

A person wearing a white lab coat is seated at a wooden desk. Their hands are on a silver laptop keyboard. To the right of the laptop is a white plate with a single croissant. A smartphone is visible on the desk to the right of the plate. The background is slightly blurred, showing some greenery.

Action Research Project:

"What practical guidance can be provided to address the needs of recent black UAL graduates, who do not or cannot participate in UAL's traditional mentoring programmes?"

By Jazmin Hodges

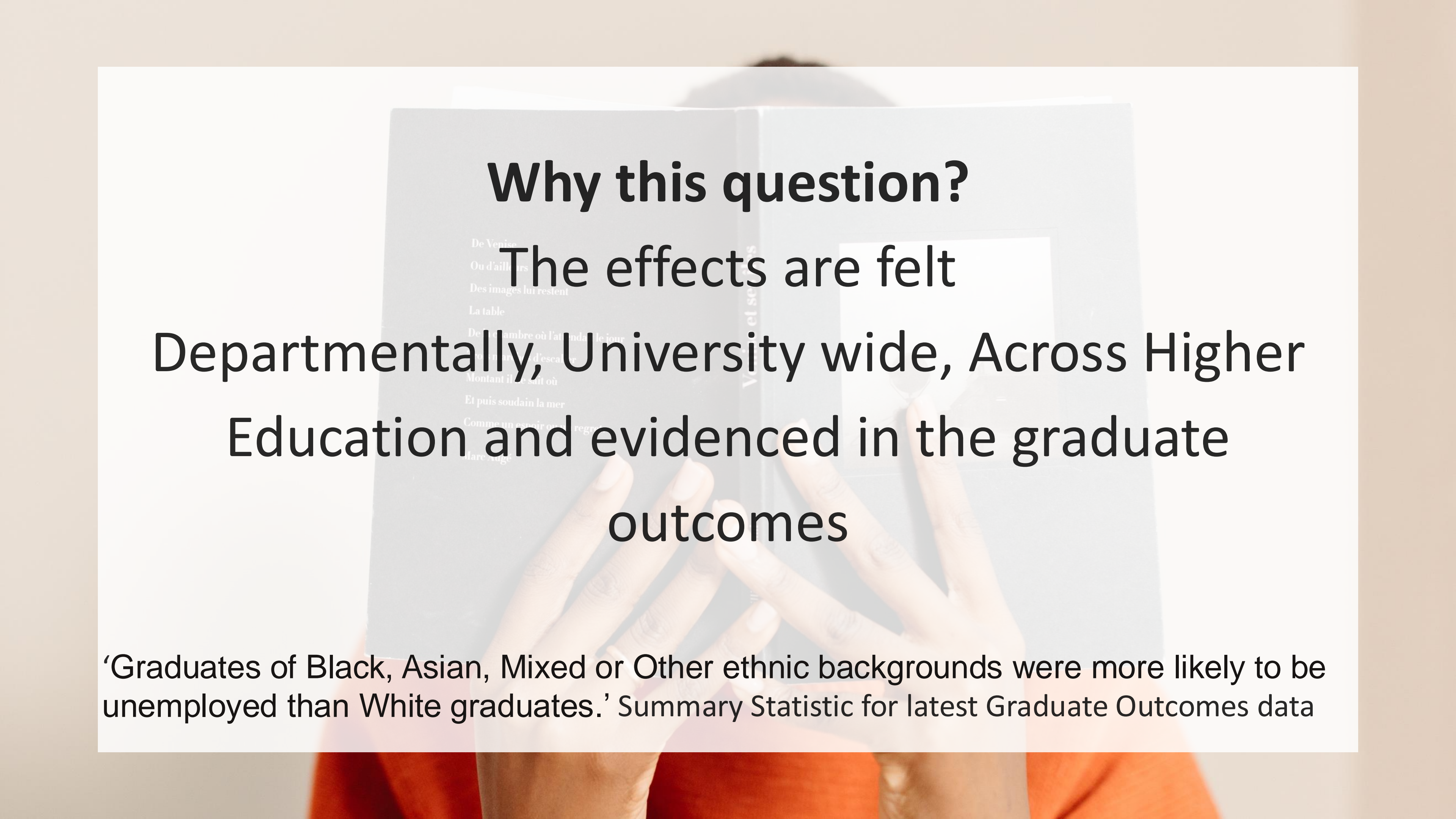
Context: Black participants are often underrepresented in mentoring programmes.

100 BMOL . Available at: <https://100bmol.org.uk/>

Turner, C. and Grauerholz, L. (2017) 'Introducing the Invisible Man: Black Male Professionals in Higher Education', Humboldt Journal of Social Relations, 39(Special Issue 39: Diversity & Social Justice in Higher Education), pp. 212–227.

UAL, n.d., Principles for climate, racial and social justice, University of the Arts London, viewed 5 January 2025

Walkington, L. (2017) 'How Far Have We Really Come? Black Women Faculty and Graduate Students' Experiences in Higher Education', Humboldt Journal of Social Relations, 39(Special Issue 39: Diversity & Social Justice in Higher Education), pp. 51–65

A person is holding a book with a grey cover. The cover has French text: 'De Venise', 'Ou d'ailleurs', 'Des images lui restent', 'La table', 'De la chambre où l'attend le jour', 'Pour n'arriver d'escalier', 'Montant il ne sait où', 'Et puis soudain la mer', 'Comme un espoir ou un regret', and 'Marc Augé'. The person's hands are visible, and they are wearing an orange garment.

Why this question?

The effects are felt
Departmentally, University wide, Across Higher
Education and evidenced in the graduate
outcomes

‘Graduates of Black, Asian, Mixed or Other ethnic backgrounds were more likely to be unemployed than White graduates.’ Summary Statistic for latest Graduate Outcomes data



What was my goal?

**To equip graduates
with the tools to find their own mentors beyond a
formal programme.**

DePaul, K. (2020) 'What to say when you're reaching out to someone on LinkedIn', *Harvard Business Review*, 2 November. Available at: https://hbr.org/2020/11/what-to-say-when-youre-reaching-out-to-someone-on-linkedin?utm_medium=email&utm_source=circ_other&utm_campaign=ascendnloutreach_3xvisitors_20201123&deliveryName=DM10687 [Accessed: 22 December 2024].



How can this begin to be tackled?

Initial thoughts were...

Go directly to the source! – Speak to graduates
from this demographic...

But, could I do this ethically in the timeframe?

Ellerby, J.M. (2005) 'Untangling the Trauma Knot: Autoethnography and Annie Ernaux's

"Shame", *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, 38(3), pp. 59–75

A man wearing a straw hat and a white shirt is taking a photograph with a camera. He has a brown bag slung over his shoulder. The background is a light-colored wall with a window.

What did I do instead?

I decided I would speak to colleagues

How?

Initially I devised a questionnaire but settled on having conversations with them individually via Teams.

Simpson, C. & Trezise, E., 2011. Learning conversations as reflective practice. *Reflective Practice*, 12(4), pp.469-480..

A mixed method approach

Conversation as Method – (Primary)

Secondary Research

Autoethnography

Written Feedback

Conversation as Method

Spoke with 4 colleagues

Who have over 30 years combined experience in
their areas

Conversations ranged from 30 to 90 minutes

These conversations resulted in transcripts that
were over 35,600 words (combined)

A man wearing a straw hat, a white button-down shirt, and dark jeans is taking a photograph with a vintage camera. He has a brown messenger bag slung over his shoulder. The background is a light-colored wall with a window. A semi-transparent white box is overlaid on the image, containing text.

What happened next

After the conversations took place and retroactive consent was ascertained, I hit a block.

A person is sitting on a brown leather couch, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and white pants. They are holding a white laptop. In front of them is a small white round table with a brown notebook, a pen, and a smartphone on it. The background is a light-colored tiled floor.

Data poetry and Autoethnography

Then we had our final workshop... Where I was introduced to data poetry.

Using this autoethnographic method I condensed the data from 35,600 words to 3,410 from which I constructed 7 (not very good) poems to identify the key themes from the 4 conversations

Example of data poetry

BAME mentors,
they are so generous,
and they say. We'll stay in touch forever,
sort of thing
and I think,

Key Themes

- Graduates don't know how to approach potential mentors
- There is no data for students who are aware of the programme but choose not to participate
 - People who drop out don't communicate
- People often request for mentors that look like them, this is hard to achieve so are often reminded mentors don't have to look like them.

I then used these key findings to devise the first draft of ‘Make your Mentor’

Make your Mentor

A FLEXIBLE APPROACH TO FINDING YOUR OWN MENTOR

This guide is for you if :

- You tried a mentoring scheme before, but it didn't quite work for you.
- Want to choose a mentor based on personal characteristics or career alignment.
- Want a mentor but don't have time for a formal scheme. Aren't eligible for the mentoring scheme you were interested in.
- Want to benefit from several mentor perspectives at once.

If you said yes to any of the above—or are just curious about a different approach to mentoring—read on!

This guide is designed to give you the tools to approach industry professionals for useful advice that could propel their careers forward.

The process is simple:

- Identify a career goal
- Approach several individuals
- Learn from each one to help you on your journey

Mentoring throughout your career

Mentoring can happen at any stage of your career. It's a powerful way to broaden your worldview, gain insight into yourself, and chart your career trajectory.

Mentoring often happens within structured programs. However, that model doesn't work for everyone. If it doesn't suit you, you can still benefit from mentorship by taking an independent approach.

Mentorship on your own terms can take many forms: a single email exchange, one conversation, a portfolio review, or a weekly chat over a month or months. You can find your own mentor and set up a structure and pace which works mutually. This is your schedule, your contacts, and your network—and ultimately, your career.



Your 3-step Make-Your-Mentor Plan

Step 1 - Identify what you want to gain

- Take some time to clearly outline your goals.

For instance:

- Understanding the landscape of an industry
- Gaining industry contacts
- Getting portfolio feedback
- Strategizing your next career move
- Learning how someone else got started
- Anything else related to career development

Tip: When reaching out state your goal!

Step 2 - Research potential mentors

Look for individuals whose experiences align with your goals. These could be anyone you find valuable.

Where you can Look for Mentors:

- Networking events
- Social media platforms (e.g., LinkedIn, The Dots)
- Your existing circle

Tip: Consider their career journey—what can you learn from their field, expertise or background. Consider if a different perspective could help broaden your view?

Step 3 - Reach out

- Contact more people than you think you'll need—many won't respond, and that's okay! People are busy and may not have time to engage. This is why casting a wide net is key.
- Try and find a wide variety of people, check if they've mentored before!

Tip: There's some useful templates on the next page to help you get started!



MESSAGE TEMPLATES

Tip: Always remember to greet everyone you message warmly and to sign off in a respectful and friendly manner.

INTRO MESSAGE

"I came across your LinkedIn profile, and your career path is so inspiring—especially as it's similar to the one I hope to take.

At the moment I'm looking for a mentor, to offer me feedback on where my portfolio could be strengthened. Do you know anyone who offers this kind of short-term support?"

REACHING OUT TO A RECOMMENDED CONTACT

"I recently graduated from UAL and started working at [Company] as a [Role]. I received your contact information from [Mutual Contact], who mentioned your expertise in [Area of Expertise].

I'd love to speak with you about [Specific Topic] to get your insights. If you're available, a coffee or quick phone call would be amazing."

FOLLOW UP AFTER NETWORKING EVENT

"It was great meeting you at [Networking Event]! I really enjoyed our conversation about [Topic] and would love to continue it.

Would you be available for a coffee or call in the coming weeks?"

REACHING OUT TO A SPEAKER

"I attended your talk at [Event] and thoroughly enjoyed it. Your insights on [Topic] were incredibly valuable.

I had a few follow-up questions about your career journey. Would it be possible to schedule a call?"

Take control of your mentorship journey. You don't need a formal programme to build meaningful connections—just curiosity, initiative, and persistence.

Brinko, K.T., 1993. The practice of giving feedback to improve teaching: What is effective? *The Journal of Higher Education*, 64(5), pp.574–593. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2307/2959994> [Accessed 16 December 2024]

Impact and moving forward

- I will work to revise and improve the document further so that version 3 is approved for circulation.
- Two mentoring programmes have expressed an interest in being sent the finalized version to send to students and graduates who don't qualify for the programme.

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What could be further explored in the Q & A

Anything you are naturally curious about and perhaps:

The format chosen for the resource

My exploration of autoethnography

Moving away from questionnaires and interviews

Next steps...