

**Session title:** The role of educational developer in supporting the decolonisation of practice within a UK university: reflections from the field

**Session type:** Paper

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**Session summary:**

Decolonisation is an agenda that has gained increasing prominence across the sector, with institutions, students and academics engaging in activities to decolonise HE for a range of reasons. In this presentation we will discuss our work with staff and students to raise the profile of decolonisation. We will consider the mechanisms we drew on to engage staff, as well as the barriers we negotiated in the process of undertaking this work.

**Session outline:**

Decolonisation is an agenda that has gained increasing prominence across the sector, with institutions, students and academics engaging in activities to decolonise HE for a range of reasons. The Office for Students advocate decolonisation to mitigate the attainment gap for black and minority ethnic students (Stevenson et al., 2019). More widely, decolonisation is recognised as a mechanism through which issues of representation, belonging and cultural safety can also be explored (Liyanage, 2020). To decolonise practice, HE professionals, are required to critique the construction and content of curricular, and the disciplinary knowledge students are exposed to throughout their studies (Lockett et al., 2019). However, this can be a challenging activity for academics to undertake, involving the re-evaluation of the existing forms of teaching, learning, assessment, and pastoral support provided to students (Liyanage, 2020).

Our role as Educational Developers placed us at the heart of work to decolonise practice at the University of Plymouth. In this presentation we will discuss our approach to this work, highlighting the importance of engaging critically with decolonisation from several perspectives. We looked externally, drawing on the work of established scholars and practitioners to inform our local work, using this to develop an evidence base of relevance to the University of Plymouth. This work directed developments in resources for staff, to support re-evaluation of assessment practices and the content of curricula, as well as recommendations for the students' union (Winter et al., 2022; Ellis & Turner, 2022). We will discuss work undertaken with staff and students that enabled us to raise the profile of decolonisation and consider key moments in our journey. We will conclude by reflecting on how we also negotiated issues of legitimacy, perceived relevance, and representation, and the impact this had on our work.

**References:**

Ellis, I. & Turner, R. (2022). Reviewing student-led and student facing activities to decolonise higher education: outcomes of a student-staff partnership. *Journal of Educational Innovation, Partnership and Change*, 8(1): <https://journals.studentengagement.org.uk/index.php/studentchangeagents/article/view/1106>

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