. I think that really helped with having the project team, all the mentors that I work with, everybody has a single objective, the chairing board, which involves teams from your side, people from MMU, everybody had a unified objective: we want to see a change” (Dr Francis Awolowo)

Additionally, Francis and Kristina noted that at times Francis was working 7 days a week to deliver the ASPIRE programme, particularly during the first cohort and that without his commitment and passion the programme could not have been possible. It is clear that commitment to the programme by the programme lead and delivery team has been essential for the success of the programme.

3.3 Impact evaluation findings

The impact evaluation provides insight into whether the ASPIRE programme’s focus on confidence and work-readiness for Black students improves: works to:

1. The experiences of Black students, staff, and other students.
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2. The engagement of Black students, staff, and other students.
3. The future study or career prospects of Black students who take part in ASPIRE.

3.3.1 Confidence and resilience

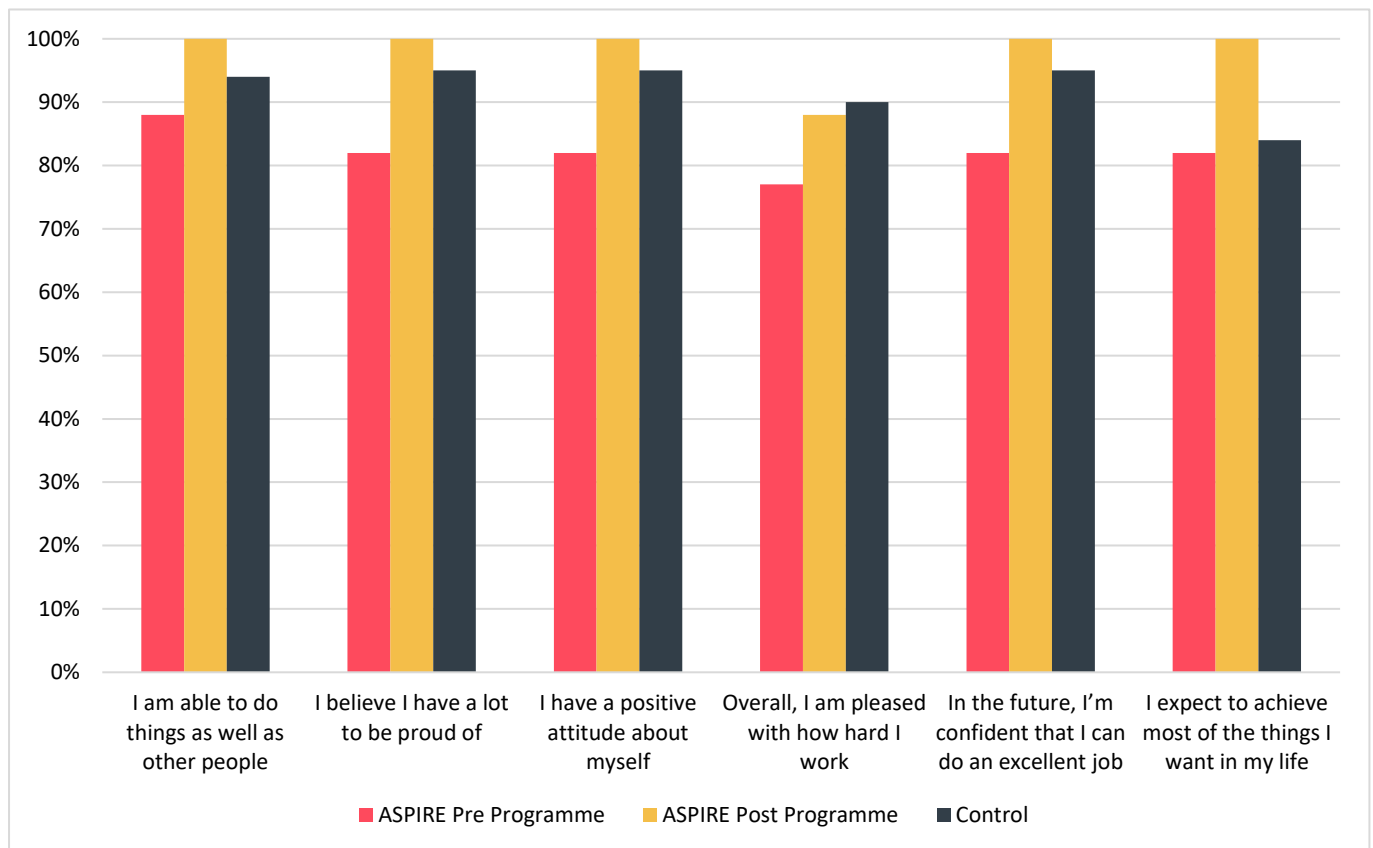
The majority of ASPIRE scholars in the pre-survey Mostly Agreed or Definitely Agreed that they:

- + Are able to do as well as other people (88%)
- + Have a lot to be proud of (82%)
- + Have a positive attitude about themselves (82%)
- + Are pleased with how hard they work (77%)
- + Are confident that they can do an excellent job in the future (82%)
- + Expect to achieve most of the things they want in life (82%).

The scholars in the control group sample agreed slightly more strongly with each of these statements (94%, 95%, 95%, 90%, 95%, 84% respectively), suggesting higher levels of confidence in the control sample than the ASPIRE scholars' sample. However, Chi-square tests of the dichotomous values (as outlined in the methods), showed no statistical significance between the pre- and control surveys for each of these statements.

After the programme, analysis of frequencies suggests confidence increased in each of these areas and beyond the levels of the control sample for those who completed the post-survey with all participating scholars agreeing that they: are able to do as well as other people; have a lot to be proud of; have a positive attitude about themselves; are confident they can do an excellent job in the future; and expect to achieve most of the things they want in life. Out of the eight scholars who completed the post-survey, seven (88%) also agreed that they are pleased with how hard they work (88%). Again, Chi-square tests showed no statistical significance between the pre- and post-surveys for the statements.

Figure 1. Proportion of participants who agreed with confidence statements in the control group and in the pre- and post-survey with ASPIRE scholars.



The ASPIRE programme may have had an impact for those scholars who completed the pre- and post-survey in terms of scholar confidence. Furthermore, all scholars who completed the post-survey rated their improvement in confidence as Quite a Bit (25%) or Very Much (75%) as a result of the programme. However, low numbers of respondents to the post-survey and the lack of statistical significance shown in the Chi-square tests, means this is not necessarily generalisable and cannot account for other external factors which may have occurred during the period of the programme.

The listening room data provides further insight into scholar's levels of confidence post-programme. Every scholar that participated in the listening rooms referred repeatedly to their confidence increasing as a result of the programme.

"I believe when I started this programme I did not have much confidence at this particular stage, I have been contacting people that two years ago I wouldn't have the confidence to talk to" (ASPIRE scholar)

"So the Aspire programme has prepared me for work and given me the confidence that I need, the confidence that I can be able to handle any situation, I can do anything. The belief in myself that I am worthy" (Aspire scholar)

Scholars discussed confidence in relation to their work preparedness, research and academic skills, ability to apply for PhDs, presenting, networking, pursuing an academic career, being themselves and being proud of their identity, and communication skills. It was clear from the listening rooms that scholars attributed their increased confidence directly to the ASPIRE programme.

“The programme. I have always said the programme can never be overemphasised, the programme has equipped us to succeed, irrespective of the barriers, irrespective of whatever comes our way. Whatever. It is achievable. It has upped our confidence level and everything is achievable.” (ASPIRE scholar)

The mentor listening rooms also revealed that mentors increased in confidence in terms of their ability to support students from different backgrounds, challenge racist behaviour and in deliver inclusive practice.

“So for me a key learning was on how to take in to consideration that people come from different backgrounds and even in terms of supervision you have to understand their own background. You have to provide the right kind of support, and I also found it useful even in terms of curriculum design, teaching styles, preparing lecture materials, so you would be able to carry everybody on board and be more impactful.” (ASPIRE mentor)

“I think that is a very huge contribution to my own personal self-development. After that I felt more confident in the way that I support students, knowing key things to do and learnt from what other people’s experiences and then being able to make that sort of change that I desire in my own practice.” (ASPIRE mentor)

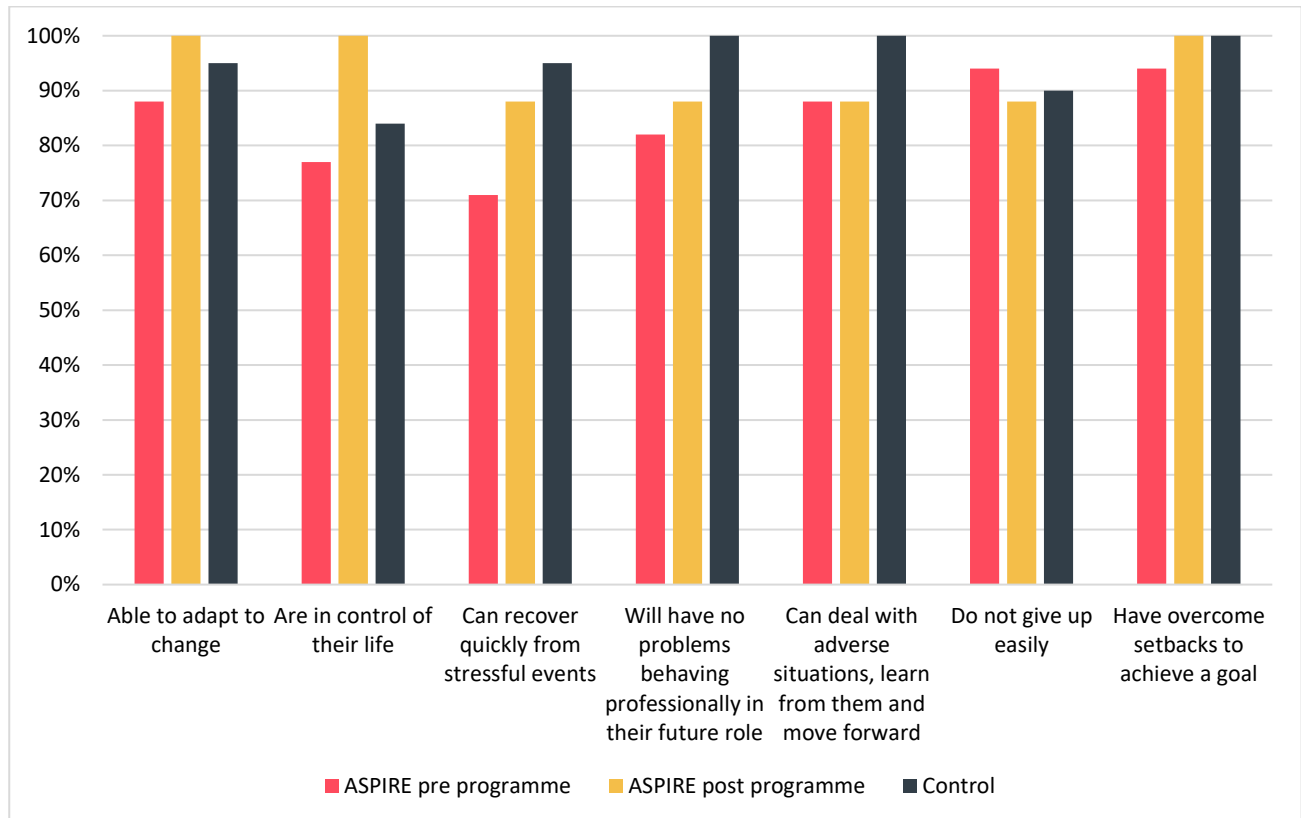
In terms of resilience, the majority of ASPIRE scholars agreed (either Mostly or Definitely Agree) in the pre-survey that they:

- + Are able to adapt to change (88%)
- + Are in control of their life (76%)
- + Can recover quickly from stressful events (70%),
- + Will have no problems behaving professionally in their future role (as a doctoral student/an employee) (82%)
- + Can deal with adverse situations, learn from them and move forward (83%)
- + Do not give up easily (94%)
- + Have overcome setbacks to achieve a goal (94%).

Again, each of these were higher amongst the control group (shown in Figure 2). This suggests that there were higher levels of resilience amongst the control than the ASPIRE scholar group prior to the programme. However, none of these statement responses were significantly different for the pre- and control surveys according to Chi-square tests.

As with confidence, as shown in Figure 2 in the post-survey each of these increased, although Chi-square tests show no statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-surveys for these statements.

Figure 2. Proportion of participants who agreed with confidence statements in the control group and in the pre- and post-survey with ASPIRE scholars.



The listening rooms revealed an increase in resilience in scholars, with participants suggesting they felt more able to persevere in their pursuit of their goals due to the ASPIRE programme.

3.3.2 Experiences of racism and belonging

Scholars shared their experiences of one or more instance of racism in the past year at university, breaking down into the following instances:

12% had experienced tokenism

24% had experienced individual racism

6% had experienced institutional racism

18% had experienced microaggressions

24% had experienced monoculturalism

The listening rooms revealed that prior to the programme and perhaps related to experiences of racism, scholars did not always feel that they belonged within academic

spaces and in society in general, with one scholar suggesting that they felt “alone” and there was “something wrong” with them.

After the programme scholars felt an increased sense of belonging, within academic spaces and as part of a community of Black scholars.

“I feel like I now belong to a group of scholars who are like-minded, like me. I feel like I belong to a class of academics who are ready to further their education, who are ready to try new things, and to be able to overcome any challenges that may come their way. I also feel like I belong to a black community of scholars, academics, students who are aspiring to be the best that they can be and who are trying as much as they can to lead to black excellence” (ASPIRE scholar)

“The programme taught us that as well as belonging to this programme, we belong to a society. We belong to the community. We want to be a representative in British society.” (ASPIRE scholar)

Despite scholars experiencing racism and lacking a sense of belonging prior to the programme, ASPIRE supported scholars to feel that they belong within academic spaces and society more broadly, providing a community of like-minded scholars and mentors, impacting their sense of identity and confidence. As one scholar put it post-programme: “I am not alone, I am not lost.”

3.3.3 Knowledge

Participants were asked to rate their level of knowledge about various aspects of doctoral study from None to Very much.

In the pre-survey the majority of ASPIRE scholars rated their knowledge of requirements for doctoral-level study as to Some Extent 41%, with equal numbers selecting that they had Very Little Knowledge (29%) and Quite a Bit of Knowledge (29%). In comparison, in the post-survey 100% of respondents rated their knowledge as very much or quite a bit. Chi-square tests showed statistical significance between the levels of knowledge for the pre-survey group and the post-survey group ($X^2(1, N=25) = 10.9, p = <0.01$), suggesting that the programme had a significant impact on levels of knowledge of participants in relation to requirements for doctoral level study.

Funding

Questions about funding for doctoral study revealed that most ASPIRE scholar participants rated themselves as having knowledge To Some Extent about the financial cost of undertaking a doctorate (47%), loans for a doctorate (41%), and scholarships/bursaries/studentships for undertaking a doctorate (35%). On the latter question quite high numbers of scholars suggested they had no knowledge of scholarships/bursaries/studentships (29%).

In comparison in the post-survey the majority of participants rated themselves as having a good understanding of the requirements for doctoral study (25% Quite a Bit and 75% Very Much), the financial cost of undertaking a doctorate (38% Quite a Bit and 63% Very Much), loans for undertaking a doctorate (38% Quite a Bit and 50% Very Much) and scholarships/bursaries/studentships for undertaking a doctorate (38% Quite a Bit and 50% Very Much).

Although there was a small sample size for those who completed the pre- and post-survey Chi-square tests also showed statistical significance between the pre- and post- responses for these statements, suggesting that the programme had an impact on their levels of knowledge about doctoral study funding.

Applications

For knowledge about what key information to include in a job and doctoral application 12% suggested their knowledge was None (n=2), 24% suggested they had Very Little knowledge (n=4), 35% suggested they had Knowledge to Some Extent (n=6), and 29% suggested they had Quite a Bit of knowledge (n=5).

On where to find advertisements for doctorate positions the majority had knowledge To Some Extent (35%, n=6), or Quite a Bit of knowledge (35%, n=6). On what you need to do to improve your chances of successfully being granted a job or doctorate position 12% had No knowledge (n=2), 24% Very Little (n=4), 41% knowledge to Some Extent (n=7), and 24% Quite a Bit of knowledge (n=4).

In the post-survey 100% of scholars had either Quite a Bit or Very Much knowledge about what key information to include in a job and doctoral application, where to find advertisements for doctorate positions, and what you need to do to improve your chances of successfully being granted a job or doctorate position. Again, each of these statements showed statistically significant differences for the pre- and post-survey respondents, suggesting that the ASPIRE programme had an impact on scholars' levels of knowledge about doctoral applications.

Within the listening rooms scholars suggested that their knowledge of doctoral applications had increased as a result of the programme, particularly the process of writing a PhD proposal.

"I do feel like I am able to now apply for a PhD, something that even though I had in mind, I didn't have exposure to it, how to write a PhD proposal and all that, that through the ASPIRE programme it has given me the idea of how to go about it, how to write a PhD proposal, what to expect during PhD studies." (ASPIRE scholar)

"It has given me a broad perspective and given me a feel or a taste of what a PhD is and how it feels to be doing a PhD. It has given me the knowledge and understanding regarding a PhD programme and how to write and structure a PhD proposal so yes it has really changed me" (ASPIRE scholar)

Life after PhD

Levels of knowledge prior to the programme on life after PhD were mixed with the majority of participants having No knowledge or Very Little knowledge of what types of roles you can get when you have a doctorate (12% and 47% respectively), the types of skills you develop when undertaking a doctorate (12% and 41% respectively), the level of pay you can expect when you hold a doctorate (18% and 41% respectively), and the amount of jobs for candidates who have a PhD (12% and 47% respectively).

Comparatively in the post-survey 100% of scholars who completed the survey had either Quite a Bit or Very Much knowledge of the types of roles you can get when you have a doctorate and the types of skills you develop when you have a doctorate. 88% had either Quite a Bit or Very Much knowledge of the level of pay you can expect when you hold a doctorate and the amount of jobs for candidates who have a PhD. These statements were all shown to have statistically significant differences between the pre- and post-survey responses, suggesting scholars' levels of knowledge about life after a PhD improved due to the ASPIRE programme.

3.3.4 Work readiness/preparedness

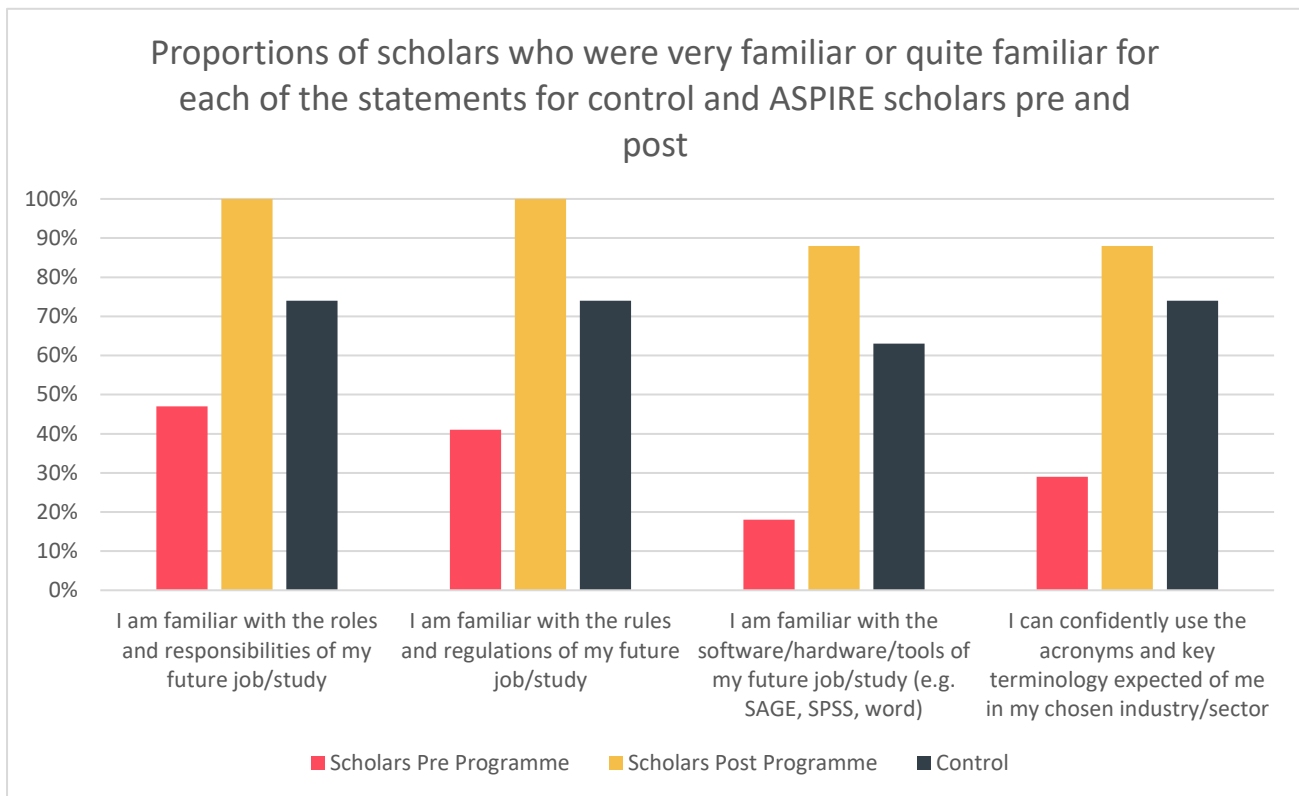
Prior to the programme, scholars had mixed levels of knowledge and confidence in regard to work-readiness and preparedness.

When asked to what extent they thought their degree programme sufficiently prepared them for work, the majority of scholars (n=7) responded To Some Extent (41%). An additional five scholars responded Quite a Bit (29%), three Very Much (18%), and two Very Little (12%).

However, scholars' familiarity with the roles and responsibilities of their future job/study, the rules and regulations of their future job/study⁺, software/hardware/tools of their future job/study⁺⁺ and acronyms and key terminology expected in their chosen industry/sector increased during the course of the programme to beyond the level of their peers in the control group.³

³ * represents statistically significant differences for the statement between the pre- and control survey respondents. + represents statistically significant differences for the statement between the pre- and post-survey respondents as per Chi-square tests.

Figure 3. Proportions of scholars who were very familiar or quite familiar with PhD applications statements for control and ASPIRE scholars pre- and post- programme



Additionally, when asked specifically about skills and work experience for employment, only 47% of ASPIRE scholars prior to the programme Mostly Agreed or Definitely Agreed that they can talk about their skills to a potential employer in a persuasive manner, compared to 84% in the control sample of students. Similarly, 58% agreed they can talk about their work experiences to demonstrate their capability to fulfil a role, compared to 84% of the control group. These were not found to be statistically significant in Chi-square tests.

In the post-survey 88% of ASPIRE scholars Mostly Agreed or Definitely Agreed that they can talk about their skills to a potential employer in a persuasive manner and 100% agreed they can talk about their work experiences to demonstrate their capability to fulfil a role. Chi-square tests showed the latter statement is statistically significant, compared to the pre-survey responses.

Similarly, the listening rooms showed an improvement in work readiness/preparedness, with scholars having an increased understanding of job applications and interview processes.

“I had a more positive approach to interviews and putting myself out there and being more daring, instead of being reserved. Also the tone of my presentation has changed. So instead of talking in the third person I can confidently and boldly say I am the first person. So responding to an interviewer and responding to questions I go ‘I have done it’, not ‘I think/I’m sure/maybe’” (ASPIRE scholar)

“I would like to say that the ASPIRE programme has prepared me for work because it has taught me how to prepare when I have an interview. It has taught me how I should prepare for the interview. What to say. And what to do. And not what to say or do – so yes, the ASPIRE programme has prepared me for work and has given me an idea about my career path where I want to go in terms of choosing a career for the future.” (ASPIRE scholar)

“It was like an eye-opener for me on how to go about navigating LinkedIn, navigating the website, arranging my CV.” (ASPIRE scholar)

Scholars also referred to improvements in understanding of the requirements for employment and their ability to apply their skills and knowledge from their studies to an academic or non-academic workplace.

3.3.5 Skills

Ahead of the academic writing workshop, the scholars completed the skills survey (n = 11). Scholars indicated on an agreement scale their academic writing, critical thinking and reading, teamwork, research skills and communication skills.

These indicated that **scholars wished to work on research skills**, with 46% rating their ability to cite literature as Not at All / Very Little / To Some Extent. Scholars also wished to work on their **independent study skills**, with 46% Mostly Disagreeing or Neither Agreeing nor Disagreeing with the statement that they take effective lecture notes, and 27% Mostly Disagreeing or Neither Agreeing nor Disagreeing that they can create an effective study plan. Scholars' responses also indicated that they wished to work on their **academic writing skills**, with 46% feeling either Somewhat Anxious or Very Anxious about their writing. 55% responded Mostly Disagree / Neither Agree nor Disagree that they could write a logical and well-structured research proposal. In the survey, scholars' responses indicated that they did not require support with teamwork, critical thinking and reading, or communication skills.

In the post-survey scholars ranked how much the ASPIRE programme improved their skills from Not at All to Very Much. 63% responded that the programme had improved their writing Very Much and 25% Quite a Bit. Furthermore, when asked about their anxiety in relation to writing no scholars responded that they were Somewhat or Very Anxious after the programme, compared to 46% in the pre-survey, suggesting the programme had an impact on the anxiety of scholars in relation to writing. Similarly, 63% of respondents suggested their research skills had improved Very Much and 38% Quite a Bit as a result of the programme and 100% of respondents to the post-survey suggested they learnt any useful strategies for managing anxiety about writing.

Within the listening rooms scholars referred to an advancement in various skills including academic writing and research skills, communication and presenting skills, and networking skills or interpersonal skills.

“The use of NVivo, SPSS, the Q Plus programme, the quantitative programme, the data analysis programme. I am going to use that. This

has changed me and made me prepared for the dissertation". (ASPIRE scholar)

"What I've seen with the help of this programme, if you have the skill, just upskill yourself and mingle with the right people, network with the right people, and your skin, your colour, is not a barrier at all." (ASPIRE scholar)

3.3.6 Successes

Of those who completed the post-survey all but one respondent (88%) indicated that they are interested in doctoral study, with three scholars having submitted applications, and four planning on submitting applications the month following the survey. Although data is limited, and it is possible that scholars had similar intentions prior to applying for the ASPIRE programme, this suggests an improvement in scholars' future study and career prospects.

Both the mentors and scholars referred to scholar successes that they attributed to the programme within the listening rooms. These included applications for PhDs, acceptances on PhDs, and employment successes.

"I am happy that at the end of it all it was a success story. She did complete her programme on time. She was able to get a job and I think that she is happy now." (ASPIRE mentor)

"This person also applied for a funded PhD opportunity and was invited for an interview and I did offer some support to this particular person as well, preparing this person for the interview, and this person was successful at the interview." (ASPIRE mentor)

"I have now got a voluntary position that will help me in my career development. I have done the post-graduate degree that I applied for and so I got a place on that, and I am planning on looking for a more practical PhD for the future, like apprenticeship PhD or something that will allow me to do research on the area that I'm interested in but with more practice" (ASPIRE scholar)

"I was able to bring it to fruition by the skills, the training, the networking – you know, the material, the resource. I was able to get and Aspire helped me a whole lot to be able to get by within academia and put a worthwhile application which actually gave me a good opportunity." (ASPIRE scholar)

"Being able to apply for a post-graduate degree, and not just a post-graduate but a doctoral degree, a scholarship scheme, being shortlisted, went through interview, and being fully considered as ... is something of a big success story" (ASPIRE scholar)

"I have been able to put in an application for a PhD, was shortlisted and successful through that process, so I am looking forward to starting up the doctoral research" (ASPIRE scholar)

Interviews with the programme lead Dr Francis Awolowo and Kristina, Senior Administrator also revealed that the programme has reached levels of success beyond initial expectations,

gaining attention from the media and other universities seeking to implement the programme:

“The impact of the project is now much more felt than before. We have more visibility beyond their three partners. ASPIRE is now more visible in the country, which I think is a good sign and it’s a good thing, and we’ve now started receiving requests from other universities to come and help them in terms of widening and access and participation for black students. “And you’ll tell us more about your model, how have you delivered this?” (Dr Francis Awolowo)

“I think it got quite a lot of attention from the press, so it’s been disseminated in the press, and Francis is going to conferences to deliver keynote addresses. So yes, it’s getting attention and people want to hear about and learn from it.” (Kristina, Senior Administrator)

Related to these success stories discussed in the listening rooms and interviews, overall, of the 46 scholars who have completed the programme since cohort 1, ten scholars (22%) have secured fully funded PhDs, five (11%) have graduated with distinction, two (4%) completed their MA programmes, one (2%) completed a PGC, and 11 (24%) successfully completed their masters. The programme has also reached a wider audience and best practice from programme leaders and evaluators has been shared amongst academics, policy makers and practitioners, having been presented at nine conferences, two of which included a keynote from the programme lead. The programme has also been featured on BBC radio, Wonkhe, Bluesky Thinking and Forbes (full details of project outputs can be found in Appendix A). An ASPIRE podcast has also recently been launched. Finally, the programme lead has attended parliament by invitation, addressing MPs about the ASPIRE project, its impact and policy implications, with some MPs now calling for the programme to be extended nationally.

4. Conclusion

Moving forward to the third cohort, additional lessons can be learned from this year's process evaluation.

Process evaluation recommendations for cohort 3:

- + Linking mentors with supervisors earlier in the programme could support supervisor and scholar relationship development, providing additional support for scholars to share their lived experience with white supervisors who do not have the same backgrounds/characteristics as themselves.
- + Continuing to consider timings to make the programme as accessible as possible for those with external commitments can also support engagement for the third cohort.
- + Communicate commitment levels early, alongside benefits of the programme for all, but particularly for supervisors, including benefits for their personal/professional development.
- + For the evaluation of the next cohort the lead researcher/evaluator ought to be a consistent presence (due to unforeseen circumstances the lead evaluator changed during cohort 2), attending the initiation event and familiarising themselves with cohort participants from early in the programme, sharing the aims of the evaluation.
- + The evaluation elements including the surveys and any qualitative data gathering should be embedded within aspects of the programme as far as possible.
- + Shorten the surveys, reducing the number of questions, re-structuring for ease of use and making them more concise and accessible for participants.
- + Instead of the creation of a unique code at the start of the surveys collect participant names to enable matching across pre- and post-surveys more seamlessly and reduce the potential for errors.
- + Consider the methods of collection of qualitative data, returning to interviews for supervisors and making available participant reflections/journals for review by the evaluator.

Despite these areas for improvement, it is clear that the ASPIRE programme is valued highly by those who take part in it. The impact evaluation findings show that the programme is having an impact on scholars' confidence, resilience, knowledge and understanding, skills, work readiness and sense of belonging/community. Additionally, the success stories and the wider interest the programme has gained, highlight the impact the programme is considered to have had on scholars' future study and career prospects.

5. Appendix

5.1 Appendix A: programme outputs

Publications

Awolowo, I. F., Owolade, F., Abidoye, A., Dosumu, O., & Ajao, O. (2023). Towards widening participation in post-graduate research: The ASPIRE programme. *People, Place and Policy Online*, 1-11. doi:[10.3351/ppp.2023.4627796626](https://doi.org/10.3351/ppp.2023.4627796626)

Conference presentations

Awolowo, I. (2023). Accomplished Study Programme in Research Excellence (ASPIRE). In *UKCGE EDI Conference*. Crown Plaza, Sheffield. Retrieved from <https://ukcge.ac.uk/assets/pdfs/EDI-Programme-v1.24.pdf>

Awolowo, I. (2023). Achieving Equity in the research environment: The ASPIRE Agenda. In *Vitae International Researcher Development Conference*. Manchester. Retrieved from https://www.vitae.ac.uk/acl_users/credentials_cookie_auth/require_login?came_from=https%3A/www.vitae.ac.uk/events/vitae-international-researcher-development-conference-2023/booking-vitaecon2023

Awolowo, I., Abidoye, A., Owolade, F., Seun, A., & Dosumu, O. (2023). Give me a hand, and I will thrive: How personalised mentorship is helping black students progression. In *BAM Conference*. University of Sussex: British Academy of Management.

Awolowo, I., Abidoye, A., Ajao, S., & Dosumu, O. (2023). Impact of personalised mentorship on black heritage students: A case study of ASPIRE. In *Advance HE Teaching and Learning Conference*. Keele. Retrieved from <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2023-05/Day%20%20-%20Part%20%20T%26L%202023.pdf>

Awolowo, I., Abidoye, A., Ajao, S., & Dosumu, O. (2023). Towards Fixing the Broken Pipeline: The ASPIRE Agenda. In *CABS Learning, Teaching & Student Experience*. ICC, Wales. Retrieved from <https://charteredabs.org/events/ltse2023/>

Media

Awolowo, I. (2023). *How ASPIRE is changing the narratives for Black students*. WONKHE. Retrieved from <https://wonkhe.com/blogs/how-aspire-is-changing-the-narratives-for-black-students/>

Awolowo, I. (2023). *Expanding Influence In Business And Beyond For Black Students*. Forbes. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/mattsymonds/2023/10/26/expanding-influence-in-business-and-beyond-for-black-students/?sh=4c52f94e11d4>

Awolowo, I. (2023). *Black History Month 2023: The Power Of Mentors – Dr. Ifedapo Francis Awolowo*. Bluesky Thinking. Retrieved from <https://bluesky-thinking.com/black-history-month-2023-the-power-of-mentors-dr-ifedapo-francis-awolowo/>

Interview with Dr Ifedapo Francis Awolowo ASPIRE programme lead, BBC Sheffield, July 2023. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0fwq0hc>

5.2 Appendix B: recruitment promotional materials for ASPIRE scholars



ASPIRE

Are you a black or black mixed heritage student in the UK, thinking about making a positive change in your life or career?

ASPIRE is a fully funded opportunity to develop yourself; a movement to showcase the very best Black talent.

Achieve your personal and professional goals with ASPIRE

Next cohort begins 16th of January 2023

WHAT?

- Join a 30-strong community on a 6-month journey valued at over £10k: workshops, clubs, collaboration and more.
- **Develop life-wide** skills that will help you better navigate systems and structures – whether that be **industry** or **higher education**
- A range of targeted opportunities will be available to ASPIRE alumni, including a number of funded PhD positions.

HOW?

- Email aspire@shu.ac.uk to express your interest in the program
- Attend our online expression of interest event on the **30th of November 2022 by 11 am.**
- Application will open on the 1st of December 2022 after the expression of interest event.

5.3 Appendix C: recruitment promotional materials for ASPIRE scholars

ASPIRE is looking for academic supervisors who are interested in learning more on how to better support Black and Black (mixed) heritage scholars during research study. You will have experience in supporting undergraduate and/or postgraduate students through research.

Academic supervisors will become part of our ASPIRE community. It is a fantastic learning community in which we share experiences with compassion and understanding in order to support each other. If you are interested in taking part and becoming a part of our ASPIRE community, please contact ASPIRE project lead, Dr Francis Awolowo on i.f.awolowo@shu.ac.uk by 10th April 2023.

About ASPIRE

ASPIRE 2023 is a 6-month programme funded by UKRI/Research England & Office for Students (<https://lnkd.in/dXVJ2PWU>), that seeks to enhance the pipeline of Black and Black (mixed) heritage people into doctoral level study. We also seek to work with colleagues in the sector, to better support Black and Black (mixed) heritage scholars doing research at all levels.

ASPIRE is a programme currently running in partnership between Sheffield Hallam University and Manchester Metropolitan University. The programme develops the personal and professional development, work-readiness, employability skills, academic writing, and quantitative and qualitative research skills of ASPIRE scholars.

Over the 6 months, scholars participate in a wide range of exciting & interesting online webinars, workshops, life coaching, student-led study skills conference, talking therapies and other on-campus community-building activities. Scholars also undertake a paid 30-hour internship to develop their work readiness and employability.

Scholars will then apply all their learning and skills developed during the ASPIRE programme to a 6-week research project/live client brief at the end of the programme. During the project, scholars will be supported by two ASPIRE project supervisors, one of whom will be you, their academic supervisor.

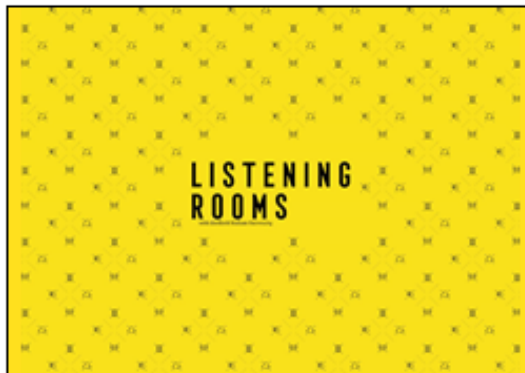
About Academic Supervision

Academic supervisors will undertake workshops and coaching between mid-April and May (on average, about 8-10 hours of activity per month). These activities will encourage you to reflect on your practice in supporting Black and Black (mixed) heritage scholars. There is space for introspection in engaging in safe but honest & important conversations about what good practice in supporting these scholars needs to be.

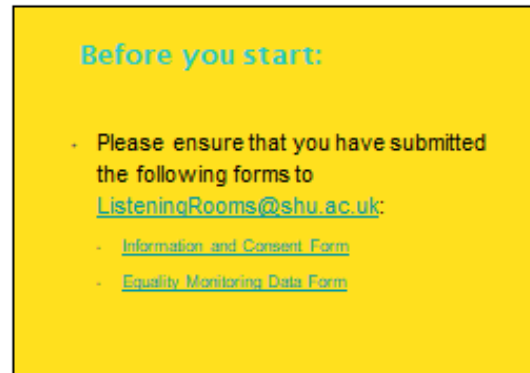
ASPIRE academic supervisors will be asked to support up to 2 ASPIRE scholars working on their projects for 6 weeks, between May and June. All academic supervisors will be supported by a Black/Black (mixed) heritage academic mentor who already has an ongoing & established mentor/mentee relationship with the ASPIRE scholar(s) allocated to you, the academic supervisor.

5.4 Appendix D: listening room guides

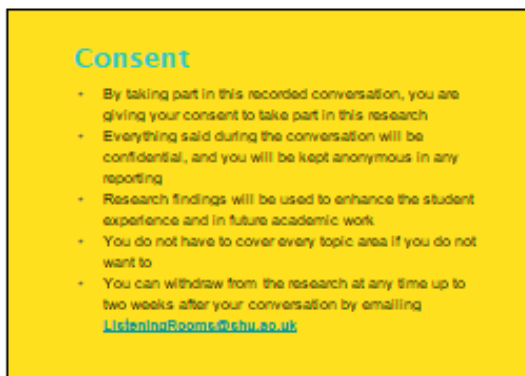
Scholar listening room guide:



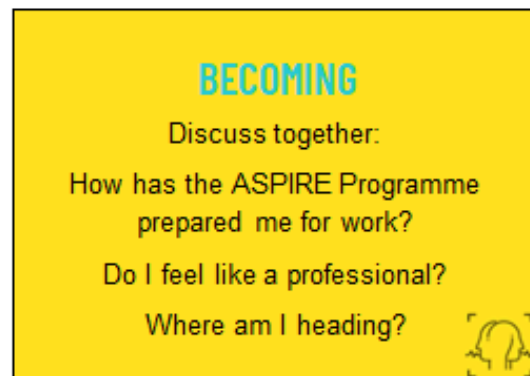
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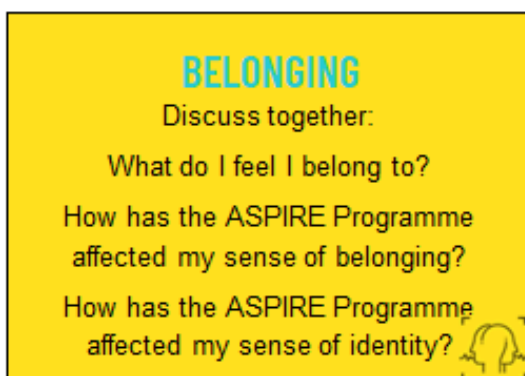
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3



4



5



6

THE ASPIRE PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Discuss together:

How would I explain the ASPIRE Programme structure to somebody considering the programme?

How has the programme structure supported my success?

What changes to the programme structure would enhance my experience?



7

JOURNEY

Discuss together:

What progress have I made since starting the ASPIRE Programme?

How have I changed since starting the ASPIRE Programme?

What have been the key moments?



8

SUCCESS

Discuss together:

What are the structural barriers and enablers to success?

Does being black affect your level of success?

Has the ASPIRE Programme better equipped you to succeed?



9

You have completed your Listening Room Online

- Please stop the recording and **continue through the remaining slides** for your debrief

10

Thank you!

- Please complete the debrief form and send to:
ListeningRooms@shu.ac.uk

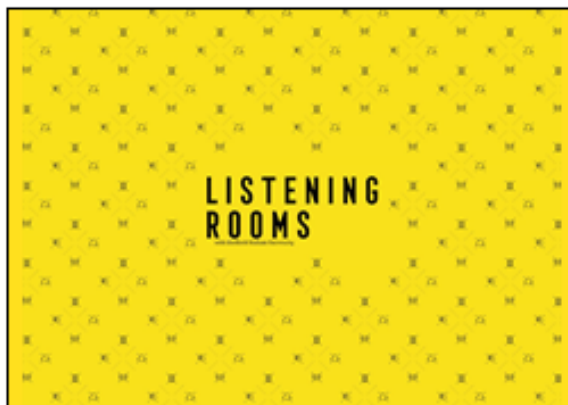
11

Need Support?

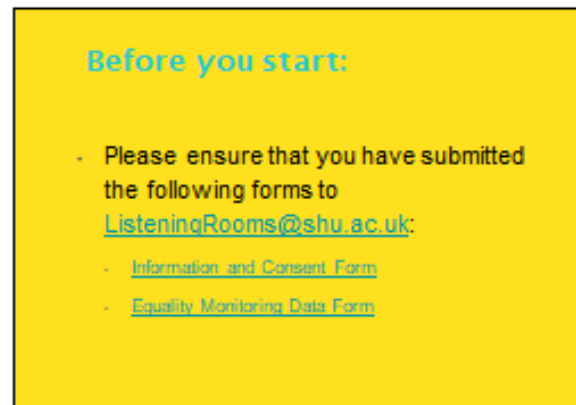
- If any of the topics raised during your conversations were hard for you to talk about or impacted your wellbeing, we would like to encourage you to take advantage of the free support services available to all Hallam students:
 - [JoxiDance](#) (this is also available to non-Hallam students)
 - [Report and Support](#)
 - [Help and Support Services](#)
 - [Student Wellbeing](#)

12

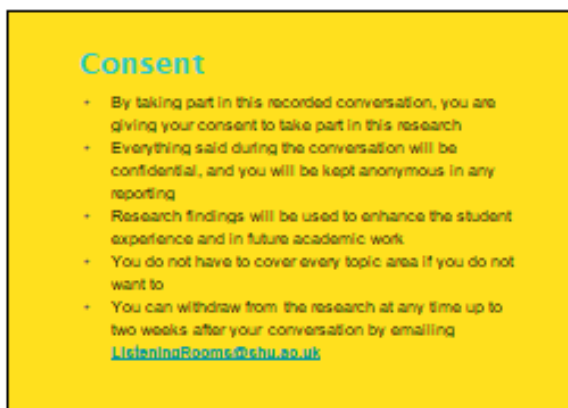
Mentor listening room guide:



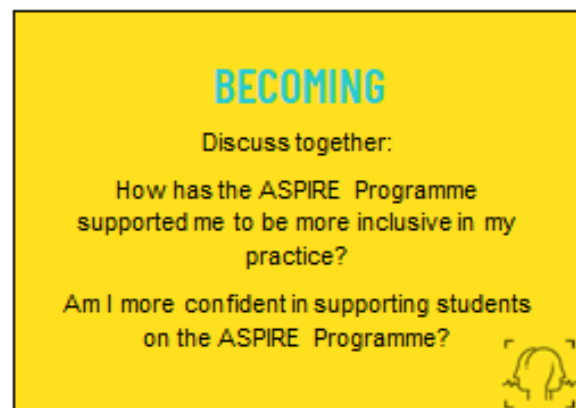
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2



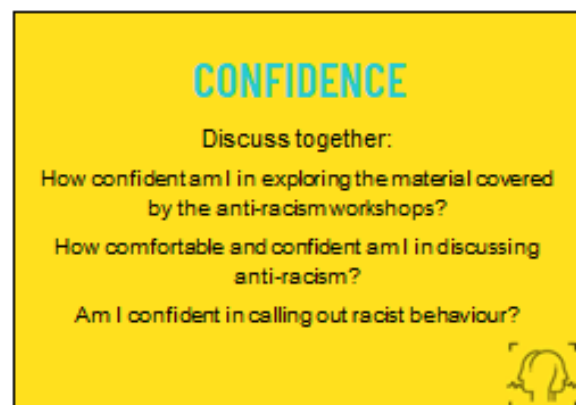
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4



5



6

THE ASPIRE PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

Discuss together:

How would I explain the ASPIRE Programme structure to somebody considering mentoring on the programme?

How was the process of matching mentors to students?

What changes to the programme structure would enhance my experience?



7

NETWORK

Discuss together:

How have my experiences with my mentee(s) been on the ASPIRE Programme?

How have my experiences with the supervisor(s) been on the ASPIRE Programme?

Have I been able to develop my network through the ASPIRE programme?



8

SUCCESS

Discuss together:

What are the structural barriers and enablers to success for black students and black staff?

Has the ASPIRE Programme shaped my teaching/mentoring practices?

Has the ASPIRE Programme better equipped my mentee(s) to succeed?



9

You have completed your Listening Room Online

- Please stop the recording and **continue through the remaining slides** for your debrief

10

Thank you!

- Please complete the debrief form and send to:
ListeningRooms@shu.ac.uk

11

Need Support?

- If any of the topics raised during your conversations were hard for you to talk about or impacted your wellbeing, we would like to encourage you to take advantage of the free support services available to all Hallam students:
 - [Report and Support](#)
 - [Employee Assistance Programme](#)

12

5.5 Appendix E: scholar pre and post survey questions

Pre-Student Survey ASPIRE

The ASPIRE (Accomplished Study Programme in Research Excellence).

AdvanceHE

Welcome

The ASPIRE programme focuses on developing your strengths and capabilities. It centres on you as an individual to provide opportunities to develop skills through networking, sharing lived experience, mentoring and creative connections. The overall aim of the programme is to help you develop life wide skills to access opportunities in the labour market and/or doctoral level study. This means enhancing skills but also helping you to better navigate systems and structures that we know advantage other racialised groups.

With this in mind, Advance HE have been commissioned to evaluate the ASPIRE programme. To do this we will ask you to respond to questions about your experiences, then you will be asked to answer the same questions again at the end of the ASPIRE programme.

The survey covers 4 sections looking at:

Aims of ASPIRE

Work-readiness and preparedness for doctoral study

Sense of belonging

Questions about yourself

By completing this survey, we will use your answers to feedback to the ASPIRE project team about what worked, and what didn't to improve the ASPIRE programme for the next cohort of students.

Data confidentiality

All personal data and information that you share will be held confidentially by Advance HE in accordance with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018. At no point will the information you provide be shared in a way that would allow you to be personally identified.

All information about participants will be handled confidentially by the researchers.

Participants will not be personally identifiable in any report arising from the research.

Participation is voluntary.

The ASPIRE programme team will only see aggregate level data where the proportions are large enough for individuals not to be identified.

The survey has been designed so that you can save your responses and finish later. The survey is not saved automatically, but you can choose to save your responses and finish the survey at a later stage by clicking on the 'save' button located at the bottom of each page. To return to the survey and pick up where you left your responses, you will have to either

bookmark the 'finish later' URL in your browser, or request Jisc to email you the 'finish later' URL, generated once you click the 'save' button.

While we hope that you answer the survey in full, you are free to stop answering questions at any point or skip any questions without an asterisk (* denotes questions that must be answered to continue in the survey). You can withdraw your consent at any time in the future by closing your browser or contacting insights@advance-he.ac.uk

Privacy Notice

Please read this [Privacy Notice](#), which sets out how any personal data you submit as part of this survey will be utilised and protected by Advance HE, and your rights as a data subject. We will not directly identify you in our report to Sheffield Hallam University, Manchester Metropolitan University, ASPIRE project team. However, you may be indirectly identified by information you provide, such as your department.

In order to participate, please tick below to confirm that you have read and understood the Privacy Notice and statement above.

I confirm

Alternative format

If you would like to receive the survey in an alternative format, please contact Hannah Griffin-James, hannah.griffin-james@advance-he.ac.uk, 0330 041 6201.

ID

At the end of the ASPIRE programme we will ask you to complete this survey again to assess overall as a cohort of students whether there have been any changes in skills, knowledge, understanding, confidence and resilience.

In order to anonymously link your survey responses across the ASPIRE project please provide the following to create a self-generated 8-digit anonymous code:

What are the first three letters of your *mother's first name?

What are the first three letters of the street on which you currently live?

On what day of the month were you born?

For example, a person whose mother's name is HANNAH who lives on Main Street and was born on 18th January their code would be: HANMAI18

*Alternatively, if you cannot or do not wish to use the first three letters of your mother's first name, please use the first three letters of the first name of another person. Remember this is the code we will ask for again in our other surveys for the ASPIRE programme.

You will be asked for any further comments on the topics covered, to enable staff to gain a better understanding of what has gone well and what has worked less well. **Please do not**

identify yourself or other individuals (including staff) in your comments. If you have a complaint or need support with any of the issues raised within the survey, please contact *the ASPIRE team*.

	No	Yes
Would you describe your ethnicity Black or Black heritage?		

Insert routing: if answer yes Black/Black heritage will go to next question, and skip ethnicity.

(If no) How would you describe your ethnicity or ethnic background? *not required
Arab
Asian – Bangladeshi or Bangladeshi British
Asian – Chinese or Chinese British
Asian – Indian or Indian British
Asian – Pakistani or Pakistani British
Any other Asian background
Black – African or African British
Black –Caribbean or Caribbean British
Any other Black background
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White or White British and Asian or Asian British
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White or White British and Black African or Black African British
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White or White British and Black Caribbean or Black Caribbean British
Any other mixed or multiple ethnic background
White – English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish or British
White - Irish
White - Roma
Any other White background
Any other ethnic background
Not known
Prefer not to say

New Page

This set of questions will ask you about things that are important to preparing for work or doctoral study.

Evaluation of aims of programme

Confidence					
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
I am able to do things as well as other people					
I believe I have a lot to be proud of					
I have a positive attitude about myself					
Overall, I am pleased with how hard I work					
In the future, I'm confident that I can do an excellent job					
I expect to achieve most of the things I want in my life					
Overall, I look at the positive side of life					
To what extent do you agree or disagree that...	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
Thinking about a job interview (or an interview for a doctoral position).					
I can talk about my skills to a potential employer in a persuasive manner					
I can talk about my work experiences to demonstrate my capability to fulfil a role					
Resilience					
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:	Not like me at all	Not much like me	Somewhat like me	Mostly like me	Very much like me
I am able to adapt to change					
Things happen for a reason					
I am in control of my life					
I recover quickly from stressful events					
I am sure I will have no problems behaving professionally in my					

future role (as a doctoral student/an employee)					
I am sure I will be able to dress appropriately in my future role (as a doctoral student/an employee)					
I am sure I will be able to speak appropriately in my future role (as a doctoral student/an employee)					
I can deal with adverse situations, learn from them and move forward in a positive way					
I finish everything I start					
I struggle to stay focused on projects that take more than a few weeks to complete					
I don't give up easily					
I have overcome setbacks to achieve a goal					

Knowledge

Please rate your level of knowledge about...	None	Very little	To some extent	Quite a bit	Very much
Requirements for doctoral-level study					
Funding:					
Financial cost of undertaking a doctorate					
Loans for undertaking a doctorate					
Scholarships/Bursaries/Studentships for undertaking a doctorate					
Applications:					
What key information to include in a job and doctoral application					
Where to find advertisements for doctorate positions					
What you need to do to improve your chances of successfully being granted a job or doctorate position					
Life after the PhD:					
What types of roles you can get when you have a doctorate					

The types of skills you develop when undertaking a doctorate					
The level of pay you can expect if you hold a doctorate					
The amount of jobs for candidates who have a PhD					

In the past year have you experienced...at university?	No	Yes
Tokenism		
Individual racism		
Institutional racism		
Microaggressions		
Monoculturalism		

If you have any additional comments about your experiences either in your degree programme or ASPIRE programme, please write them here:
Open text
No comment

Work-readiness/Preparedness

On a scale of...	Very little	To some extent	Quite a bit	Very much
To what extent, do you think your degree programme has sufficiently prepared you for you for work ?				
To what extent, do you think your degree programme has sufficiently prepared you for you for further study ?				

<i>What if anything, are you most looking forward to about the ASPIRE programme?</i>
Open text
Nothing

<i>What has been the one most positive aspect of the ASPIRE programme so far?</i>
Open text

On a scale...	Don't know	1... Not at all familiar	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10... Very familiar
I am familiar with the roles and responsibilities of my future job/study											

I am familiar with the rules and regulations of my future job/study												
I am familiar with the software/hardware/tools of my future job/study (e.g. SAGE, SPSS, word)												
I can confidently use the acronyms and key terminology expected of me in my chosen industry/sector												

Do you know what industry/sector your job or further study you'd like to do in the future? (e.g. finance, business, social care)					
Yes					
No					
	No		Maybe		Yes
Have you undertaken any activities to plan your future career?					
On a scale...	Not at all important	Not very important	Neutral	Quite important	Very important
How important do you think it is to undertake career planning at this stage of your life?					

(If yes) Do you currently work (or have worked previously) in the industry/sector your job/further study you'd like to be in
Yes
No

How many...	None	1	3-5	5-9	10+
(If yes) Do any of your friends or family work in the industry/sector your job/further study you'd like to join					
Thinking about these people in your network, are they mostly (please select one answer)					
A first-degree connection (e.g. a mentor - someone you can ask for support)					
A second-degree connection (e.g. a friend of a friend – someone you've spoken to about work, but couldn't reach out for support without further building the relationship)					
A third-degree connection (e.g. someone you met at an event – you've spoken with about your background but not about work, and neither person would consider this a strong connection)					
Combination of all 3 types of connection					
I don't know					

On a scale...	1... Not at all confident	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10... Very Confident
How confident do you feel improving upon these connections or finding new connections										
How confident are you that you will be successful when you apply for a doctoral programme in the next year?										
How confident are you that you will be successful when you apply for a work placement?										
On a scale...	1... Not at all motivated	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10... Very motivated
How motivated are you to apply for a doctoral programme in the next year?										
How motivated are you to apply for a work placement?										
How motivated are you to apply for a job in the same industry/sector as your degree?										
On a scale...	1... Not important	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10... Very important
How important do you think aspiration is to succeed in a research career?										
How important do you think your identity is to succeed in a research career?										

	No	Maybe	Yes
Would you work unpaid for 6 months, if you thought it would improve your job/doctoral prospects?			
Would you undertake an unpaid doctoral position?			
Would you move to a new city for a job/doctoral position?			
Would you move to a new country for a job/doctoral position?			

On a scale of...	Very poor	Below average	Average	Above average	Excellent
Please rate your current ability at research in general					
Please rate your current ability at quantitative research					

Please rate your current ability at qualitative research					
Please rate your current ability at mixed-method research					

To what extent do you agree or disagree that you...	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
Admit my mistakes					
Always apply maximum amount of effort to work/university tasks					
Always meet work/university deadlines					
Always try to be my best self					
Are adaptable					
Are curious					
Are prepared for meetings					
Can act, instead of reacting, at work/university					
Can find out what I need to know for a work/coursework task					
Can manage my time well					
Can spot and take advantage of opportunities that others pass by					
Can suggest creative solutions					
Do things without being told					
Have a high degree of professionalism					
Hold yourself to a high standard of work					
Learn from my mistakes					

If you have any additional comments about the things you wish to gain from the ASPIRE programme, please write them here: Open text

Sense of belonging

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your department (or School) at University:	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
--	---------------------	-----------------	----------------------------	--------------	------------------

I can really be myself in the department					
Other students in the department take my opinions seriously					
Other staff and students in my department know I do good work					
Sometimes I feel I don't belong in this department					
In my department I am treated with as much respect as other students					
In my department there is at least one member of staff who I can talk to if I have a problem					
It is hard for people like me to be accepted in my department					
I feel proud of belonging to the department					

What are you looking forward to most about the ASPIRE programme? (multi-select)
All of the below
Accessing opportunities for people with Black and Black heritage
Accessing psychologically safe spaces
Growing my network
Improving my academic skills
Improving my doctoral opportunity prospects
Improving my job prospects
Improving my research skills
Improving my writing skills
Internship
Learning about doctoral study
Learning about how to apply for a doctorate
Learning about how to make a successful job application
Life coaching
Meeting new people
Meeting potential employers
Mental health support
Receiving mentorship
Well-being support
Other (please specify)

Questions about yourself

What is your sex?
Man
Woman
Prefer not to say

How would you describe your gender?
Female

Male
Non-binary
In another way (specify, if you wish)
Prefer not to say

What is your age?
Number (limiters 16-99)
Prefer not to say

Do you have an impairment, health condition or learning difference that has a substantial or long-term impact on your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?
Yes
No
Prefer not to say

Are you currently registered as studying:
Full-time
Part-time

Are you registered as doing a:
Foundation certificate
Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) or Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE)
Higher National Certificate (HNC) or Higher National Diploma (HND)
Foundation degree (FdA, FdSc)
Bachelor degree (e.g. BA, BSc, BEng)
Integrated Masters
Taught Masters (e.g. MBA, LLM, MSc, MEng)
Master by research

Outside of the ASPIRE programme, how have you had contact with staff this term?
Mostly or completely virtually/online
A mixture of in-person and virtually/online
Mostly or completely in-person

Please select which of the following most closely matches your primary area of study:
Medicine and dentistry
Subjects allied to medicine (including nursing, pharmacy, physiotherapy, biomedical sciences)
Biological and sport sciences (including biology, zoology, hair and beauty, exercise science)
Psychology
Veterinary sciences
Agriculture, food and related studies (including animal science, forestry, food production)
Physical sciences (including physics, chemistry, forensics)
Mathematical sciences
Engineering and technology

Computing
Geography, earth and environmental studies
Architecture, building and planning
Education and teaching
Social sciences (including sociology, politics, social work)
Law
Business and management (including marketing, HR, economics, accounting, tourism)
Media, journalism and communications
Language and area studies (including English and Welsh)
Historical, philosophical and religious studies (including archaeology)
Design, and creative and performing arts
Combined and general studies

Thank you for taking part

Thank you very much for your time in completing this survey if you have a complaint or need support with any of the issues raised please contact the ASPIRE programme leaders Dr. Francis Awolowo (I.F.Awolowo@shu.ac.uk) and Dr Iwi Ugiagbe-Green (I.Ugiagbe-Green@mmu.ac.uk).

If you have any further comments or queries about the survey please feel free to contact the Advance HE researcher leading the evaluation at hannah.griffin-james@advance-he.ac.uk

Many thanks for your responses.

Post-Student Survey ASPIRE

The ASPIRE (Accomplished Study Programme in Research Excellence).

Advance HE

Welcome

Congratulations on completing the ASPIRE programme.

To assess whether the ASPIRE programme has enhanced your skills and also helped you to better navigate systems and structures that we know advantage other racialised groups; we are asking you respond to questions about your experiences on the APSIRE programme and to answer the same questions that you completed at the start of the ASPIRE programme.

The survey covers 4 sections looking at:

Evaluation of ASPIRE programme

Confidence and resilience

Work-readiness and preparedness for doctoral study

About your future

By completing this survey, we will use your answers to feedback to the ASPIRE project team about what worked, and what didn't to improve the ASPIRE programme for the next cohort of students.

Data confidentiality

All personal data and information that you share will be held confidentially by Advance HE in accordance with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018. At no point will the information you provide be shared in a way that would allow you to be personally identified.

All information about participants will be handled confidentially by the researchers.

Participants will not be personally identifiable in any report arising from the research.

Participation is voluntary.

The ASPIRE programme team will only see aggregate level data where the proportions are large enough for individuals not to be identified.

The survey has been designed to save your responses as you go. As long as you use the same computer, you can exit and return to the survey at a later time to complete it.

While we hope that you answer the survey in full, you are free to stop answering questions at any point or skip any questions without an asterisk (* denotes questions that must be answered to continue in the survey). You can withdraw your consent at any time in the future by closing your browser or contacting insights@advance-he.ac.uk

Privacy Notice (for special category data – race)

Please read this [Privacy Notice](#), which sets out how any personal data you submit as part of this survey will be utilised and protected by Advance HE, and your rights as a data subject. We will not directly identify you in our report to Sheffield Hallam University, Manchester Metropolitan University, ASPIRE project team. However, you may be indirectly identified by information you provide, such as your department.

In order to participate, please tick below to confirm that you have read and understood the Privacy Notice and statement above.

I confirm

Alternative format

If you would like to receive the survey in an alternative format, please contact Hannah Griffin-James, hannah.griffin-james@advance-he.ac.uk, 0330 041 6201.

ID

At the start of the ASPIRE programme we asked you to complete this survey to assess overall as a cohort of students whether there have been any changes in skills, knowledge, understanding, confidence and resilience.

In order to anonymously link your survey responses across the ASPIRE project please provide the following to create a self-generated 8-digit anonymous code:

What are the first three letters of your *mother's first name?

What are the first three letters of the street on which you currently live?

On what day of the month were you born?

For example, a person whose mother's name is HANNAH who lives on Main Street and was born on 18th January their code would be: HANMA18

*Alternatively, if you cannot or do not wish to use the first three letters of your mother's first name, please use the first three letters of the first name of another person. Remember this is the code we will ask for again in our other surveys for the ASPIRE programme.

You will be asked for any further comments on the topics covered, to enable staff to gain a better understanding of what has gone well and what has worked less well. **Please do not identify yourself or other individuals (including staff) in your comments.** If you have a complaint or need support with any of the issues raised within the survey, please contact *the ASPIRE team*.

This set of questions will ask you about things that are important to preparing for work or doctoral study.

Evaluation of programme

Elements of programme

How satisfied are you with the ASPIRE programme in terms of:	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Accessibility of the resources					
Amount of effort require to complete programme					
Amount of hours of work required					
Amount of support available					
Applicability of content					
Asynchronous training (i.e. learning on your own schedule)					
Coaching					
Digital storytelling					
Format of lectures					
Learning online					
Listening rooms					
Mental health and wellbeing sessions					
Mentorship					
Networking sessions					
Programme content					
Programme delivery					
Quality of the resources					
Reflective diaries					
Talking Heads					
Use of case studies					
Use of FutureLearn for teaching content					
Use of Pebblepad					

Please rate how beneficial to your career goals the following were as part of the ASPIRE programme?	Very little	To some extent	Quite a bit	Very much
Accessing opportunities for people with Black and Black heritage				
Accessing psychologically safe spaces				
Growing my network				
Improving my academic skills				
Improving my doctoral opportunity prospects				
Improving my job prospects				

Improving my research skills				
Improving my writing skills				
Internship				
Learning about doctoral study				
Learning about how to apply for a doctorate				
Learning about how to make a successful job application				
Life coaching				
Meeting new people				
Mental health support				
Receiving mentorship				
Reflective diaries				
Well-being support				

	No		Yes	
Did you access the psychological safe spaces (e.g. listening rooms)				
	Not at all beneficial	A little beneficial	Somewhat beneficial	Very beneficial
How beneficial were these psychological safe spaces?				

Knowledge

Please rate your level of knowledge about...	None	Very little	To some extent	Quite a bit	Very much
Requirements for doctoral-level study					
Funding:					
Financial cost of undertaking a doctorate					
Loans for undertaking a doctorate					
Scholarships/Bursaries/Studentships for undertaking a doctorate					
Applications:					
What key information to include in a job and doctoral application					
Where to find advertisements for doctorate positions					
What you need to do to improve your chances of successfully being granted a job or doctorate position					
Life after the PhD:					
What types of roles you can get when you have a doctorate					
The types of skills you develop when undertaking a doctorate					

The level of pay you can expect if you hold a doctorate					
The amount of jobs for candidates who have a PhD					

Coaching

On a scale...	Not at all	Very little	To some extent	Quite a bit	Very much
How useful was the group coaching?					
How useful was the individual coaching?					
Do you think you benefited from the coaching?					

What was the best thing about coaching?
Open text
Nothing

What was the worst thing about coaching?
Open text
Nothing

Writing

	No	Yes
Did you learn any useful strategies for managing anxiety about writing?		
	Open text response	
Which was the most helpful strategy for managing your anxiety about writing?		

Benefits/Not so "great's"

How do I see taking part in the ASPIRE programme helping me in the longer term?
Open text
Nothing

<i>What if anything, is the one area in which your experience of the ASPIRE programme could be improved?</i>
Open text
Nothing

<i>What advice would I give to a friend about to start on the same ASPIRE programme?</i>
Open text
Nothing

<i>How much time would I suggest that it would be worth putting into it? Please give your answer as hours per week.</i>
Hours per week (number restricted, 0-80hours)

<i>What was the most boring or tedious part of taking part in the ASPIRE programme?</i>
Open text
Nothing

<i>Have you considered, for any reason, leaving the ASPIRE programme?</i>
Yes
No
Prefer not to say

<i>(If yes) What was the main (or most recent) reason that led you to consider leaving the ASPIRE programme</i>
Open text

<i>(If yes) Have you considered, for any reason, leaving your degree programme?</i>
Yes
No
Prefer not to say

Confidence and Resilience

Confidence					
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
I am able to do things as well as other people					
I believe I have a lot to be proud of					
I have a positive attitude about myself					
Overall, I am pleased with how hard I work					
In the future, I'm confident that I can do an excellent job					
I expect to achieve most of the things I want in my life					

Overall, I look at the positive side of life					
Thinking about a job interview (or an interview for a doctoral position). To what extent do you agree or disagree that...	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
I can talk about my skills to a potential employer in a persuasive manner					
I can talk about my work experiences to demonstrate my capability to fulfil a role					
Resilience					
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:	Not like me at all	Not much like me	Somewhat like me	Mostly like me	Very much like me
I am able to adapt to change					
Things happen for a reason					
I am in control of my life					
I recover quickly from stressful events					
I am sure I will have no problems behaving professionally in my future role (as a doctoral student/an employee)					
I am sure I will be able to dress appropriately in my future role (as a doctoral student/an employee)					
I am sure I will be able to speak appropriately in my future role (as a doctoral student/an employee)					
I can deal with adverse situations, learn from them and move forward in a positive way					
I finish everything I start					
I struggle to stay focused on projects that take more than a few weeks to complete					
I don't give up easily					
I have overcome setbacks to achieve a goal					

Work-readiness/Preparedness

Do you know what industry/sector your job or further study you'd like to do in the future? (e.g. finance, business, social care)					
Yes					
No					
	No		Maybe		Yes
Have you undertaken any activities to plan your future career?					
On a scale...	Not at all important	Not very important	Neutral	Quite important	Very important
How important do you think it is to undertake career planning at this stage of your life?					

On a scale...	Don't know	1... Not at all familiar	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10... Very familiar
I am familiar with the roles and responsibilities of my future job/study											
I am familiar with the rules and regulations of my future job/study											
I am familiar with the software/hardware/tools of my future job/study (e.g. SAGE, SPSS, word)											
I can confidently use the acronyms and key terminology expected of me in my chosen industry/sector											

Please rate how much the ASPIRE programme has improved your...	Not at all	Very little	To some extent	Quite a bit	Very much
Ability to apply knowledge of research to real world problems					
Academic writing					
Confidence					
Critical thinking					
Employability skills					
Empowered you to grow your social network					
Grown your network					
Knowledge of employability					
Mental health					

Presenting skills					
Research skills					
Resilience					
Wellbeing					
Work preparedness					

Please rate how anxious you feel about the following...	None	A little anxious	Mildly anxious	Somewhat anxious	Very anxious
Attending network events					
Building up your network					
Presenting					
Reflection on study skills					
Talking to new people					
Writing					

On a scale of...	Very poor	Below average	Average	Above average	Excellent
Please rate your current ability at research in general					
Please rate your current ability at quantitative research					
Please rate your current ability at qualitative research					
Please rate your current ability at mixed-method research					

To what extent do you agree or disagree that you...	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
Admit my mistakes					
Always apply maximum amount of effort to work/university tasks					
Always meet work/university deadlines					
Always try to be my best self					
Are adaptable					
Are curious					
Are prepared for meetings					
Can act, instead of reacting, at work/university					
Can find out what I need to know for a work/coursework task					
Can manage my time well					

Can spot and take advantage of opportunities that others pass by					
Can suggest creative solutions					
Do things without being told					
Have a high degree of professionalism					
Hold yourself to a high standard of work					
Learn from my mistakes					

If you have any additional comments about how you have developed your skills as part of the ASPIRE programme, please write them here:

Sense of belonging

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the ASPIRE programme:	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
I can really be myself in ASPIRE					
Other students in ASPIRE take my opinions seriously					
Other staff and students in ASPIRE know I do good work					
Sometimes I feel I don't belong in ASPIRE					
In ASPIRE I am treated with as much respect as other students					
In ASPIRE is at least one member of staff who I can talk to if I have a problem					
It is hard for people like me to be accepted in ASPIRE					
I feel proud of belonging to ASPIRE					

About your future

	No	Yes
Are you interested in doctoral study?		
In the past month how many applications have you submitted?	number	
In the next month how many applications are you planning on submitting?	number	
	No	Yes

Are you actively looking for work?		
(if yes)	Part-time	Full-time
What kind of work?		
In the past month how many applications have you submitted?	number	
In the next month how many applications are you planning on submitting?	number	

Are you a recipient of...	No	Yes
Funding from Manchester Metropolitan University or Sheffield Hallam University (e.g. a scholarship, studentship, etc.)?		
Are you planning on applying for Phd candidate funding from the ASPIRE programme?		
Did you complete an internship as part of the ASPIRE programme?		

Thank you for taking part

Thank you very much for your time in completing this survey if you have a complaint or need support with any of the issues raised please contact the ASPIRE programme leaders Dr. Francis Awolowo (I.F.Awolowo@shu.ac.uk) and Dr Iwi Ugiagbe-Green (I.Ugiagbe-Green@mmu.ac.uk).

If you have any further comments or queries about the survey please feel free to contact the Advance HE researcher leading the evaluation at hannah.griffin-james@advance-he.ac.uk

Many thanks for your responses.

5.6 Appendix F: supervisor pre and post survey questions

PRE Supervisor Survey

The ASPIRE (Accomplished Study Programme in Research Excellence).

AdvanceHE

Welcome

The ASPIRE programme focuses on improving your awareness of the racialised needs of Black and Black Mixed heritage students interested in accessing doctoral study, and change the ways in which Black and Black Mixed heritage students can be best supported to access doctoral study.

These questions have been designed to assess your understanding, attitudes, and perceptions as a PGR supervisor to the specific, racialised needs of Black and Black Mixed heritage students interested in accessing doctoral study.

The survey covers 7 sections looking at:

Aims of ASPIRE

Perceptions of Black and Black Mixed heritage students

Understanding of Black and Black Mixed heritage students

Knowledge of specific barriers for Black and Black Mixed heritage students

Exposure to racialized issues

Confidence supporting Black and Black Mixed heritage students

Questions about you

By completing this survey, we will use your answers to feedback to the ASPIRE project team about what worked, and what didn't to improve the ASPIRE programme for the next cohort of supervisors.

Data confidentiality

All personal data and information that you share will be held confidentially by Advance HE in accordance with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018. At no point will the information you provide be shared in a way that would allow you to be personally identified.

All information about participants will be handled confidentially by the researchers.

Participants will not be personally identifiable in any report arising from the research.

Participation is voluntary.

The ASPIRE programme team will only see aggregate level data where the proportions are large enough for individuals not to be identified.

The survey has been designed so that you can save your responses and finish later. The survey is not saved automatically, but you can choose to save your responses and finish the survey at a later stage by clicking on the 'save' button located at the bottom of each page.

To return to the survey and pick up where you left your responses, you will have to either bookmark the 'finish later' URL in your browser, or request Jisc to email you the 'finish later' URL, generated once you click the 'save' button.

Privacy Notice (for special category data – race)

Please read this [Privacy Notice](#), which sets out how any personal data you submit as part of this survey will be utilised and protected by Advance HE, and your rights as a data subject. We will not directly identify you in our report to Sheffield Hallam University, Manchester Metropolitan University, ASPIRE project team. However, you may be indirectly identified by information you provide, such as your job role and department.

In order to participate, please tick below to confirm that you have read and understood the Privacy Notice and statement above.

I confirm

Alternative format

If you would like to receive the survey in an alternative format, please contact Hannah Griffin-James, hannah.griffin-james@advance-he.ac.uk, 0330 041 6201.

ID

At the end of the ASPIRE programme we will ask you to complete this survey again to assess overall as a cohort of supervisors whether there have been any changes in understanding, attitudes or perceptions of PGR students specific racialised needs.

In order to anonymously link your survey responses across the ASPIRE project please provide the following to create a self-generated 8-digit anonymous code:

What are the first three letters of your *mother's first name?

What are the first three letters of the street on which you currently live?

On what day of the month were you born?

For example, a person whose mother's name is HANNAH who lives on Main Street and was born on 18th January their code would be: HANMAI18

*Alternatively, if you cannot or do not wish to use the first three letters of your mother's first name, please use the first three letters of the first name of another person. Remember this is the code we will ask for again in our other surveys for the ASPIRE programme.

You will be asked for any further comments on the topics covered, to enable staff to gain a better understanding of what has gone well and what has worked less well. **Please do not identify yourself or other individuals (including students) in your comments.** If you

have a complaint or need support with any of the issues raised within the survey, please contact *the ASPIRE team*.

Aims of programme

What is the main reason you are taking part in the ASPIRE programme?
To learn how to be a better supervisor
To build my network
To improve the opportunities for Black and Black mixed heritage students
To update my supervision practice
To learn about the structural barriers facing Black and Black mixed heritage students
Other (please specify)

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of the ASPIRE programme					

If there were no restrictions in place (related to the pandemic and you could choose) how would you prefer to engage with the ASPIRE programme?
Mostly online
Mostly in person
A blended or hybrid approach combining online and in person

Thinking of your current view of the ASPIRE programme as a whole, please rate whether each attribute is true or false.	False	True
The course is well organised		
The course is running smoothly		
The online resources have been well organised		
I have been able to access course-specific resources (e.g. live sessions, Podcast, MS Teams) when I needed to		

The workload on the APSIRE programme is manageable		
The course will improve my supervisory practice for Black and Black mixed heritage students		

Explore impact of staff perceptions towards black and black mixed heritage students

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
Increasing the diversity of doctoral candidate populations would improve the quality of research at my university					
Increasing the diversity of doctoral candidate population would improve the academic culture at my university					

Selecting doctoral candidates

Please rate the following elements level of importance when choosing a doctoral candidate to work with.	Not at all important	Not very important	Neutral	Quite important	Very important
Ability to manage complex projects					
Ability to take on board feedback and edit work					
Academic background and experience					
Alignment of research interests					
Candidates attitude					
Candidates communication and interpersonal skills					
Candidates skills set/knowledge					
English language proficiency					
Exhibits curious and original thought					
Good personality fit					
Passion for topic					

Previous familiarity with a candidate					
Quality of application					
References					

Career/Role

As a supervisor how often in the past year have you...	Not applicable	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Co-authored a paper with a student for publication					
Collaborated with a student to gather data					
Discussed students future career					
Ensure my students understand the hidden curriculum					
Ensure that my students build a strong network					
Ensure that my students have the research skills needed to succeed in work and academia					
Open my network to my students					
Provide advice on pursuing academic careers					
Provide advice on pursuing an alternative to an academic career					
Support my students in publishing					
Supported a student in applying for funding for them to undertake further study					
Supported a student in applying for funding to continue in their doctoral position					
Written a reference for a student to undertake a non-academic job					

Written a reference for a student to undertake a research post					
--	--	--	--	--	--

Confidence & Resilience

Perception of Black and Black mixed heritage students confidence					
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
Black and Black mixed heritage students...					
Are able to do things as well as other people					
Believe that they have a lot to be proud of					
Have a positive attitude about themselves					
Are pleased with how hard they work					
Are confident that I can do an excellent job					
Expect to achieve most of the things they want in their life					
Look at the positive side of life					
Thinking about a job interview (or an interview for a doctoral position). To what extent do you agree or disagree that Black and Black mixed heritage students...	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
Can talk about their skills to a potential employer in a persuasive manner					
Can talk about their work experiences to demonstrate their capability to fulfil a role					
Perception of Black and Black mixed heritage students resilience					
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree

Black and Black mixed heritage students...					
Are able to adapt to change					
Believe that things happen for a reason					
Are in control of their life					
Recover quickly from stressful events					
Are sure that they will have no problems behaving professionally in their future role (as a doctoral student/an employee)					
Are sure that they will be able to dress appropriately in their future role (as a doctoral student/an employee)					
Are sure that they will be able to speak appropriately in their future role (as a doctoral student/an employee)					
Can deal with adverse situations, learn from them and move forward in a positive way					
Finish everything they start					
Struggle to stay focused on projects that take more than a few weeks to complete					
Don't give up easily					
Have overcome setbacks to achieve a goal					

Explore staff understanding of experiences of Black and Black mixed heritage students

How important is a sense of belonging to a department for a...	Not at all important	Not very important	Neutral	Quite important	Very important
Black or Black mixed heritage doctoral applicant					
Black or Black mixed heritage doctoral candidate					

How often when considering a doctoral application ...	Never	Seldom	About half the time	Usually	Always
Do you consider elements that might improve access to doctoral level study for Black or Black mixed heritage students?					
Do you consider elements that might improve access to job opportunities for Black or Black mixed heritage students?					

Which ideas could you adopt to improve access to doctoral level study for Black or Black mixed heritage students?	Not relevant	Will not do	Unsure	Will do	Already do
Create a consistent, transparent PGR application process					
Make admissions data open access					
Create a welcoming and inclusive environment in my team					
Improve my supervision practice					
Support improvements to access psychological safe spaces					
Improve my awareness and understanding of career options for students					
Talk and write about the hidden elements of doctoral applications (i.e. "hidden curriculum")					
Talk and write about the hidden elements of doctoral study (i.e. "hidden curriculum")					
Improve opportunities for postgraduate students to write with me					
Improve opportunities for postgraduate students to develop their research skills					
Improve opportunities for postgraduate students to network					
Improve opportunities for postgraduates to practice teaching and other related tasks (e.g. marking)					
Improve opportunities for postgraduate students to share their job application materials with me for feedback					
Provide formal mentoring opportunities					

Provide opportunities to collaborate on publications					
Provide informal mentoring opportunities for Black or Black mixed heritage students					

Explore staff knowledge of specific barriers for Black or Black mixed heritage students

How likely do you think it is that an undergraduate or postgraduate student would experience the below within your department:	Not at all likely	Not very likely	Neutral	Quite likely	Very likely
Tokenism					
Individual racism					
Institutional racism					
Microaggressions					
Monoculturalism					

How frequently do you think an undergraduate or postgraduate student would experience the below within your department:	Never	Seldom	About half the time	Usually	Always
Tokenism					
Individual racism					
Institutional racism					
Microaggressions					
Monoculturalism					

Please rate how important you think developing the following elements are to a student's success	Not at all important	Not very important	Neutral	Quite important	Very important
Ability to adhere to deadlines					
Ability to make a complaint					
Ability to reach out for support					
Amenable nature					
Confidence					
Grit					
Having a strong sense of belonging					
Positive demeanour					
Resilience					
Prepared to seek support from university services					

Please write here any additional comments about the above issues. *optional

Open text
No comment

Explore staff exposure to issues – e.g. race quality

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
White people in the UK have certain advantages because of the colour of their skin (R)					
Race plays an important role in who gets onto a doctoral programme (R)					
Race plays an important role in who gets selected for a job (R)					
Black and Black mixed heritage students have the same opportunities as white students in the UK					
Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance of success at work					
Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance of succeeding in academia					
White people are more to blame for racial discrimination than people of Black and Black mixed heritage. (R)					

Explore staff confidence in confronting racial injustice

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements	Prefer not to answer	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
I feel supported to enact good supervision						
I feel capable of addressing the racialised issues within my capacity as a supervisor						
I feel capable of addressing the racialised needs of my students within my capacity as their supervisor						
I feel confident tackling racism within my department						

I feel confident tackling racism within my university						
I fear the consequences of standing up to racism within my department						
I fear the consequences of standing up to racism within my university						

On the following scale...	Not at all confident	Not very confident	Somewhat confident	Fairly confident	Completely confident
How confident do you feel addressing the racialised needs of any Black or Black mixed heritage student you are supervising					

On the following scale...	Not at all supportive	Slightly supportive	Somewhat supportive	Fairly supportive	Completely supportive
How supportive do you believe your university is of addressing racialised needs of any Black or Black mixed heritage student you are supervising					

What one thing would make your role as a supervisor better? Please write freely and give as much detail as possible.					
Open text					
How confident do you feel supporting candidates from a Black or Black mixed heritage background to:	Not at all confident	Not very confident	Somewhat confident	Fairly confident	Completely confident
Accessing paid work					
Accessing voluntary work					
Accessing work-experience/Internships					
Build their confidence					
Build their grit					
Build their resilience					
Improve academic skills					
Improve their future career prospects					
Improve their future study prospects					
Sharing your network					

What one thing could you do to improve Black and Black mixed heritage students **experiences** of doctoral study?

Open text

What one thing could you do to improve Black and Black mixed heritage students **engagement** with doctoral study?

Open text

If you have any additional comments about improvements, please write them here:

Open text

Questions about yourself and your supervision

Please select your career stage from the list:

Early Career (or doctoral student)

Mid-career

Late career

Retired

Other

Select the total number of doctoral candidates you are the primary supervisor for:

1-2

3-5

6-10

11-20

>20

Select the number of doctoral candidates you are a member of the committee/second supervisor

1-2

3-5

6-10

11-20

>20

Select the number of doctoral candidates you are supporting informally

1-2

3-5

6-10

11-20

>20

How many students have you seen through to successful doctoral completion?

Raw number (min 0, max 100, number only)
--

<i>Overall what main route have your current doctoral students taken:</i>
<i>Directly from a previous HE academic qualification</i>
<i>Undertaking doctorate part-time</i>
<i>Employed but undertaking doctorate independently</i>
<i>Sponsored by an employer to undertake doctorate</i>
<i>Professional, but not currently employed</i>
<i>Government-sponsored</i>
<i>No prior HE academic background (no undergraduate or postgraduate degree)</i>
<i>Retired</i>
<i>Other (open text)</i>

Select the total number of masters students you are the primary supervisor for:
<5
6-10
11-15
>15

<i>In general, which discipline do you supervise:</i>
Medicine and dentistry
Subjects allied to medicine (including nursing, pharmacy, physiotherapy, biomedical sciences)
Biological and sport sciences (including biology, zoology, hair and beauty, exercise science)
Psychology
Veterinary sciences
Agriculture, food and related studies (including animal science, forestry, food production)
Physical sciences (including physics, chemistry, forensics)
Mathematical sciences
Engineering and technology
Computing
Geography, earth and environmental studies
Architecture, building and planning
Education and teaching
Social sciences (including sociology, politics, social work)
Law
Business and management (including marketing, HR, economics, accounting, tourism)
Media, journalism and communications
Language and area studies (including English and Welsh)
Historical, philosophical and religious studies (including archaeology)
Design, and creative and performing arts
Combined and general studies

<i>Which is the main type of doctorate that you supervise?</i>
--

<i>PhD by publication</i>
<i>PhD by thesis</i>
<i>Practice-based doctorate</i>
<i>Professional doctorate</i>

How would you describe your ethnicity or ethnic background?
Arab
Asian – Bangladeshi or Bangladeshi British
Asian – Chinese or Chinese British
Asian – Indian or Indian British
Asian – Pakistani or Pakistani British
Any other Asian background
Black – African or African British
Black –Caribbean or Caribbean British
Any other Black background
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White or White British and Asian or Asian British
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White or White British and Black African or Black African British
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White or White British and Black Caribbean or Black Caribbean British
Any other mixed or multiple ethnic background
White – English, Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish or British
White - Irish
White - Roma
Any other White background
Any other ethnic background
Not known
Prefer not to say

Do you have an impairment, health condition or learning difference that has a substantial or long-term impact on your ability to carry out day-to-day activities?
Yes
No
Prefer not to say

What is your sex?
Man
Woman
Prefer not to say

How would you describe your gender identity?
Female

Male
Non-binary
In another way (specify, if you wish)
Prefer not to say

Thank you

Thank you very much for your time in completing this survey if you have a complaint or need support with any of the issues raised please contact the ASPIRE programme leaders Dr. Francis Awolowo (I.F.Awolowo@shu.ac.uk) and Dr Iwi Ugiagbe-Green (I.Ugiagbe-Green@mmu.ac.uk).

If you have any further comments or queries about the survey please feel free to contact the Advance HE researcher leading the evaluation at hannah.griffin-james@advance-he.ac.uk

Many thanks for your responses.

Post Supervisor Survey

The ASPIRE (Accomplished Study Programme in Research Excellence).

AdvanceHE

Welcome

Congratulations on completing the ASPIRE programme.

To assess whether the ASPIRE programme has improved your understanding, attitudes, perceptions of the specific, racialised needs of Black students interested in accessing doctoral study, we will ask you to answer the same questions that you completed at the start of the ASPIRE programme.

The survey covers 5 sections looking at:

Evaluation of the ASPIRE programme

Perceptions of Black students

Understanding of Black students

Knowledge of specific barriers for Black students

Confidence supporting Black students

By completing this survey, we will use your answers to feedback to the ASPIRE project team about what worked, and what didn't to improve the ASPIRE programme for the next cohort of supervisors.

Data confidentiality

All personal data and information that you share will be held confidentially by Advance HE in accordance with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018. At no point will the information you provide be shared in a way that would allow you to be personally identified.

All information about participants will be handled confidentially by the researchers.

Participants will not be personally identifiable in any report arising from the research.

Participation is voluntary.

The ASPIRE programme team will only see aggregate level data where the proportions are large enough for individuals not to be identified.

The survey has been designed so that you can save your responses and finish later. The survey is not saved automatically, but you can choose to save your responses and finish the survey at a later stage by clicking on the 'save' button located at the bottom of each page. To return to the survey and pick up where you left your responses, you will have to either bookmark the 'finish later' URL in your browser, or request Jisc to email you the 'finish later' URL, generated once you click the 'save' button.

While we hope that you answer the survey in full, you are free to stop answering questions at any point or skip any questions without an asterisk (* denotes questions that must be

answered to continue in the survey). You can withdraw your consent at any time in the future by closing your browser or contacting insights@advance-he.ac.uk

Privacy Notice (for special category data – race)

Please read this [Privacy Notice](#), which sets out how any personal data you submit as part of this survey will be utilised and protected by Advance HE, and your rights as a data subject. We will not directly identify you in our report to Sheffield Hallam University, Manchester Metropolitan University, ASPIRE project team. However, you may be indirectly identified by information you provide, such as your job role and department.

In order to participate, please tick below to confirm that you have read and understood the Privacy Notice and statement above.

I confirm

Alternative format

If you would like to receive the survey in an alternative format, please contact Hannah Griffin-James, hannah.griffin-james@advance-he.ac.uk, 0330 041 6201.

ID

At the end of the ASPIRE programme we will ask you to complete this survey again to assess overall as a cohort of supervisors whether there have been any changes in understanding, attitudes or perceptions of PGR students specific racialised needs.

In order to anonymously link your survey responses across the ASPIRE project please provide the following to create a self-generated 8-digit anonymous code:

What are the first three letters of your *mother's first name?

What are the first three letters of the street on which you currently live?

On what day of the month were you born?

For example, a person whose mother's name is HANNAH who lives on Main Street and was born on 18th January their code would be: HANMAI18

*Alternatively, if you cannot or do not wish to use the first three letters of your mother's first name, please use the first three letters of the first name of another person. Remember this is the code we will ask for again in our other surveys for the ASPIRE programme.

You will be asked for any further comments on the topics covered, to enable staff to gain a better understanding of what has gone well and what has worked less well. **Please do not identify yourself or other individuals (including students) in your comments.** If you

have a complaint or need support with any of the issues raised within the survey, please contact *the ASPIRE team*.

Aims of programme

	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of the ASPIRE programme					

What is the most important thing you've gained from taking part in the ASPIRE programme?
Open text
Nothing

Thinking of your current view of the ASPIRE programme as a whole, please rate whether each attribute is true or false.	False	True
The course was well organised		
The course ran smoothly		
The online resources were well organised		
I was able to access course-specific resources (e.g. live sessions, Podcast, MS Teams) when I needed to		
The workload on the ASPIRE programme was manageable		
The course improved my supervisory practice for Black and Black mixed heritage students		

How satisfied are you with the ASPIRE programme in terms of:	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
Abuntu session					
Accessibility of the resources					
Amount of effort required to complete programme					
Amount of hours of work required					
Amount of support available					
Applicability of content					
Asynchronous learning					
Coaching					
Format of lectures					
JEDI workshop					
Listening rooms					
Mental health and wellbeing sessions					
Mix of teaching resources					
Networking sessions					
Programme content					
Programme delivery					
Quality of the resources					
Race equity training					
Reflective diaries					
Talking Heads					
Use of case studies					
Use of FutureLearn for teaching content					
Use of MS Teams					

What one thing would you suggest the project team do to improve the ASPIRE programme?
Open text
Nothing

Explore impact of staff perceptions towards black students

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
Increasing the diversity of doctoral candidate populations would					

improve the quality of research at my university					
Increasing the diversity of doctoral candidate population would improve the academic culture at my university					
ASPIRE has created sufficient opportunities to discuss my supervision practice with other supervisors (in-person or virtual/online)					
ASPIRE has encouraged me to be the best supervisor I can be					
I have appropriate opportunities to give feedback on my experience					

Selecting doctoral candidates

Please rate the following elements' level of importance when choosing a doctoral candidate to work with.	Not at all important	Not very important	Neutral	Quite important	Very important
Ability to manage complex projects					
Ability to take on board feedback and edit work					
Academic background and experience					
Alignment of research interests					
Candidate's attitude					
Candidate's communication and interpersonal skills					
Candidate's skills set/knowledge					
English language proficiency					
Candidate exhibits curious and original thought					
Good personality fit					
Passion for topic					
Previous familiarity with a candidate					
Quality of application					
References					

Career/role

As a supervisor how often in the past year have you...	Not applicable	Never	Sometimes	Often	Very often
Co-authored a paper with a student for publication					
Collaborated with a student to gather data					
Discussed students future career					
Ensure my students understand the hidden curriculum					
Ensure that my students build a strong network					
Ensure that my students have the research skills needed to succeed in work and academia					
Open my network to my students					
Provide advice on pursuing academic careers					
Provide advice on pursuing an alternative to an academic career					
Support my students in publishing					
Supported a student in applying for funding for them to undertake further study					
Supported a student in applying for funding to continue in their doctoral position					
Written a reference for a student to undertake a non-academic job					
Written a reference for a student to undertake a research post					

Confidence & Resilience

Perception of Black and Black mixed heritage students confidence					
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements.	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
Black and Black mixed heritage students...					
Are able to do things as well as other people					

Believe that they have a lot to be proud of					
Have a positive attitude about themselves					
Are pleased with how hard they work					
Are confident that I can do an excellent job					
Expect to achieve most of the things they want in their life					
Look at the positive side of life					
Thinking about a job interview (or an interview for a doctoral position). To what extent do you agree or disagree that Black and Black mixed heritage students...	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
Can talk about their skills to a potential employer in a persuasive manner					
Can talk about their work experiences to demonstrate their capability to fulfil a role					
Perception of Black and Black mixed heritage students resilience					
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements. Black and Black mixed heritage students...	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
Are able to adapt to change					
Believe that things happen for a reason					
Are in control of their life					
Recover quickly from stressful events					
Are sure that they will have no problems behaving professionally in their future role (as a doctoral student/an employee)					
Are sure that they will be able to dress					

appropriately in their future role (as a doctoral student/an employee)					
Are sure that they will be able to speak appropriately in their future role (as a doctoral student/an employee)					
Can deal with adverse situations, learn from them and move forward in a positive way					
Finish everything they start					
Struggle to stay focused on projects that take more than a few weeks to complete					
Don't give up easily					
Have overcome setbacks to achieve a goal					

Explore staff understanding of experiences of Black students

How important is a sense of belonging to a department for a...	Not at all important	Not very important	Neutral	Quite important	Very important
Black or Black mixed heritage doctoral applicant					
Black or Black mixed heritage doctoral candidate					

How often when considering a doctoral application ...	Never	Seldom	About half the time	Usually	Always
Do you consider elements that might improve access to doctoral level study for Black or Black mixed heritage students?					
Do you consider elements that might improve access to job opportunities for Black or Black mixed heritage students?					

Which ideas could you adopt to improve access to doctoral level study for Black or Black mixed heritage students?	Not relevant	Will not do	Unsure	Will do	Already do
Create a consistent, transparent PGR application process					
Make admissions data open access					
Create a welcoming and inclusive environment in my team					
Improve my supervision practice					
Support improvements to access psychological safe spaces					
Improve my awareness and understanding of career options for students					
Talk and write about the hidden elements of doctoral applications (i.e. "hidden curriculum")					
Talk and write about the hidden elements of doctoral study (i.e. "hidden curriculum")					
Improve opportunities for postgraduate students to write with me					
Improve opportunities for postgraduate students to develop their research skills					
Improve opportunities for postgraduate students to network					
Improve opportunities for postgraduates to practice teaching and other related tasks (e.g. marking)					
Improve opportunities for postgraduate students to share their job application materials with me for feedback					
Provide formal mentoring opportunities					
Provide informal mentoring opportunities for Black or Black mixed heritage students					

Explore staff knowledge of specific barriers for Black students

How likely do you think it is that an undergraduate or postgraduate student would experience the below within your department:	Not at all likely	Not very likely	Neutral	Quite likely	Very likely
Tokenism					
Individual racism					
Institutional racism					
Microaggressions					
Monoculturalism					

How frequently do you think an undergraduate or postgraduate student would experience the below within your department:	Never	Seldom	About half the time	Usually	Always
Tokenism					
Individual racism					
Institutional racism					
Microaggressions					
Monoculturalism					

Please rate how important you think developing the following elements are to a student's success	Not at all important	Not very important	Neutral	Quite important	Very important
Ability to adhere to deadlines					
Ability to make a complaint					
Ability to reach out for support					
Amenable nature					
Confidence					
Grit					
Having a strong sense of belonging					
Positive demeanour					
Resilience					
Prepared to seek support from university services					

Please write here any additional comments about the above issues. *optional
Open text
No comment

Explore staff exposure to issues – e.g. race quality

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
White people in the UK have certain advantages because of the colour of their skin (R)					
Race plays an important role in who gets onto a doctoral programme (R)					

Race plays an important role in who gets selected for a job (R)					
Black and black mixed heritage students have the same opportunities as white students in the UK					
Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance of success at work					
Everyone who works hard, no matter what race they are, has an equal chance of succeeding in academia					
White people are more to blame for racial discrimination than people of Black and Black mixed heritage. (R)					

Explore staff confidence in confronting racial injustice

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements	Prefer not to answer	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
I feel supported to enact good supervision						
I feel capable of addressing the racialised issues within my capacity as a supervisor						
I feel capable of addressing the racialised needs of my students within my capacity as their supervisor						
I feel confident tackling racism within my department						
I feel confident tackling racism within my university						
I fear the consequences of standing up to racism within my department						
I fear the consequences of standing up to racism within my university						

On the following scale...	Not at all confident	Not very confident	Somewhat confident	Fairly confident	Completely confident
How confident do you feel addressing the racialised needs of any Black or Black					

mixed heritage student you are supervising					
--	--	--	--	--	--

On the following scale...	Not at all supportive	Slightly supportive	Somewhat supportive	Fairly supportive	Completely supportive
How supportive do you believe your university is of addressing racialised needs of any Black or Black mixed heritage student you are supervising					

What one thing would make your role as a supervisor better? Please write freely and give as much detail as possible.

Open text					
How confident do you feel supporting candidates from a Black or Black mixed heritage background to:	Not at all confident	Not very confident	Somewhat confident	Fairly confident	Completely confident
Accessing paid work					
Accessing voluntary work					
Accessing work-experience/Internships					
Build their confidence					
Build their grit					
Build their resilience					
Improve academic skills					
Improve their future career prospects					
Improve their future study prospects					
Sharing your network					

What one thing could you do to improve Black and Black mixed heritage students **experiences** of doctoral study?

Open text

What one thing could you do to improve Black and Black mixed heritage students **engagement** with doctoral study?

Open text

If you have any additional comments about improvements, please write them here:

Open text

Thank you

Thank you very much for your time in completing this survey if you have a complaint or need support with any of the issues raised please contact the ASPIRE programme leaders Dr. Francis Awolowo (I.F.Awolowo@shu.ac.uk) and Dr Iwi Ugiagbe-Green (I.Ugiagbe-Green@mmu.ac.uk).

If you have any further comments or queries about the survey please feel free to contact the Advance HE researcher leading the evaluation at hannah.griffin-james@advance-he.ac.uk

Many thanks for your responses.

5.7 Appendix G: skills questions

Scholar Skills Questionnaire

The ASPIRE programme aims to support you in both your personal and professional development, focusing on 3 key objectives:

Increasing employability knowledge

Improving academic writing

Developing research skills

This survey will ask you to rate your own skills in these areas and whether you believe the ASPIRE programme has supported you in developing these skills.

Data confidentiality

All personal data and information that you share will be held confidentially by Advance HE in accordance with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act 2018. At no point will the information you provide be shared in a way that would allow you to be personally identified.

All information about participants will be handled confidentially by the researchers.

Participants will not be personally identifiable in any report arising from the research.

Participation is voluntary.

The survey has been designed so that you can save your responses and finish later. The survey is not saved automatically, but you can choose to save your responses and finish the survey at a later stage by clicking on the 'save' button located at the bottom of each page. To return to the survey and pick up where you left your responses, you will have to either bookmark the 'finish later' URL in your browser, or request Jisc to email you the 'finish later' URL, generated once you click the 'save' button.

While we hope that you answer the survey in full, you are free to stop answering questions at any point or skip any questions without an asterisk (* denotes questions that must be answered to continue in the survey). You can withdraw your consent at any time by contacting insights@advance-he.ac.uk and providing your 8-digit anonymous code (which you will create after reading the Privacy Policy).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The following questions have been adapted from a number of sources and, especially, the skills questions from the Dr Jenny Reeve at Manchester Metropolitan University with permission.

RESEARCH ETHICS AND STORING DATA

Advance HE has robust research ethics and data storage policies, copies of which are available to participants on request. All personal and/or special category data are held securely in accordance with the Advance HE Privacy Policy.

Privacy Notice

Please read this Privacy Notice, which sets out how any personal data you submit as part of this survey will be utilised and protected by Advance HE, and your rights as a data subject. We will not directly identify you in our report to Sheffield Hallam University, Manchester Metropolitan University, ASPIRE project team. However, you may be indirectly identified by information you provide, such as your department.

In order to participate, please tick below to confirm that you have read and understood the Privacy Notice and statement above.

I confirm

Alternative format

If you would like to receive the survey in an alternative format, please contact Hannah Griffin-James, hannah.griffin-james@advance-he.ac.uk, 0330 041 6201.

You will be asked for any further comments on the topics covered, to enable staff to gain a better understanding of what has gone well and what has worked less well. **Please do not identify yourself or other individuals (including staff) in your comments.** If you have a complaint or need support with any of the issues raised within the survey, please contact *the ASPIRE team*.

Anonymous ID link

In order to anonymously link survey responses across the ASPIRE project please provide the following to create a self-generated 8-digit anonymous code:

What are the first three letters of your *mother's first name?

What are the first three letters of the street on which you currently live?

On what day of the month were you born?

For example, a person whose mother's name is HANNAH who lives on Main Street and was born on 18th January their code would be: HANMAI18

Please generate an 8-digit anonymous code

*Alternatively, if you cannot or do not wish to use the first three letters of your mother's first name, please use the first three letters of the first name of another person. Remember this is the code we will ask for again in our other surveys for the ASPIRE programme.

Once you click 'next' you will be directed to the first section of the survey.

Increasing employability knowledge					
On a scale of...	Not at all	Very little	To some extent	Quite a bit	Very much

Please rate how much the ASPIRE programme has increased your knowledge of employability					
When working in a team...	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
I can work effectively as part of a team to complete tasks					
I can build effective working relationships with peers					
I can build an effective working relationships with my supervisor					
I am able to lead a team					
I listen to other members of the team and respond appropriately					
I value other team members opinions					
I take other team members opinions into consideration					
I cooperate with others easily					

If you have any additional comments about your employability skills, please write them here:

Improving academic writing					
On a scale of...	Not at all	Very little	To some extent	Quite a bit	Very much
Please rate how much the ASPIRE programme has improved your academic writing					
Which areas of your academic writing have improved...	Not at all	Very little	To some extent	Quite a bit	Very much
Ability to cite literature					
Ability to write an argument					
Able to demonstrate critical thinking in writing					
Confidently selecting a tense to write in					
Grammar					
Sentence structure					
Spelling					
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree

			nor disagree		
I am able to use feedback e.g. constructive criticism to improve my work					
I arrive on time for classes, workshops, appointments and meetings					
I can create an effective study plan					
I can follow my study plan					
I can manage my time effectively					
I can prioritize my workload					
I regularly reflect on my own learning					
I take effective lecture notes					
I take effective workshop notes					
Please rate how anxious you feel about the following...	None	A little anxious	Mildly anxious	Somewhat anxious	Very anxious
Attending network events					
Building up your network					
Presenting					
Reflection on study skills					
Talking to new people					
Writing					

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
I can correct any grammatical, punctuation or spelling errors in my work					
I can identify any grammatical, punctuation or spelling errors in my work					
I can plan and organise the content of an assignment					
I can write a logical and well-structured brief for a client					
I can write a logical and well-structured essay					
I can write a logical and well-structured research proposal					

I can write in well-structured paragraphs					
I can write in well-structured sentences					
I know how to write effective introductions and conclusions					

If you have any additional comments about your writing, please write them here:

Critical thinking					
On a scale of...	Not at all	Very little	To some extent	Quite a bit	Very much
Please rate how much the ASPIRE programme has improved your critical thinking					
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
I can develop my own perspective on a topic					
I can evaluate the strengths of an argument					
I can evaluate the weaknesses of an argument					
I can question the relevance of the information that I read for my assignments					
I can question the truth of the information that I read					
I can select evidence to support my argument					
I can use data to make predictions from data, or extract patterns from data					
I can use figures to make a chart or graph					
I can use sources effectively to make a strong argument					
I can use sources effectively to show that I am well-informed about a topic					

If you have any additional comments about your skills, please write them here:

Speaking					
On a scale of...	Not at all	Very little	To some extent	Quite a bit	Very much
Please rate how much the ASPIRE programme has improved your presenting skills					
On a scale of...	Not at all important	Not very important	Neutral	Quite important	Very important
How important do you think it is to practice speaking with strangers?					
How important do you think it is to practice speaking with important people in your area of study?					
How important do you think it is to gain experience presenting to an audience?					
	No		Yes		
Do you have any role models?					
How important do you think role models are for...	Not at all important	Not very important	Neutral	Quite important	Very important
Applying for a doctorate					
Applying for a job					
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
I can speak confidently to my peers					
I can confidently present my academic work to my lecturers and peers					
I can confidently talk about my work to family and friends					
I can confidently talk about my work to potential employers					
I can confidently talk about my work to my mentor or supervisor					

I can adapt the way I speak for different activities depending on the setting					
I am able to listen actively and effectively					
I can explain new concepts or processes to people					
I can use charts, diagrams or images when explaining a challenging idea					

If you have any additional comments about your skills, please write them here:

Developing research skills					
On a scale of...	None	Very little	To some extent	Quite a bit	Very much
Please rate how much the ASPIRE programme has improved your ability to apply knowledge of research to real world problems					
To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements:	Definitely disagree	Mostly disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mostly agree	Definitely agree
I can find information from a range of different sources (e.g. journals, books, media)					
I can use information from a range of different sources (e.g. journals, books, media) to write an argument					
I know how to find relevant books in my degree subject					
I know how to find relevant journals in my degree subject					
I know how to format a reference list to show the sources I have used in my work					
I know how to paraphrase or summarise other people's ideas in my own work					
I know how to reference and quote other people's ideas in my own work					
I know how to write a reference list to show the					

sources I have used in my work					
I understand what plagiarism is, and how and why to avoid plagiarism					

If you have any additional comments about your skills, please write them here:

Thank you very much for your time in completing this questionnaire. If you have a complaint or need support with any of the issues raised within the survey, please contact the ASPIRE team.

If you have any further comments or queries about the survey please feel free to contact the Advance HE researcher leading the evaluation at hannah.griffin-james@advance-he.ac.uk

Many thanks for your responses.

5.8 Appendix H: diary questions

Students Learning Diary

Reflection is a commonly used method to promote learning and greater independence in learning by bringing learning itself to consciousness and making it explicit (Watkins, 2001).

Advantages

- + In your reflections you will revisit what you have learned which is likely to lead to improvement and in-depth learning.
- + Actively processing your learning through reflection can make your own understanding of what you've learned clearer (Gibbs, 1991).
- + Reflection will give you an opportunity to document your learning journey.
- + Your reflection can provide references and suggestions for future students (e.g. highlighting ideas that you found tricky where the programme can add more support).

Disadvantages

Time-consuming. Although 30 minutes each week feels like a lot! Research shows that engaging regularly in structured reflection leads to a deeper understanding and better application of subject matter knowledge and increased knowledge of social agencies, increased complexity of problem and solution analysis, and greater use of subject matter knowledge in analysing problems (Eyler and Giles, 1999).

Structured reflection doesn't suit everyone. Remember this is your learning diary, although the ASPIRE programme leaders will read it, you can structure your answers the way that makes the most sense to you, and use language you are comfortable with.

But what does Reflection actually mean?

You're collecting information about your own learning, and analysing and evaluating this new information. The process of analysing and evaluating your learning can help you identify your own behaviours and underlying beliefs which may lead to changes and improvements in your approach to becoming ready for work, or applying to doctoral study. A common misunderstanding about reflection is that it is simply sharing feelings or voicing opinions. Honestly, poor reflection can fit this description. Therefore, we have devised some structured questions to guide you through the reflection process, this will support you in producing high-quality reflections. If you have questions, the University of Edinburgh has lots of helpful information here <https://www.ed.ac.uk/reflection/reflectors-toolkit/producing-reflections/ways-reflecting/written> and The Higher Education Academy here [ESCalate Resource: Evidencing Reflection: putting the 'w' into reflection](#)

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- Eyler, J., & Giles, D.E. *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?* San Francisco.

Gibbs, G. (1991). *Improving student learning – the CNAA project*. In: Students at the centre of learning, ed. Brown S pp 17-21.

Watkins, C. (2001). *Learning about learning enhances performance*. London, UK: Institute of Education School Improvement Network.

Instructions

The following reflective learning log prompts follow Chang (2019) framework looking across, a) content, b) learning process, c) value of learning. We ask you to please **spend a minimum of 30 minutes, every week reflecting on the past week.**

Date Completed Reflection (XX/XX/XX) _____

This past week: Monday's date (XX/XX/XX) _____

Reflect on content

What did I actually achieve during the ASPIRE programme this week? Which were the most difficult parts, and why were they difficult for me? Which were the most straightforward parts, and why did I find these easy?

Please type your answer here....

100-150 words approx.

What was the best thing I did? Why was this the best thing I did? How do I know that this was the best thing I did?

Please type your answer here....

50-100 words approx.

What else have I got out of taking part in the ASPIRE programme this week? Have I developed other skills and knowledge, which may be useful elsewhere at another time? If so, what are my own learning outcomes from taking part in this programme?

Please type your answer here....

50-100 words approx.

Reflect on learning process

What worked least well for me? Why did this not work well for me? What have I learned about the topic concerned from this not having worked well for me? What have I learned about myself from this not having worked well for me? What do I plan to do differently in future as a result of my answers to the above questions?

Please type your answer here....

100-150 words approx.

What are the three most important things that I think I need to do with this topic at this moment in time? Which of these do I think is the most urgent for me to do? When will I aim to start doing this, and what is a sensible deadline for me to have completed it by?

Please type your answer here....

1-

2-

3-

Most urgent:

Deadline:

50 words approx.

Reflect on value of their learning

Do I feel that my time on this week has been well spent? If not, how could I have used my time more sensibly? Or should this week have been designed differently? Which parts of the week represent the time best spent? Which parts could be thought of as time wasted?

Please type your answer here....

100-150 words approx.

Overall, how has the ASPIRE programme helped (or hindered) my motivation this week to learn more about work-readiness/doctoral study? Has it encouraged me, or disillusioned me?

Please type your answer here....

50-150 words approx.



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