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# Student-led New Black Society

*“Students and staff who have been involved in this new society have already begun noticing they are more self-aware and motivated.”*

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## Area of Focus

Student-led approach to challenging racial perceptions of the word ‘black’ and providing a space for all students to feel included at university.

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## Context

From literature in the field, student feedback, and personal experiences, the school recognised that whilst there are services at university that cater for students from minority backgrounds, some students in these cohorts do not feel these services relate directly to them nor do they seek them out when they need support. Statistically, there are also significant gaps in progression and attainment rates between BME and White students. Similarly, it was acknowledged that there are few role models here at NTU that BME students can look up to and feel empowered by.

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## Approach

One of the Law students approached staff in the School to discuss his idea of creating a student-led society that aimed at addressing isolation for BME students. The Deputy Dean in the Law School agreed to fund the society and assist with marketing. To gather momentum, an educational developer helped facilitate the conversations between students and staff around starting up a student society. This became The New Black Society.

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## Interventions

Interventions created by the society were primarily focussed on building skills for students. The current president is one of the NTU employability champions, and so events this year have been focussed on employability: for example, a CV workshop and a workshop on interview and presentation skills. Additionally, there were some events involving external motivational speakers and panel discussions.

A mentorship scheme has also been a focus for the society. BME students often struggle with motivation and lack of representation, and so having a mentor with industry connections can make a difference for them. Seeing someone from a similar background and culture who is successful in the legal professions can help students visualise success for themselves.

Additionally, the society has links with NTU Global Lounge. Events here concentrate on international students. In particular, international students have often said that they feel isolated when they start at university. Networking and student support events run by the New Black society in the Global Lounge aim to combat this.

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## Initial Outcomes

Evidence of initial success can be seen in anecdotal feedback from students and staff. One academic who helped set up the society with the students acknowledged that some BME students had become more self-aware and motivated with their studies. The current president of the society noted that student feedback on the events had been very positive. In particular, students who attended felt they were able to look beyond their studies and think about what they could achieve after university. Students have also reported feeling empowered following panel discussions run by the society.

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## Challenges and next steps

The next step for the society is to ensure its sustainability and impact going forward. One of the main challenges for this initiative was communicating with people that the target audience for this society is everyone, not just those from a BME background. The founder of the society and staff in the Law School have worked hard at communicating this message and as time progresses and the society becomes more established, the group hopes to attract a more diverse membership.

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## Contact details

Elyse Wakelin, Success for All contact, Nottingham Law School  
[elyse.wakelin@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:elyse.wakelin@ntu.ac.uk)