Evaluation of Safeguarding Students Catalyst Fund Projects

Round three – Interim report

Report to the Office for Students by Advance HE

November 2019

Contents

Executive Summary

Advance HE explored the extent to which round three Catalyst funding had encouraged positive change around tackling issues related to religion and belief and hate crime/incidents. Findings, which explore the challenges and enablers of short-term interventions, are supported by an initial review of issues addressed in the interim reports. Project teams submitted interim reports to the Office for Students in February 2019 and covered project activity from April 2018 until the end of January 2019. Advance HE's research with the project teams investigated three main themes:

- **Change**: procedural and cultural changes that came from the projects, positive and negative impacts and who was impacted by changes.
- **Evaluation methods:** the evaluation methods used to date, and how results from evaluations might help facilitate lasting change.
- **Sustainability**: whether project teams expected their initiatives to continue after the end of the funding, and what they expect their legacy to be within the provider and across the sector more widely.

With regards to change, research participants discussed the cultural shift they noticed as a result of the Catalyst-funded projects, as staff and students became more willing to discuss religion and belief on campus. Participants also noted the increased visibility of religion and belief work on campus and a greater awareness of projects among students, staff and senior leaders. Providers have since revised their own policies and procedures, as well as made ongoing efforts to improve reporting mechanisms and embed new approaches to training.

Students were also more motivated to establish their own faith-based activities and events, which has increased their knowledge of other faiths, enabled them to meet others from different backgrounds and improved employment opportunities.

Relationship-building across the provider was also noted as a key consequence of the funding, and several participants discussed the various stakeholder links established. These included links between the following:

- The project team and equality, diversity and inclusion teams.
- The project team and the students' union.
- The provider and religion and belief groups in the wider community.

Although some tangible differences have arisen from the projects so far, participants generally agreed that it was too soon to understand the longer lasting impacts and highlighted the difficulty of assessing projects aiming to deliver long-term culture change at the half way point. At this stage, participants discussed their use of surveys before their funded initiative, as well as conducting one-to-one interviews with staff and students. Just under half of participants noted their intention to use an end-point survey to gauge whether students' knowledge, skills or confidence have changed over time.

With regards to sustainability, more than half of participants highlighted the integral role of senior leaders within the provider in ensuring the legacy of religion and belief work undertaken as part of the Catalyst-funded project. This support included the power of senior leaders to determine the provider's priorities, where religion and belief sat on this scale, and the subsequent allocation of resources.

Participants also highlighted concerns in terms of staffing and being too reliant on a small number of talented individuals. To address this concern, participants stressed the benefits of embedding practices from project work into business as usual.

While it is too soon to say whether approaches to sustainability will help ensure the continuation of Catalyst-funded projects beyond 2020, participants shared examples of effective practice to help embed project work going forward. This included the key role of senior leaders, and their ability to continue to raise awareness of the projects among staff and students. Participants also noted the value of positive evaluation results as an evidence-base to help argue their case and the benefits of work that adds value to other areas of provider activity.

Building on the research findings provided by project teams, Advance HE used their sector knowledge and expertise to unpack these further and provide a summary of 'what works' in tackling issues related to religion and belief and hate crime/incidents. Examples of effective practice have been developed for project teams to consider going forward, but are also useful to consider in wider sector safeguarding work:

+ Meaningful participation and engagement from senior leaders is required to help raise the profile of work around inclusion of the protected characteristics of religion and belief and enhance its sustainability.
+ The OfS, Advance HE and the funded projects should explore the possibility of continuing the religion and belief network beyond the lifespan of the Catalyst funding.
+ Religion and belief work across the student lifecycle requires a holistic and nuanced approach and adequate resourcing from providers, above and beyond the role of Chaplaincy and (intra)faith advisers.
+ Providers should consider how discrimination, harassment and hate crime related to religion and belief intersects with students' other identity characteristics, particularly 'race' (including nationality and ethnicity), and gender.
+ Where appropriate, evaluation of student-focussed interventions should adopt a mixed method approach. This avoids relying on quantitative analysis using a student survey, which can be negatively impacted by survey fatigue, and brings to life the lived dimension of the work.
+ Further funding, advice and guidance is required to help upskill HE practitioners in the use of evaluation methods and forms of analysis.

1. Introduction

1.1 Catalyst student safeguarding funding

In 2016, the Universities UK (UUK) Harassment Taskforce report Changing the Culture recommended that higher education providers put in place measures to address the effective prevention of and response to harassment, sexual violence and hate crime within the higher education sector in all its forms.[1]

In line with UUK's ongoing work in this area and in response to the Taskforce's recommendations, the Office for Students (OfS) provided £4.7m in matched funding to a total of 119 English higher education providers for the period between 2017 and 2020.[2] This Catalyst funding was spread across three rounds, each with a different focus:

+ **Round one** focused on tackling sexual misconduct and involved 63 one-year projects.
+ **Round two** supported work tackling hate crime and online harassment and involved 45 one-year projects.
+ **Round three** commenced in 2018 and will last for two years, supporting 11 projects to address hate crime/incidents on the grounds of religion or belief. This round also involved the organisation of network meetings. Since July 2018, there have been four meetings to date which each focussed on different themes related to religion or belief. It was an opportunity for project teams to be brought together to form a collaborative network of specialist knowledge. The network meetings are discussed in more detail in Section 2.3.

The aim of the Catalyst funding is to identify and support good practice in the sector, and to improve and enhance student safeguarding, specifically in relation to sexual misconduct, hate crime and online harassment.[3] This is achieved through short-term diverse interventions, designed to support high coverage activity and thereby stimulate sector-level culture change to identify and support good practice in tackling these issues.

1.2 About this evaluation and next steps

The OfS commissioned Advance HE to support and enable learning, disseminate innovative and good practice from the Catalyst-funded projects, and help establish 'what works' in relation to safeguarding students. This interim report focuses on the third round of funding and the 11 projects that have undertaken work to address hate crime/incidents related to religion or belief.

As funding for these projects runs until 2020, the findings presented in this report are intended to inform the ongoing development of projects and do not present a summative account of the round three funded projects. A second round of primary research will be conducted between January and March 2020. The second round will use the same methods as used in the first round of research, and

[1] Universities UK (2016). *Changing the Culture*, https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Pages/changing-the-culture-final-report.aspx.

[2] The OfS inherited the Higher Education Funding Council for England's (HEFCE) role in promoting safeguarding when the latter ceased to exist. Also see, Universities UK (2018). *Changing the Culture: One Year On*, https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2018/changing-the-culture-one-year-on.pdf.

[3] Further details on the projects are available at: https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-wellbeing-and-protection/student-safety-and-wellbeing/what-are-the-projects/.

will engage with some participants a second time, to assess what has changed, as well as expanding recruitment to capture the experiences and perceptions of staff and students who did not participate in this round of research. The OfS will publish a final, summative evaluation of the round three funded projects after the projects submit their final reports in March 2020.

1.3 Approach

Teams running the funded projects were required to submit an interim report in February 2019 covering project activity until the end of January 2019. Further detail about the interim reports is provided in Section 2.2.

Following discussions between the OfS, Advance HE and representatives from the 11 project teams, as well as an initial review of issues addressed in the interim reports, it was agreed that primary research would investigate three broad themes:

- **Change**: procedural and cultural changes that came from the projects, positive and negative impacts and who was impacted by changes.
- **Evaluation methods:** the evaluation methods used to date, and how results from evaluations might help facilitate lasting change.
- **Sustainability**: whether project teams expected their initiatives to continue after the end of the funding, and what they expect their legacy to be within the provider and across the sector more widely.

To investigate these themes in detail, a methodology was devised to collect qualitative data from across the projects. As the total number of projects was smaller than in the previous rounds, 11 projects rather than 63 (round one) or 45 (round two), it was not necessary to devise a sampling strategy. Instead, all projects were invited to participate in at least one component of the research. Data was captured via the following activities:

- Semi-structured interviews, group interviews and focus groups with 15 participants engaged in the funded projects.
- Detailed thematic analysis of the 11 interim project reports.
- Two provider site visits to Nottingham Trent University and London School of Economics and Political Science.

Primary research was conducted between June and August 2019. Further information on the project's methodology is presented in Appendix 2.

Following the collection of data from across these three strands, Advance HE's research team analysed and synthesised findings to highlight common challenges and solutions to safeguarding work, identify issues and risks, and recommend measures to ensure the sustainability of work taking place. Above all, the intention of this interim report is to compile and present examples of effective practice for the project teams ahead of the third round of funding reaching its conclusion. To help foreground practical measures that project teams may wish to consider, examples of effective practice shared by interview and focus group participants are noted in relevant sections throughout the report (stylised in teal). Advance HE applied their background in equality, diversity and inclusion

work in HE to unpack these examples further, with strategic recommendations looking beyond the projects presented in Section 6.

1.4 Limitations

The practice of research related to religion or belief is not value neutral and, as with other organisations, Advance HE's work in this area will invite a degree of subjectivity and bias. Advance HE encourages its researchers to reflect on the potential biases they may bring to projects and put measures in place, for example a standardised interview guide, to ensure they do not impact upon the topic under investigation. However, for both researchers and interviewees, it is difficult to escape the 'background noise' of issues related to religion or belief and create an environment where these do not affect the direction of interviews or prominence of topics.

Taking account of these potential limitations, we therefore recognise that:

+ Our evaluation cannot present a representative account that describes the perceptions and experiences of all funded projects.
+ Although measures were followed to ensure interviews were conducted as objectively as possible, external 'noise' likely informed the prominence of topics that came to mind.

In terms of limitations, due to the period when the research was conducted (June to August 2019), it was difficult to engage with undergraduate students involved in the delivery of projects and/or impacted by the delivery of projects. This means that voices presented in this interim report mainly reflect the perceptions and experiences of staff and postgraduate students.

To address this limitation, the second round of research will be conducted at a time that is easier to engage with undergraduate students. Advance HE will also develop a schedule for future research activities with project teams and the OfS to help maximise the potential for student engagement.

2. About the projects

2.1 Introduction

The third round of Catalyst-funded safeguarding projects involved 11 higher education providers across England each receiving up to £25,000 of one-off matched funding to undertake a range of initiatives to tackle hate crime or incidents related to religion or belief.[4]

Providers used their Catalyst funding to part-fund a diverse range of ventures including:

- Design and delivery of research projects.
- Design and delivery of training resources.
- Creation and embedding of enhanced reporting systems.
- Establishment, connection with and contribution to nationwide networks of academics, practitioners, faith societies, the police, higher education providers, colleges and schools.
- Student excursions to charities, museums, galleries, faith organisations and archives in the UK and abroad.
- Formation of advisory groups.
- Dissemination of project activities.
- Creation of student forums and provision of administrative support.

A full list of the providers funded in round three and their project titles is noted in Appendix 1.

2.2 Project objectives and outcomes

Projects teams were requested to submit an interim report to the OfS by 28 February 2019. Each report covered project activity until the end of January 2019 and project teams were asked to provide the following information:

- Key achievements to date.
- Significant inputs or outputs that have not been met.
- Ways in which staff and students have been involved in and impacted by the project.
- Milestones that have not been met.
- Plans for sustainability after the end of the Catalyst funding
- Approaches to evaluation.
- Views on the network meetings.

Advance HE used the information presented in the 11 interim reports to develop a clearer sense of projects' objectives and outcomes. Additional information on the methodology used to identify

[4] A crime that the victim, or any other person, perceives to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards an aspect of a person's identity. In England and Wales, hate crime legislation covers five areas of identity: disability; transgender identity; race or ethnicity; religion or beliefs; and sexual orientation.

objectives and outcomes is presented in Appendix 2. The term ‘objectives’ is used to describe the overall purposes and targets of the projects, whereas the term ‘outcomes’ is used to describe specific changes in the knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviours of those involved in the projects (for example, increased student confidence in reporting mechanisms) or how the projects operate (for example, increased provision of training). The interim reports were reviewed and the following objectives were identified, listed in order of most frequent to least frequent:

- Engage in dissemination activities.
- Embed the project into existing initiatives and programmes.
- Recruit students, staff and consultants to develop and manage the project.
- Produce several resources related to the project.
- Conduct research for the project.
- Develop and manage reporting software, issues and incidents.

Outcomes are the result of objectives. Across the interim reports there was therefore a clear link between objectives noted and the outcomes that projects hoped to achieve. Analysis of the interim reports identified several intended outcomes, these included:

- Increased embedding of evidence-based reporting systems, procedures and policies.
- Adding religious hatred to the provider curriculum and pre-existing training on LGBTQ issues, racism, sexual harassment and bullying.
- Improved support provided by student advisory groups and safeguarding groups, based on feedback from consultations and project survey responses.
- Increased evaluation of how hate crimes/incidents are handled and the impact of training programmes.
- Increased production of evidence-based resources for use in staff and student inductions and the delivery of courses and training.
- Increased dissemination activities across a broader range of communities.
- Increased funding for reporting systems, resources and staff members.

For many of the outcomes stated it was too early to say whether they had been achieved. Advance HE’s second round of research in 2020 will return to these outcomes to assess to what extent projects have made progress in achieving their stated outcomes.

2.3 Network meetings

Network meetings were also discussed in the interim reports. These were unique to round three funding and, since July 2018, the OfS have hosted four network meetings. The meetings brought together the 11 project teams to form a collaborative, nationwide network of specialist knowledge and leading practice. Aside from the first meeting, which was an opportunity for project teams to introduce themselves to one another, subsequent meetings explored the following themes on addressing hate crimes/incidents directed at students on the grounds of religion or belief:

- Achieving effective student engagement and developing hate crime expertise.

- Faith within providers, including student multi-faith facility improvement as well as evaluation activities.
- Sustainability, longevity and securing the legacy of the projects once the funding comes to an end.

Feedback from student and staff attendees was positive about the opportunity to connect with other providers, form new partnerships, share lessons and exchange best practice. Some project teams also enjoyed the opportunity to disseminate their project guidance to a sector-wide community.

Network meetings were viewed positively as they allowed providers to share and learn from others with similar objectives. They were regarded as a valuable networking resource, so long as attendance remained affordable and more effort was put in place to connect regional teams. Several project teams wish to continue to use the network after the Catalyst funding has ended.

The interim reports also highlighted the sustainability of the network meetings after the end of the Catalyst funding. Barriers to network meeting attendance were also identified, such as insufficient funding for travel to meetings and the short notice given for meetings. Some reports proposed arranging smaller, local networks to reduce travel, cost and time constraints.

3. Change

3.1 Introduction

This part of the report considers findings from the analysis of interviews, group interviews and focus groups, alongside additional insights from the interim reports. Beginning with the theme of change before considering evaluation methods and sustainability, Advance HE's research aimed to explore both positive and negative perceptions, experience and outcomes so far from the Catalyst-funded projects. Each section concludes with 'looking beyond the projects', briefly summarising recommended effective practice from the project teams that could be useful for the wider sector to consider.

In regard to change, interview questions asked participants to discuss the following:

- Cultural change.
- Procedural change.
- Unintended consequences.
- Who has been impacted by changes?

Although these prompts will have shaped what was discussed, participants were also encouraged to reflect on the project-so-far and speak openly about their perceptions and experiences.

3.2 Key themes

Analysis of what participants shared during interviews and focus groups led to emergence of the following key themes related to change resulting from the projects:

- One in three participants highlighted how the provider's culture had changed, with staff and students able to talk more openly and positively about religion and belief. Participants also noted the increased visibility of religion and belief work on campus and a greater awareness of projects among students, staff and senior leaders.
- Providers have revised policies and procedures, improved reporting mechanisms and embedded new approaches to training.
- Participants highlighted closer links between the provider and religion and belief groups in the community, as well as between the project team and the student union, chaplaincy and the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) team.
- Projects had a range of individual impacts on students, including increased knowledge of other faiths, opportunities to meet others from different backgrounds and improved employability skills.

The rest of this section considers these broad themes in more detail and includes direct quotes from participants to help convey the perceptions and experiences of people engaged in the Catalyst-funded project work. Recommended effective practice based on the themes presented in this section is provided in further detail in Section 6.

3.3 Visibility of religion and belief on campus

Several participants noted a change in the level of visibility of religion and belief on campus and related this to awareness raising initiatives, such as poster campaigns. These types of initiatives have helped increase conversation around the topic, and it was felt that the projects and their associated aims were starting to be recognised across the provider:

> "I think we're already seeing an increased awareness of the campaign or the project throughout the university as word is spreading. For example, one of the aspects is a poster campaign that we're doing on the backs of toilet doors across campus. I've been getting as many posters out as possible and towards the end of that push, I was getting in touch with facilities managers from the different buildings and they were aware already that I was going to contact them. There was already an awareness of the project itself at the university level. Hopefully this campaign is increasing student awareness, I think that's its aim."
>
> **Participant #8**

> "One of the things that this project has enabled us to do is to give greater visibility about faith in the university campus. It wasn't there before to the extent that this project has enabled it to do. That's because we decided to take the quite counterintuitive approach to make this project about promoting the positive value of faith, rather than over emphasising what is a hate crime, how do we record it?"
>
> **Participant #2**

> "I can definitely see that the whole concept of hate crime on campus is now coming onto the tables. […] When I started there wasn't much conversation about hate crime on campus, and to be honest with you I wasn't even aware […] that we actually had a hate crime advisor on campus, not to mention a religious hate crime advisor."
>
> **Participant #12**

Recommended effective practice: to help maximise attendance at events related to religion and belief and engage with students that might not normally choose to attend, providers should consider hosting events at popular times in public spaces on campus as this will increase footfall as students stumble upon the event.

3.4 Cultural shifts, changing attitudes

Participants reflected on the fact that when the projects started, both staff and students were wary of having 'difficult conversations' about religion and belief, and that they were reluctant to engage with the projects and their initiatives. However, participants have since noticed an increase in the enthusiasm to tackle religion-based hate crime/incidents, to such a degree that new initiatives are being implemented without intervention from the project teams:

> "[…] there's been a lot of change over the past two years in the approach. The way we speak to students about faith, and I think that's because of this funding, and I think that's had a real positive impact on how students view faith societies […] tackling issues on campus, having difficult discussions, which has been great."
>
> **Participant #4**

> "I remember sitting at a round table with some colleagues just about a few weeks into my post and I was very nervous to talk about faith and there were a few shrugs at the table. I think a year on, we've had the same people come back to us to work really closely with them to actually tackle conscious biases, hate crime/hate incidences, really helping relationships and student wellbeing, increasing retention. So I feel in a big way we've come full circle from where we started with faith and all the frowning to the extent where our work has proven its worth. And the same people are now shouting out about celebrating the work we've done to the extent where toolkits are being developed. Now you will be able to see a larger scale […] faith is going to be talked about now much more."
>
> **Participant #3**

Participants also highlighted a cultural shift within their provider and noted that ideas around promoting religion and belief have now changed. They described how this has affected students in a positive way, encouraging them to engage more meaningfully with the projects, and to ask more pertinent questions:

> "There's a recognition. I think finally that people really understand what we're trying to do. We've overcome some of the perceptions that [work on religion and belief] is going to proselytise or be detrimental to LGBT rights or women's rights. I think people really trust us now and get us and it's a culture."
>
> **Participant #7**

> "I think [these] questions are just starting to feed in and that to me is what I see as a culture change more than just, 'five people have reported hate crime', actually are people understanding religion? Do they see it as something important? Are they curious about it? Are they willing to ask questions? Are they more confident in engaging with it? And I think we've started to see that with some of our students."
>
> **Participant #6**

Recommended effective practice: those tasked with planning projects related to religion and belief should ensure that it reaches both UK and international students. Some participants noted a tendency for work to focus on international students and overlook UK students.

3.5 Positive impacts on students

Participants were able to pinpoint specific examples of the positive impacts that projects have had on students. For example, the confidence of many students has increased. This was reflected in a greater number of students taking up opportunities to establish new friendships with people from faith groups different to their own, as well as set up their own faith-based events:

> "In the past year since getting involved with the [initiative], my entire friendship group is now Muslim. But we've all had our own stereotypes and pre-misconceptions about religion, because everyone understands it differently. Everyone interprets things differently. So, coming together, we've all learnt completely different things from one another, where some of them have said, 'oh, I was always too scared to be friends with the Muslims because I thought they wouldn't accept me'. Our group's just completely non-judgemental, everyone's got their own past, everyone's got their own life, we all understand things differently, and we all have our own faith in our own way."
>
> **Participant #13**

> "What's been really great is, some of them have come together to deliver some really large events, where they talk about really difficult concepts or conversations, and they've had a lot of students come along to those events, and be engaged and enjoy them, and got good feedback. The students are taking the initiative to do it themselves within our faith spaces."
>
> **Participant #4**

Recommended effective practice: students are likely to reap the most benefit from projects if they are able to engage at an early stage during their time at university. Participants therefore

recommended hosting larger events at the start of the academic year so that students can participate in any follow-up activities.

3.6 Case study – Nottingham Trent University (NTU)

Our first case study emphasises how Catalyst-funded work has personally impacted the lives of students involved, whether in terms of improved employability skills or greater awareness of other backgrounds, beliefs and cultures:

Real Faith, Real Stories, Real Students

Background and context

NTU Faith is a part of culture services and supports the university in three main areas: personal support (pastoral), community building and faith. NTU Faith offers a number of opportunities for students and staff to discover, explore and practice their faith, whether through specific religious services or more spiritual approaches including mindfulness and meditation.

Project summary

The OfS Catalyst funding has specifically enabled NTU Faith to recruit 15 student Faith Ambassadors for the project *Real Faith, Real Stories, Real Students* working under the direction of a full-time Faith Ambassador Project Manager. The 15 students were recruited with the aim to increase understanding and learning about religion-based hate crime, but also to create opportunities for Faith Ambassadors to engage with and share faith experiences in a more confident and inclusive manner.

The positive impacts of the funded programme on individual students involved has been one of the highlights, with students reporting opportunities to develop friendships with others from different faiths and improve employability skills.

NTU Faith are confident that the initiative is likely to grow, given the improved support from marketing and growing visibility of the project across campus. Those involved believe a legacy is already being created, as outputs from the project organically spread among both students and staff.

Successes and achievements

The Catalyst funding has enabled NTU Faith to achieve a number of things. In comparison to some other Catalyst-funded projects, NTU Faith were not primarily focused on raising awareness of reporting mechanisms and hate crime on campus. NTU instead decided to focus on promoting the positive value of faith, both through the creation of a community of Faith Ambassadors and opportunities to collectively experience new environments both on campus and with external faith groups.

NTU Faith has worked hard to expand its reach across the student body and wider NTU community. In particular, the funding has helped raise the profile of faith at the university among internal NTU stakeholders, such as the international Global Lounge and the Centre for Student and Community

Engagement. It has also facilitated joined-up ways of working with the university's equality, diversity and inclusion team and the students' union. Finally, the funding has helped increase engagement with academic specialisms within the university, including the departments of law, social science and fashion management.

This work takes place against a backdrop of doing religion and belief work in a secular provider, a contextual factor that is likely to apply across all funded providers. However, NTU is confident that the project has enabled them to give greater visibility to faith on the university campus, as well as to build ongoing relationships with faith leaders in the community and highlighting the real faith, real stories from real students at NTU.

3.7 Closer links across the higher education provider

Several examples were shared where project teams linked with other relevant teams across the provider. Often these working relationships did not previously exist. This included establishing closer links with the following:

+ Students' union (SU).
+ EDI team.
+ International office.
+ Sexual violence/sexual misconduct team (established as part of previous funding round).

Four participants commented on closer ties between the project team and the SU, and how this helped raised awareness of project work among SU officers. One participant highlighted the importance of ensuring the work of the provider and SU felt like 'one service':

> "We've had the student union president on our working group and also the […] President of Welfare in the SU. […] These guys were really happy to be involved, they knew what it was about just from us talking about the project."
>
> **Participant #8**

> "We want the students to feel like the union [and institution] are one service, rather than multiple different places. [We are] really trying to start to build some relationships between my team and their team around what we can do to engage more students of faith into our services, or students of non-faith, into faith-based services."
>
> **Participant #4**

Another positive example of the collaboration between the project team and the SU was also highlighted by the following participant, who noted that the joined-up approach had streamlined reporting mechanisms:

> “Our awareness of hate crime that was happening was quite low, and our reporting mechanism wasn’t great. Technically, the union and the school are two legal separate entities, and we weren’t working or talking to each other as much as we could be. And, out of the back of that, we’ve now got a big working group which is about reporting just in general, any kind of problem, where we talk to each other and we make it work. It’s about the student and the issue that’s happened, rather than, ‘we’ve got this complaint and we’re going to deal with it over here because you’re separate to us’. We have really become collaborative based on the issues that […] the team have brought up by bringing this funding to the table.”
>
> **Participant #4**

Two participants also commented on the important role the EDI team has played alongside the project team, and how they have been able to link up initiatives such as training. It has also meant that the EDI team can offer their expertise in specialist areas such as other protected characteristics, and ensure all of these are addressed within reporting mechanisms:

> “Our relationship with the EDI team has actually surprised me. […] There's been a concerted effort to fund and resource the capacity of that team. I think an unintended consequence has been that we have worked a lot more closely with them than I had envisaged at the start of the program. I thought it would be maybe a few meetings a year and we would connect but actually they've come to some of the training we've been delivering, we've gone to their training. We have successfully become safe contacts within the wider EDI remit, which is now officially publicised on the website.”
>
> **Participant #9**

> “It’s involved us working with the EDI unit a lot more actively than we had been doing in the past, and particularly with the reporting mechanisms for students of faith, looking at how we can move beyond just talking about gender and race, which again although they’re incredibly important, religion tends to get knocked to the back of the list of protected characteristics. And with our online reporting mechanisms up until about six or seven months ago, there weren’t boxes on that report that enabled you to tick whether you were making a report or a complaint along religious lines and that’s now being developed through really strong partnerships with our EDI team.”
>
> **Participant #6**

This relationship is one which has been reflected in the interim reports, with a number of providers discussing examples of embedding their projects into existing EDI initiatives, for example by upscaling and improving pre-existing programmes and training.

In addition to the relationships that have flourished between the project team and other teams across the provider, one participant highlighted the relationships that have emerged between faith societies:

> "We tend to get a lot of [groups] in the room, and they're all from different faiths in different ways, and they just love to work together and bounce off each other, and have realised that they can be a real asset, resource and support system for each other. Rather than when I first started, they didn't really like to talk to each other and it was all a bit, 'oh, that's your faith society over there, and we'll just deal with ours over here'."
>
> **Participant #4**

As noted in the final quotes, participants highlighted the importance of collaboration and partnership working, and the benefits this has brought to projects:

> "I am very committed to the idea of authentic dialogue and collaboration across different cohorts or groups of people, across different individuals, of maximising collaboration and genuine opportunities for sharing perspectives. Rather than just pretending that's what you're doing, making that really authentic."
>
> **Participant #5**

> "It's about collaborative working within partnership, and that's very much at the fore of our thinking at the moment."
>
> **Participant #10**

Recommended effective practice: the development of strong links with other relevant teams across the provider was noted as hugely important by several participants who stressed the need to identify and foster these relationships early in the project planning process.

3.8 Looking beyond the projects

Advance HE's final report in 2020 will return to the theme of change and will assess to what extent the projects have impacted on the higher education providers and the people involved. However, from analysis of information shared in interviews, group interviews and focus groups, it is clear that participants shared a number of reported changes which they believe to have had positive impacts. These included an increased visibility of religion and belief across campus, which has created a culture shift in attitudes among staff and students. Participants noted that people engaged more meaningfully with the projects, and that students had used their own initiative to embed initiatives into

business as usual. Participants also reflected on broader enablers for change which could be considered useful for the wider sector; for example, the importance of collaboration and partnership working and how funding has helped establish new relationships across the provider.

To continue to effect positive cultural and procedural change, within project teams and in the wider sector, the following recommended effective practice could be considered:

+ Host religion and belief events in public areas of the campus with increased footfall, to include as many passers-by as possible.
+ Focus on inclusivity, involving both international and UK students in religion and belief work.
+ Engage students from the beginning of the first term in events and activities, so that they can continue to reap the benefits throughout the rest of the academic year.
+ Foster relationships between teams across the provider as early on as possible, for example between the project teams and SU. Continue to nurture these relationships as they prove to be extremely valuable in implementing procedural change.

4. Evaluation methods

4.1 Introduction

Advance HE's research investigated the evaluation methods used by project teams to understand 'what works' in evaluating the impact of the Catalyst funding. During the interviews, group interviews and focus groups our researchers acknowledged that it may be too soon for participants to fully discuss evaluation and its outcomes, and we expect the final report to explore this theme in more depth.

The prompt to talk about evaluation methods (as opposed to evaluation results) will have informed the types of issues discussed by participants, although they were encouraged to speak openly about their experience of evaluation methods.

4.2 Key themes

Far fewer participants discussed evaluation methods during their interview or focus group, compared to change and sustainability. However, participants most frequently discussed the following:

- Just under half of participants noted their project's use of surveys both before and after their funded initiative, to gauge whether students' knowledge, skills or confidence have changed over time.
- Participants also discussed their use of one-to-one interviews with staff and students.
- Lastly, participants stressed the challenge of assessing culture change.

These themes will be unpacked in more detail throughout this section and supplemented with direct quotes from research participants.

4.3 Evaluation approaches

Nearly half of all participants discussed the use of baseline and endpoint surveys to assess changes over time, which could be a useful evaluation method for projects beyond the Catalyst funding. Those that used this method expressed praise as it enabled them to capture a range of viewpoints through different question formats. For example, several participants used a Likert scale to measure confidence or awareness levels.

> "There was quantitative capturing data for example, on a scale of one to five how much does faith influence your daily life? But there's also been a 'before and after', how strong was your knowledge of hate crime before, how strong is your knowledge of hate crime now on a scale of one to five? Now it's that time where we're collating all that data."
>
> **Participant #3**

> "What we did with […] our interfaith ambassadors was that we took a baseline survey before they started. So, what they were looking to get out of the programme? What was their confidence level of engaging with people of other faiths and working in a diverse team to make things happen? What skills and experience were they hoping to bring to the programme and what would enable them to bring those skills and experiences to the fore within what we did."
>
> **Participant #6**

> "In September we are rolling out what we will call our endpoint survey. It's a shorter survey compared to the previous one but we're asking some of the same questions that we asked previously around hate crime as well as their understandings and definitions around reporting. There are also new questions around awareness of our case manager's role and the case managers' existence. There are two case managers, both the one who focuses on religion or belief but the one who does all hate crime. We are also asking questions around engagement with any of the paraphernalia that the project has produced, the posters they had in the loos for example."
>
> **Participant #11**

A couple of participants commented on data protection considerations and the inclusion of a question on consent to ensure respondents could be contacted again for the endpoint survey. The opportunity to survey the same respondents twice was beneficial, as you could draw out conclusions through direct comparison. This also affected survey design, as participants included questions within their endpoint survey that could assess individual impacts.

> "The other thing that we've done in terms of making sure that this tool is effective is asking students who did the baseline survey whether they'd be happy to be contacted again. We had to get their emails and make sure that we went through all the right ethical processes and GDPR. If we can have a subset of students, of individual students, who have completed a baseline and an endpoint survey, in terms of sampling the implications that we can draw out of their responses are much stronger, than if we had 600 people doing the baseline and then a different 600 people doing an endpoint. So we've been quite careful in the design of the survey so that we can identify individual change, which I'm quite excited about."
>
> **Participant #8**

Participants also addressed some barriers they had encountered when evaluating their projects. This included a lack of time to dedicate to evaluation, as well as reluctance among senior leaders to circulate too many surveys among students.

Recommended effective practice: rather than request for surveys to be circulated centrally or across all students, some participants noted the benefits of asking course leaders to share surveys directly with students.

The concern around time was mentioned in the interim reports, where it was widely reported that time can have an influence on being able to carry out effective evaluation. This was an ongoing challenge that will be considered in more depth in the final report.

> "One of the things we have learnt is that you do have to factor time in for evaluation."
>
> **Participant #2**

> "Universities are not keen to send additional surveys out to all students via an all-student email. They are very reluctant and they usually refuse to that in our experience because they feel students are over-surveyed, and they want the emphasis to be on the student satisfaction surveys so that they get the best results for that."
>
> **Participant #3**

Interim reports also identified a focus on the planning and timetabling of future evaluations. Many of the evaluation methods proposed were designed to measure the impact of the work at various stages after each activity. There were two types of evaluation methods cited in reports: short-term methods after a project activity, and longer-term methods evaluating processes.

Reports indicated that surveys and questionnaires were the most popular evaluation methods for feedback. This was followed by requesting direct feedback from students after activities or when testing training materials and reporting systems. Collecting data outputs, including service usage, from reporting systems was also cited in reports as likely to be used in future to assess demand and evaluate how incidents were dealt with.

Recommended effective practice: alongside online surveys, the use of paper surveys also brought benefits as it enabled those conducting the research to engage directly with students in spaces with high footfalls, such as leisure spaces and dining areas. These encounters also presented an opportunity for those involved in the project to share information with students about religion and belief work on campus.

Evaluation methods such as reports, case studies, journaling, advisory meetings, project reviews and on-going meetings with consultants were often cited in interim reports as planned evaluation tools. Again, these are useful evaluation methods that could be used for similar safeguarding projects.

Such evaluation methods appear to measure changes on a longer-term basis, perhaps beyond the scope of the Catalyst projects.

4.4 Using 'real stories'

As participants reflected on their evaluation approaches so far, a couple admitted that they would have preferred to have adopted a mixed-method approach, to ensure they captured qualitative and quantitative data:

> "I guess if I would have done anything different, we would have perhaps included our qualitative phase to run some focus group discussions or something."
>
> **Participant #3**

One participant expanded on the above and noted the importance and impact of capturing real life stories. Evaluating real life stories alongside quantitative data ensured a 'well-evidenced story' and can usefully inform senior leadership teams. The participant also commented on the importance of ensuring a diversity of voices within impact stories, and not necessarily a 'story of the winners'. This observation could be useful to consider for the wider sector, and ahead of the publication of further project work in 2020.

> "I think what you need is a really clearly-told, well-evidenced story of impact, what I quite often call an impact narrative. I think sometimes we end up with a load of data and we pretend that the data speaks for itself, which it doesn't. Or otherwise, we just have a story, but we've got no evidence... data, whether that's qualitative or quantitative, to back it up in any kind of logical sense. I go for the impact narrative approach."
>
> **Participant #5**

> "I quite often find myself saying 'the numbers are literally meaningless until somebody ascribes a meaning to them, and in order to do that you have to use words'. As soon as you're using words, you're telling some kind of story, and so we need to respect the story, and let more people have a voice in that story, rather than it just being the story of the winners."
>
> **Participant #5**

Recommended effective practice: projects should find opportunities to amplify the voices of students impacted by project work and share these experiences with senior leaders in the provider. This is an extremely powerful way to present information as it not only gives those in senior positions a clearer idea about the type of work taking place but also helps ensure religion and belief work remains on their radar.

4.5 Challenges

The same participant went on to discuss the challenges associated with evaluation, particularly due to the nature of the topic. The requirement to assess technical and procedural change (i.e. changes to policies) as well as cultural change is difficult:

> "The perennial challenge is to do it, when you're talking about these things, you're not just talking about technical fixes or technical changes, or very rarely – you're actually talking about cultural change, and deep-seated changing hearts and minds, as well as what you actually do, and the way in which you engage with one another. There should be clarity in which you evaluate everything you do, and it should include understanding that you've got the right criterion in the right place for evaluating."
>
> **Participant #5**

Finally, participants noted that it may take some time to see the real impact of the projects on both the provider and the wider community:

> "In terms of those outcomes, those are broadly what we're focusing on, but I suspect we won't see a lot of that or be able to evidence a lot of that until much further down the line."
>
> **Participant #9**

> "I think it's gone at a slow pace, but it is successful. With these things, you always have to wait for a long time for results, especially when we work with the school, and around kids, and at that age, around 12, 13 year olds, you're not going to see that until they grow up. That's the long-term achievement for the project, that these students, whether they're from the university or schools, when they grow up and they lead the community, they're the ones that are going to have the information and the knowledge that we are spreading, which is, no hate, we're all the same. That's when you'll see the real results of the project."
>
> **Participant #15**

4.6 Looking beyond the projects

It is too soon to assess the outcomes of the projects so far. However, views shared by participants begin to touch upon the methods they have used, such as baseline and endpoint surveys as well as one-to-one interviews with staff and students. Advance HE's final report will return to the theme of evaluation and will assess the extent of the changes that have emerged from the projects, as well as any barriers and challenges project teams have encountered.

The following recommended effective practice noted in this section may be useful for both project teams and the wider sector to consider when carrying out evaluation activities:

- Adopt new approaches to distributing surveys to increase uptake, for example by asking course leaders to disseminate the survey among their own students. Paper surveys should also be considered as they can prove effective in locations with high student footfall.
- Find ways to amplify the student voice to senior leaders. This offers an extremely powerful way of presenting information and ensures senior leaders keep religion and belief work, and any similar work of this nature, on their radar.

5. Sustainability

5.1 Introduction

Issues related to the sustainability of Catalyst-funded projects were discussed in all interviews, group interviews and focus groups. The discussion guide invited participants to share their thoughts in relation to the following themes:

- Enablers and risks to sustainability.
- The role of senior leadership.
- The role of external organisations.

These prompts will have impacted the types of issues discussed by participants but, as with previous themes, were asked alongside general, open-ended questions.

5.2 Key themes

Several key themes emerged during interviews and focus groups that related to sustainability. These included:

- More than half of participants highlighted the integral role of senior leaders within the provider in ensuring the sustainability of religion and belief work undertaken as part of the Catalyst-funded project. This support includes their power to determine the provider's priorities and where religion and belief sits on this scale, and the subsequent allocation of resources.
- In terms of staffing, participants flagged the risk of being too reliant on a small number of talented individuals. To address this concern, participants stressed the many benefits of embedding practices from project work into business as usual.
- Engaging with religion and belief groups outside of the provider community was also noted as a way to help guarantee that work continues beyond the lifespan of funding.
- To help strengthen sustainability, participants also noted the value of positive evaluation results as an evidence-base to help argue their case and the benefits of work that adds value across several areas of the provider (such as student recruitment, learning and teaching, wellbeing etc).

This section foregrounds these themes and uses them to navigate through the types of issues raised by participants during the interviews and focus groups, alongside direct quotes to help convey the perceptions and experiences of people engaged in the Catalyst-funded project work.

5.3 Reliance on individuals

Across the projects, participants expressed praise for the high-quality and professional approach of colleagues working on issues related to religion and belief. One participant noted that their project had achieved a huge amount because those involved were 'personable' and 'confident', vital skills when working on a project focused on religion and belief. Another participant explained that their project had succeeded because of 'the right personnel who understand this stuff'.

Although the talent of project team members was understandably framed as a success factor, the role of individuals was also discussed by four participants as a key risk in regard to the sustainability of project work. The loss of talented individuals, without proper planning for their departure, had the potential to negatively impact gains made and threaten the future progress of projects:

> "The risk is in being too reliant on individual people, however brilliant they are, or however committed they are, to take an agenda forward."
>
> **Participant #5**

> "It's about building up those relationships over time. And I think if personnel change a lot quickly that can destroy some of those things."
>
> **Participant #6**

To address the loss of institutional knowledge and relationships developed by individuals, one participant highlighted the key role of formalised hand-overs. This was particularly important for any project working with student union representatives, who tend to change each academic year:

> "The members of the student union who were on our working group, they've left, they've already passed that over to their successors, who will be coming to our working groups."
>
> **Participant #8**

Recommended effective practice: increasing opportunities for cross-provider and cross-campus work could help 'plug the gaps' should talented staff choose to leave projects, taking vital knowledge and experience of the projects with them.

Project teams could address sustainability challenges that come from reliance on an individual or small group of people by strengthening the project's links to external organisations.

> "I think one of the other enablers will be […] how we are engaging with the community faith groups and how they feel that they can respond to this work and see it as very sustainable? If we've got people externally who are saying we want relationships with the university and this kind of work, this is how we want to engage, we can see some sustainability around that."
>
> **Participant #2**

One participant touched on how they helped facilitate relationships between faith leaders, and felt confident that any relationships fostered through the Catalyst funding will continue both beyond the lifespan and externally to the funded project:

> "I believe that some of the faith leaders didn't know each other, so we've formed relationships for those people to meet and there's a longevity that's happening outside, relationships happening outside that we have been a catalyst to, which I think is great."
>
> **Participant #3**

Alongside relationship-building, external organisations have also contributed to the continuation of work through their efforts to secure funding:

> "Some of these external organisations have been really good in either securing partial or whole funding for some of the initiatives that they wanted to undertake themselves with our guidance, rather than drive."
>
> **Participant #6**

Although, in the above example, the funding secured was not used to support religion and belief work within the provider, the funded work did bring benefits for students that engaged in the subsequent activities (such as external events, trips and volunteering).

Lastly, as noted in the interim reports, a potential challenge for sustainability was the identification of enough stakeholders to develop the work and participants to ensure the projects were worthwhile. In terms of stakeholders, engagement with external organisations presents one potential solution to ensure an ongoing involvement of people in the projects as they continue into the future.

5.4 Embedding practices

Four participants highlighted the importance of building project activities, or any changes that emerge from projects, into 'business as usual' at the provider. This included specific initiatives, such as the mandatory delivery of hate crime training to all staff, as well as broader approaches to hate crime reporting and attitudes towards religion and belief:

> "I've been really keen to move what we do beyond the [project team] structure. If we can change the systems and skills as a whole, it doesn't matter who the personnel are within the [project team] because those agreements have been made and they will continue."
>
> **Participant #6**

Project work will have become genuinely absorbed into the provider's way of working when staff can no longer remember the inception of a change or the people involved:

> "That's what sustains it. It could be that after five or ten years, nobody remembers the project name, or the particular people that ran it."

Participant #5

To successfully embed actions so that it becomes 'business as usual' at the provider, two participants noted the role of data as an evidence base to justify making changes. Findings that emerge from project evaluations will partly determine the future direction of funded projects, as well as provide insights into areas of the provider that may benefit from additional activities related to religion and belief:

> "It comes back down to some of the evaluation that we get. We can see that there's a gap here and this is how this project can help sustain it."
>
> **Participant #2**

At one provider, the plan is to 'draw in the evidence and the recommendations' from the Catalyst-funded project and use findings to help shape the provider's strategy to student diversity and inclusion:

> "We will draw all the best from this project, and embed it in our plans for changing the way we are, the way we do things and, in particular, the way in which we do things in partnership with different students and others with diverse backgrounds."
>
> **Participant #5**

In the above example, the future of the specific project funded by the OfS is subsumed by something bigger that extends across multiple areas of the provider. As noted by two participants, conscious efforts were made to ensure that the Catalyst-funded work cut across and added value to many areas of the provider. In turn, this had an exponential effect and helped spread a positive opinion about the project:

> "We've added value in the […] department with schools, we've added value to recruitment internationally, and we've added value to upskilling the lecturers for next year. When we trickle [...] I'm going to call it 'pixie dust', then people are telling others this is great work that we've done, then I think we know that […] we've got our legacy going on here."
>
> **Participant #3**

Participants shared the view that to maximise the potential for the project to continue beyond the end of the OfS funding, it was vital that the profile of their work was raised across the provider.

Efforts to heighten visibility included making the project a standing agenda item for senior leadership meetings and working with marketing to ensure the project made effective use of its communication

channels. These efforts were intended to raise awareness of the project among senior colleagues to try and ensure they will advocate for its continuation in the future.

Recommended effective practice: key areas should be identified within the provider to implement religion and belief initiatives so that any changes emerging from the project will trickle-down throughout the provider (for example, a change to policies at faculty rather than department level).

5.5 Case study – London School of Economics (LSE) and Political Science

Our second case study explores work taking place at LSE and their success in adopting a joined-up approach with other parts of the university community. It is hoped that these closer links will ensure the successes of project work are embedded across the provider and will help ensure that benefits are sustained.

Changing the culture; creating a faith-inclusive campus

Background and context

The LSE Faith Centre was founded in 2014. The centre runs innovative programmes and events that promote religious literacy and facilitate interfaith dialogue to explore religious differences.

Project summary

Catalyst funding has specifically enabled the Faith Centre to develop an Interfaith Ambassadors Programme, which involved working with 11 students to encourage interfaith work across the campus and lead on the planning of events, including national Interfaith Week. This project has forged a cohort of students engaged in leadership opportunities and developed friendships with others who might come from different faith backgrounds. The personal impacts of the programme on the students involved has been one of the project highlights.

As the Faith Centre has existed for over five years, the funded work was not starting from scratch. Instead, it was able to build on past approaches and intelligence gathered from the student body into what was required to advance work related to religion and belief to the next level. Part of this research involved one-to-one discussions with students, including faith society presidents and members of the Islamic and Jewish Societies. In particular, the Faith Centre wished to learn more about how and why people chose to report incidences of hate crime. The purpose of this investigation was not to specifically boost the number of reports received by the university, but establish a clearer sense of students' barriers to reporting and engagement with services.

Successes and achievements

Catalyst funding has helped the Faith Centre expand its reach across the student body and wider LSE community. The targeted and focused nature of the fund has facilitated joined-up ways of working across areas of the university community involved in similar types of work. In particular, the funding has strengthened the Faith Centre's links to LSE's the university's equality, diversity and inclusion team and the student union.

Compared to other Catalyst-funded projects, the Faith Centre can position their current work in a longer chronology dating back to the introduction of the 2010 Equality Act and its explicit protections for religion and belief. For example, the transition from a reactive approach to religion and belief work, where the focus was on responding to a crisis or dealing with an external event, to work that is more proactive and focused on the inclusive benefits of religion and belief.

Although the Faith Centre is now able deliver innovative and leading projects, work related to religion and belief is still impacted by external events, both in the UK and internationally. Factors such as the rise in anti-Semitism, unforeseeable terrorist incidents and the prevalence of far-right activities all affect the direction of the discourse. This takes place against a backdrop of doing religion and belief work in a secular provider and in a sector that still views work related to religion and belief with scepticism. This tension in higher education is most apparent in regard to the religiosity of students, particularly international students, compared to the relative non-religiosity of university staff. These observations are not unique to LSE but likely apply across all funded projects.

5.6 Senior leadership

More than half of the participants (eight) highlighted the importance of engaging with senior leaders at the provider to ensure the sustainability of projects:

> "Both an enabler and a risk is whether you can get your senior staff on board or not. We're really lucky that we've got great senior staff that listen to what we think's important, but I know colleagues in other universities who don't."
>
> **Participant #4**

> "There has to be commitment from senior people."
>
> **Participant #9**

It was also noted that support from senior leaders could take many forms and went beyond financial assistance:

> "I think having senior management buy-in, I don't mean financially, but I mean in terms of coming to events, telling other staff […], inviting us to speak at committees."
>
> **Participant #6**

For this participant, something as simple as being permitted to say that senior leaders supported the project in recruitment materials helped increase the level of engagement from course directors and boosted student recruitment as a result:

> "Senior management were very happy for us to say […] they're onboard."
>
> **Participant #8**

Recommended effective practice: senior leaders should demonstrate their commitment to supporting funded projects. This can come in many forms, including physical attendance at events or simply permitting project teams to use their name to help demonstrate buy-in from senior leaders in the provider.

Above all else, participants understood buy-in from senior leaders as the most important issue related to the sustainability of projects. Part of the importance of senior leaders lies with their power to determine the future priorities for the provider, which therefore informs the allocation of resources.

The analysis of the projects' interim reports also highlighted concerns about securing long-term funding beyond the money provided by the OfS. As noted by three participants, providers face several competing commitments in terms of priorities and the allocation of resources:

> "We know that many institutions are losing a lot of funding or are economising because of the things with student fees or making plans for Brexit, that there is not as much expendable cash going around."
>
> **Participant #10**

> "It would be unfortunate if having now emerged on the agenda it then gets put on the side simply because of reasons beyond our control."
>
> **Participant #11**

> "I think one of the barriers is working on faith in a secular university."
>
> **Participant #3**

As noted in the final quote, the place of work related to religion and belief within the secular context of HE, may make the task of being recognised as a priority area difficult, particularly against the

backdrop of other challenges such as Brexit. As noted by one participant, the need to work within a context of limited resources meant that the design of the project had to ensure it did not require much financial support after setup and foregrounded the role of students in the project:

> "We've tried to build in without having too much financial impact down the line, or where we've managed to deliver the project in a way where it's more student led, the school and the union react more to student voice than they do to staff voice in terms of funding and needs. So where we've delivered something, and students have said they've loved it, the school then want to put more money into it, so it's become a bit more sustainable."
>
> **Participant #4**

5.7 Looking beyond the projects

It is too soon to say whether these approaches to sustainability will help ensure the continuation of Catalyst-funded projects, in some shape or form, beyond 2020. However, views shared by participants related to the risk of relying on individuals who may leave the provider, the importance of embedding practices and the key role of senior leaders provides an insight into discussions taking place across the 11 funded projects. The challenges project teams faced related to sustainability are likely to be the same as or similar to challenges experienced by safeguarding projects across the wider sector. Advance HE's final report will therefore return to the theme of sustainability and assess whether these views have changed and, if so, any changes in the approach to sustainability.

Project teams shared recommended effective practice in response to the challenges noted in this section. These examples will be important for both the project teams and wider sector to consider to ensure longevity and lasting impact of projects:

+ Identify key areas within the provider that will bring most benefits from religion and belief work, such as changes to international student recruitment at the provider level.
+ Establish buy-in from senior leaders and encourage their attendance at religion and belief events.
+ Where possible, increase opportunities for cross-campus and cross-provider working. This will ensure any knowledge gaps are filled, particularly when outgoing SU officers are replaced by incoming officers at the end of academic years.

6. Recommended effective practice

6.1 Introduction

A key reason for undertaking two rounds of research, and sharing findings in an interim report (summer 2019) and final report (spring 2020), is to provide practical guidance to the 11 project teams as work progressed. As project teams will receive this interim report in October 2019, there will be an opportunity to act in response to the recommended effective practice outlined in this section, particularly in regard to work related to evaluation, dissemination of project outputs and sustainability. Recommended effective practice, both for the benefit of the projects and the wider sector, is split into the following three sub-sections:

+ **Recommended effective practice from Advance HE:** a synthesis from all strands of this round of research, based on expertise in EDI projects.
+ **Recommended effective practice from interviews, focus groups and interim reports:** includes any practical examples project teams shared during the research. (The full list of examples is presented in Appendix 4.)
+ **Sustainability challenges:** includes any barriers project teams came across, and what they did to address these.

6.2 Recommended effective practice from Advance HE

Building on the research findings provided by project teams, Advance HE used their sector knowledge and expertise to unpack this further and provide a summary of 'what works' in tackling issues related to religion and belief and hate crime/incidents. Examples of good practice were developed for project teams to consider going forward, but are also useful to consider in wider sector safeguarding work:

+ Meaningful participation and engagement from senior leaders is required to help raise the profile of work around inclusion of the protected characteristics of religion and belief and enhance its sustainability.
+ The OfS, Advance HE and the funded projects should explore the possibility of continuing the religion and belief network beyond the lifespan of the Catalyst funding.
+ Religion and belief work across the student lifecycle requires a holistic and nuanced approach and adequate resourcing from providers, above and beyond the role of Chaplaincy and (intra)faith advisers.
+ Providers should consider how discrimination, harassment and hate crime related to religion and belief intersects with students' other identity characteristics, particularly 'race' (including nationality and ethnicity) and gender.
+ Where appropriate, evaluation of student-focussed interventions should adopt a mixed method approach. This avoids relying on quantitative analysis using a student survey, which can be negatively impacted by survey fatigue, and brings to life the lived dimension of the work.
+ Further funding, advice and guidance is required to help upskill HE practitioners in the use of evaluation methods and forms of analysis.

In some cases, it may be too late to action the changes presented during this Catalyst-funded round of projects. However, looking forward, this practical guidance should helpfully inform future work in this area across the funded providers and the HE sector in general.

6.3 Recommended effective practice: from interviews, focus groups and interim reports

Specific examples of good practice shared by participants of interviews and focus groups are presented in Appendix 4. These examples, which are taken verbatim from interviews and focus groups, present a diverse menu of ideas and future considerations. Although they are unlikely to work across all contexts or within all providers, there is value in listening to the perceptions and experience of participants who have directly engaged in the Catalyst-funded projects.

Furthermore, within the interim reports, challenges related to access to funding, recruitment, research and project visibility were partly addressed through the creation of a diverse network of stakeholders (both on and off campus).

Among the examples of good practice shared, 17 related to the work of the OfS and three related to the work of Advance HE. Although some of these considerations are beyond the scope of the two organisations, all feedback received has been noted and will be taken into account ahead of future projects.

6.4 Challenges to sustainability

Data from participants and the interim reports highlight five broad challenges related to the sustainability of project work. Examples of effective practice shared by project teams in Appendix 4 could be applied to help address similar sector challenges.

- **Funding:** the reports noted that the sustainability of a project was dependent on securing long-term funding in order to employ students and staff to develop and deliver the project; improve resources and develop reporting systems and mechanisms; respond to the number of hate crime reports on campus; and conduct on-going research, monitoring and dissemination activities.
- **The position of the project within a provider:** where a project sits within a provider, its position, was an important factor in relation to its sustainability. This was apparent from how providers planned the project; a project's visibility; whether it was supported with sufficient funding, staff, and volunteers; and if the project team had sufficient power to make the changes intended.
- **Stakeholders:** the interim reports noted that stakeholders, through the duties they conducted, supported sustainability. The reports expressed a belief that internal stakeholders and partnerships with organisations will support project momentum through information and resource exchanges.
- **Recruitment:** the reports noted the need to employ a case manager or project officer to continue the project beyond the end of the OfS funding or use existing staff resources, in EDI or human resources teams, to continue the project work.

- **Time:** the reports indicated that particular aspects in projects needed enough time to be sufficiently embedded. Tasks that required more time than initially planned included developing an evidence-based approach to produce materials, reporting systems and procedures; creating an online learning unit; creating a provider and students' union steering group to manage future delivery; developing formal networks across the HE sector in the UK and internationally.

6.5 Conclusion

The recommended effective practice shared by participants highlights the extent to which project teams are proactively addressing challenges they have faced. It also provides useful considerations for other project teams who have not yet encountered these challenges, as well as the wider sector when considering any future safeguarding work

7. Conclusion

Findings from this research highlight the extent to which the round three Catalyst funding has encouraged positive change around tackling issues related to religion and belief and hate crime/incidents.

For the majority of participating providers, this change represented a cultural shift, with both staff and students appearing more willing to discuss religion and belief on campus. Many also mentioned the impact of funding on their students, as they demonstrated increased motivation and initiative to establish their own faith-based activities and events. Across these changes, the increased visibility of religion and belief on campus has encouraged students to create new friendships with people from different faith groups.

Relationship-building across the provider is also regarded as a key consequence of the funding, which several participants discussed in regard to the various stakeholder links established. This mainly included building relationships with providers' existing EDI teams as well as with the students' union. Relationships such as these have been vital to help embed initiatives such as training, and engage students with project activities and reporting mechanisms through increased campaigning. Furthermore, participants discussed the closer links they created with external faith-based groups, in turn raising the profile of the provider's work in the wider community.

Although it has been clear to see the tangible differences that have arisen from the projects so far, participants generally agreed that it was too soon to understand the real impact and expressed the difficulty of assessing short-term culture change. A full analysis of evaluation will be provided in the final report, when methods such as endpoint surveys have concluded.

At this stage, around half of all participants discussed the use of baseline and endpoint surveys. They noted how these methods extract a variety of viewpoints from respondents, through the use of question types such as Likert scales. Several participants also reflected on the importance of feeding back well-evidenced stories to senior management teams, which was possible when a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods were used. However, a number of participants agreed that use of a mixed-method approach would be dependent on resources and budget.

While it is too soon to say whether approaches to sustainability will help ensure the continuation of Catalyst-funded projects beyond 2020, participants shared a number of examples of recommended effective practice to help embed the projects going forward. Participants reflected on the key role of senior leaders, and their ability to continue to raise awareness of the projects among staff and students as long as there is demonstrable commitment. However, participants also discussed the risk of relying on individuals who may leave the provider, and the knowledge and expertise they would take with them.

As previously mentioned, Advance HE's final report will return to the themes of change, evaluation methods and sustainability and will assess whether views have changed. It will also assess to what extent the recommended effective practice provided in this report has helped address some of the challenges presented by participants in this round of research. Finally, the report will summarise to

what extent the funding has created a lasting impact on the participating providers on tackling religious based hate crime/incidents.

Appendix 1: Funded projects overview

The list below presents information on the 11 projects funded in round three of Catalyst funding. Among the providers with funded projects:

- Two received funding for projects in both rounds two and three (three years of funded activity).
- Three received funding for a project in round three only (two years of funded activity).
- Six received funding for projects under all three rounds (four years of funded activity).

Table 1. Round three projects and years of funded activity

Provider	Round 3 project title	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
Coventry University	Tackling religion-based hate crime on the multi-faith campus	✓	✓	✓
Durham University	Religious Hate Crime in the North East: Driving Interventions for Acceptance, Reporting and Supporting			✓
King's College London	It Stops Here: Religious Based Hate Crime			✓
LSE (London School of Economics and Political Science)	Changing the culture; creating a faith-inclusive campus	✓	✓	✓
Northumbria University	Responding to Religious-based Hate Crime on Campus		✓	✓
Nottingham Trent University	Real Faith, Real Stories, Real Students	✓	✓	✓
Sheffield Hallam University	Standing Together Against Hate: Developing effective community partnerships to tackle religious-based hate crime affecting students	✓	✓	✓
Solent University	Human Library: facilitating powerful conversations between LGBTQ+ and faith communities to foster understanding and empathy			✓
University of Bath	Tackling religiously-based hate crime: extending the University community approach	✓	✓	✓
University of Leicester	Standing Together Against Religiously-Motivated Hate	✓	✓	✓
University of Manchester	Passivity, the Bystander and Religious Based Hate Crime		✓	✓

Appendix 2: Methodology

Introduction

In June 2019 the project team leading this work at Advance HE changed. As a result of this change, some elements of the methodology used in previous rounds were adapted. Changes to the methodology included:

- **Student survey:** prior to the handover of the project in June 2019, an online survey was designed and circulated among students that had engaged with the funded projects. The survey included a mixture of Likert scale questions (for example, 'How confident are you that your institution is able to tackle hate crime/incidents?') and questions that invited free-text responses. As of June 2019, the survey had only received 16 responses, with half of these responses coming from one provider. Rather than revise and recirculate the student survey, which would have been potentially even more challenging over the summer months, the decision was made to remove this component of the research.
- **Online focus groups:** Advance HE organised three online focus groups focussed on the thematic areas of change, evaluation methods and sustainability. These focus groups intended to involve students and were scheduled to take place in July 2019 at three different times/days on the online Zoom platform. However, even with the support of the OfS to publicise the online focus groups and dissemination of flyers at the July network meeting, we received no sign-ups from students. This may relate to the time of year the focus groups were scheduled to take place and the lack of advance notice provided to project teams. The decision was therefore made to remove this component from the research and increase the number of one-to-one telephone interviews, to ensure enough qualitative data was captured.

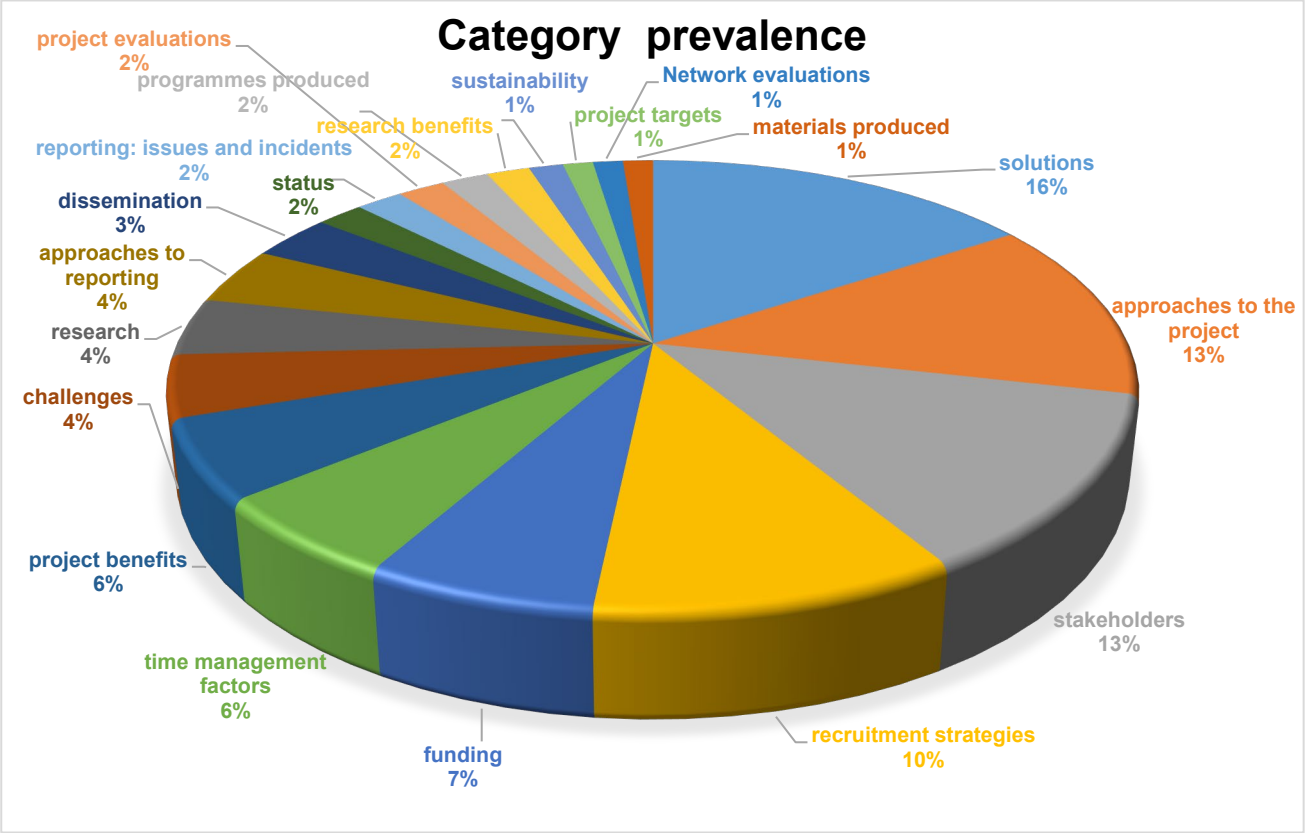
Ahead of the second round of primary research in early 2020, Advance HE will work with the OfS and the 11 project teams to strengthen the collection of data related to the student voice. In particular, online focus groups present a method to capture data and also present participants with an opportunity to critically reflect on their own practices and share experiences with others. We believe methods such as focus groups work best when information flows back-and-forth between researchers and participants. For this reason, we intend to develop and run a series of online focus groups as part of the second round of research, with advance notice given to encourage participation.

Thematic analysis of interim reports

The eleven interim reports were inductively analysed using the qualitative software programme Atlas.ti. Thematic analysis was undertaken in order to establish overall meaning, and then to identify a coding system. The final code list, including main themes and sub-themes, was verified twice.

Analysis of the interim reports identified 20 distinct topics, presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Percentage breakdown of the 20 topics covered in interim reports



These 20 topics were then grouped and divided into 18 themes and 98 codes. For example, the following codes were grouped under the theme ‘Project funding’:

- External consultants.
- Project recruitment.
- Student/project funding.
- Catalyst funding.
- Internal sources in the higher education provider.

Once codes had been merged and refined, an aggregate of individual code frequencies and thematic groups was exported to Microsoft Excel for further data management.

Code frequencies in Excel were reduced to code instances to avoid counting the same data several times, and to highlight which codes were more prevalent than others. For example, the code ‘student/project funding’ had a frequency of eight, indicating the number of times the topic was mentioned, but a code instance of five. The code instance reflected how many reports mentioned the theme. Therefore, five out of the 11 reports provided information that referred to the same code.

Interviews and focus groups

Advance HE interviewed 15 participants from five project teams. Rather than invite all project teams to participate in the interview and focus group component of the research, which might have resulted

in too many expressions of interest, a staggered approach was adopted. This was ordered by differing levels of engagement with the funding, allowing a variety of providers to discuss their experiences. Projects leads were contacted via email and asked if they and/or colleagues would be available to participate in the research; the extent of expressions of interest determined whether this would involve one-to-one interviews, a group interview and/or focus group. Depending on the level of uptake within each project team, further project teams were subsequently contacted.

We originally intended to conduct around ten interviews. However, to offset the reduction in data gathered following the lack of uptake in the online focus groups, we increased the number of participants to 15.

Interviewees brought a diverse range of experiences and perceptions to the research. This included people with different identity characteristics, from different levels of seniority in the provider, and with a varied degree of engagement in the day-to-day running of the projects.

Building on the methodology for the published evaluation for rounds one and two of Catalyst funding, Advance HE's research team designed a variety of updated research materials in round three. This included a discussion guide for project team members that was suitable for one-to-one interviews, group interviews and focus groups. Project teams are encouraged to make use of this discussion guide, should they wish to undertake similar qualitative work on the themes of change, evaluation methods and sustainability in the future.

Interviews were conducted either in-person or by telephone and recorded using a Dictaphone. These recordings were sent to an external organisation for transcription. Transcripts were then imported to the software package Atlas.ti for qualitative analysis.

Using the same analytical approach used in the thematic analysis of the interim reports, all quotes that expressed a similar theme were marked with a code (for example, 'Learning: approach: need to ensure success is celebrated/publicised'). As far as possible, transcripts were coded inductively (read without a priori expectations and analysed by someone who had not read the project's interim reports) to detect recurring themes.

Transcripts from the 15 participants were reviewed twice by an Advance HE researcher. Following the first review, a provisional code list was checked by a second Advance HE researcher to ensure that the codes presented a coherent account of the interviews. Using this revised code list, the transcripts were reviewed a second time.

This process resulted in a final list of codes grouped under eight themes:

+ Challenges.
+ Change.
+ Evaluation.
+ Learning.
+ Network meetings.
+ Outcomes.
+ Outputs.
+ Sustainability.

Thematic analysis of the interview transcripts was synthesised with analysis from the review of the 11 interim project reports. It should be noted that as interviewees were not explicitly directed to speak about any particular elements of their project, failure to mention a given concept should therefore not be interpreted as disagreement or dislike.

Site visits

Researchers from Advance HE visited two funded providers, London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and Nottingham Trent University (NTU), in July 2019. These were chosen with consideration of provider size, region, area of research expertise and type of project undertaken.

Each site visit lasted one day, which included a tour of the provider's facilities as well as informal discussions with the wider project teams. At both providers, formal in-depth interviews were also conducted with practitioners and projects leads.

Conducting face-to-face interviews lends an opportunity to 'bring to life' the projects and their outcomes so far, and the information gathered from these has informed the development of two 'spotlight' case studies included in this report (Sections 3.6 and 5.5).

Appendix 3: Analysis of interim reports

The six main objectives identified in the interim reports fall under fourteen themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the reports (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. List of 14 themes indicating project objectives

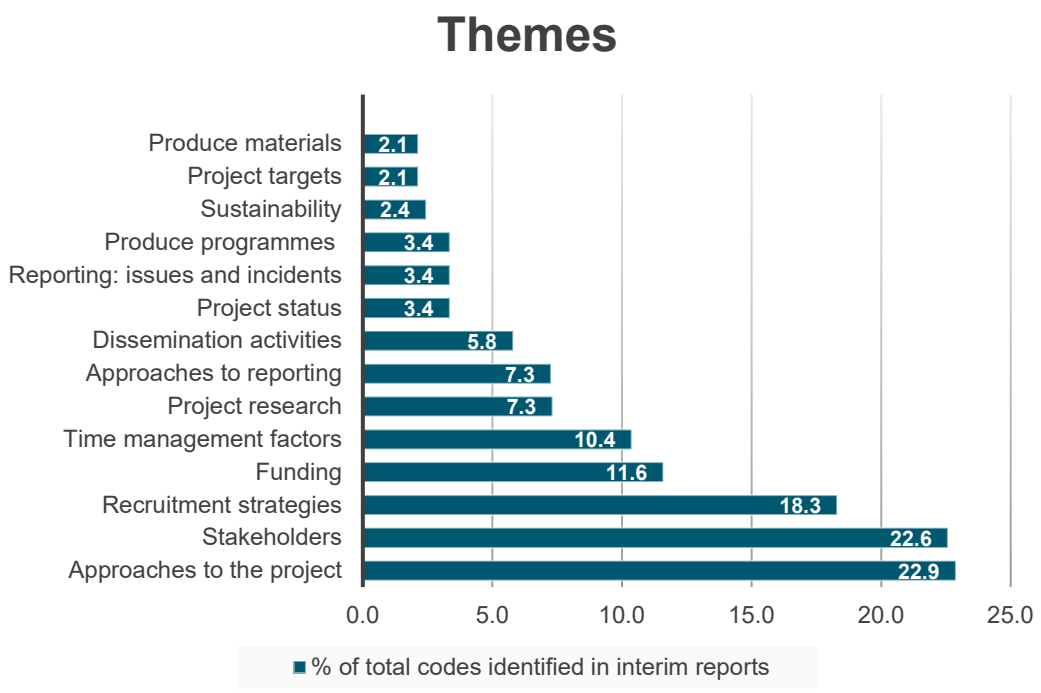


Figure 2 shows that the theme 'Approaches to the project' accounted for 22.9% of all codes identified in the reports. This theme marked instances in the report where providers discussed their approach to the funded project and highlighted their objectives. For example, if a report noted that a provider's objective was to improve the reporting system this would be grouped under the theme 'Approaches to the project'.

Among the key themes highlighted in Figure 2, the second most frequently noted theme relates to 'Stakeholders', the contributions they provided, and the various resources, connections and support available from them. Analysis of the reports identified the main external stakeholders as students' unions, consultants, specialist charities, other providers, schools and colleges, and local communities.

Table 2 presents the codes noted under the theme of 'Stakeholders'. The frequency column indicates the number of interim reports (out of 11) that noted the code.

Table 2. Stakeholders – codes from the interim reports

Theme	Code name	Frequency
Stakeholders	The benefits of forging and maintaining internal relationships inside the provider for the project	11
	The benefits of using external connections outside of the provider for the project	11
	The benefits of using stakeholders for the project; who the project stakeholders are	11
	The types of connections stakeholders provide	11
	Focus on specialism and expertise	10
	Part of the internal centralisation process	10
	Ways to keep students and staff included in the project	10

All 11 interim reports referenced the top four codes noted in Table 2. These codes provided useful information about stakeholders and highlighted the following benefits they contributed to a project:

- Internal stakeholders helped with specific duties such as producing resources, evaluating existing systems, conducting research and delivering or promoting activities.
- External stakeholders provided connections to form partnerships with other providers, allowed for joint ventures and enabled the exchange of best practices.
- External stakeholders brought new skills and knowledge to projects.
- Each stakeholder provided different types of connections and access to different types of communities and resources such as previously excluded student communities with access to religious communities, senior management with access to funding or associations with resources.

Other contributions listed in Table 2 show that stakeholders came with specialisms and expertise useful to the project, such as marketing, information technology, theological knowledge, education and media.

The reports indicated internal stakeholders from across a provider such as senior management, students' unions, support services, and staff, when connected, formed steering groups. Such collaborations produced a centralised approach on tackling hate crime/incidents. Ten out of 11 reports discussed such practice, as seen in Table 2. This outcome highlights the importance of connecting a diverse array of stakeholders throughout the project to help centralise practices.

Figure 2 also shows that 'Recruitment strategies' were the third most frequent code and accounted for 18.3% of all codes identified. Providers used a variety of paid consultants, staff and student interns alongside volunteer students. Collaborating with the students' union, specialist charities and student associations within the provider also appeared part of a strategy that bypassed the need to recruit additional staff to support the project. Table 3 lists codes that highlight the importance of recruitment strategies for the project. They also highlight the multiple recruitment approaches noted in reports.

The theme 'Recruitment strategies' recorded a variety of approaches to embedding a project management structure, ensuring that project objectives were embedded into campus-wide operations, and noting how students were recruited as both project collaborators and consumers.

Table 3. Recruitment strategies – codes from the interim reports

Theme	Code name	Frequency
Recruitment Strategies	Providing an embedded positionality for the role of project manager within the provider	11
	Specifying a specific role and position for project management	11
	The types of specialism and expertise needed to run the project	10
	Using the provider's students as collaborators and volunteers	10
	The types of roles needed to support the project	10
	Employing the provider's graduates as research or intern staff	8

As noted in Table 3, all 11 reports referred to a specific role within the project team with 'Embedded positionality'. Reports indicated that 'embedded' refers to the connectedness of the position to other internal stakeholders and the ability of the manager to encourage campus-wide changes. The reports discussed two approaches that providers used to create an embedded positionality for the management role. One included making the role of project manager permanent and placing all control for project activities within the role. The second included adding the duties of project manager to existing staff. This required staff to incorporate the project into existing schedules and processes. Table 3 shows that, regardless of approach, all reports noted that a specific role and position for the management of the project was crucial. In addition to this, recruitment for the role needed staff with sufficient expertise and specialism to manage the project. Additional expertise and specialism could be sought through other stakeholders, as discussed earlier.

The theme 'Recruitment strategies' also indicated that students were the most frequently recruited members of project teams. They were used as support staff in a variety of roles, as discussed in the last three codes in Table 3. The reports stated that these roles also benefitted students by giving them the opportunity to develop and deliver project activities, gain experience, learn new skills and form connections with staff and other organisations. One provider also created an employability accreditation award to recruit more students onto the project.

The reports indicated that recruiting students with a diverse array of skills and from a wide range of departments was beneficial for the project. This was demonstrated in reports that cited the use of art, media or theatre students to help produce project materials such as exhibitions, short films, photography and websites for events and training activities. Students from education, law or social science backgrounds were also recruited to support research and training activities. The reports also indicated that student volunteers were given training to ensure that more students from diverse educational backgrounds could be recruited and contribute to the project.

The reports indicated that students were stakeholders whose contribution greatly benefited the project. Some providers placed a greater emphasis on recruiting student 'ambassadors', 'leaders' or 'educators' to act as peer support, and to recruit students to co-produce resources with their accounts of hate crime/incidents. Other reports cited recruiting hundreds of students as testers and feedback providers on training materials, surveys and the reporting system.

Appendix 4: Recommended effective practice: from research participants

Recommended effective practice	Project teams / provider	HE sector
Approach		
Pinpoint student gatherings or activities that would be an ideal time to promote project initiatives or carry out evaluations, such as engaging with Muslim students before or after Friday prayers.	✓	
Ask course leaders to share surveys with students. A number of providers have used this approach successfully and increased uptake as a result.	✓	
Create opportunities to disseminate paper forms with participants/respondents in areas with increased footfall, such as dining halls.	✓	
Ensure that provider policies and procedures are consistently reviewed, to help improve reporting mechanisms.	✓	✓
There is a tendency for religion and belief work to only focus on international students. Ensure that the work also includes UK students.	✓	✓
Encourage Hate Crime Managers to participate in national and international events in order to raise the profile of the projects.	✓	
Identify key areas within the provider for religion and belief work where the changes created will be most impactful and ultimately add value. This will ensure the benefits of the project trickle-down within the provider.	✓	
Increase opportunities for cross-campus work (i.e. ensuring marketing is consistent across all provider buildings).	✓	
Increase opportunities for cross-provider work (i.e. linking up relevant teams across the provider).	✓	✓
Establish ways to share common measures for benchmarking across providers.	✓	✓
Continue to focus on the OfS' regulatory role, to ensure providers comply with duties preventing discrimination and harassment related to religion and belief.		✓
The OfS should continue to consider intersectional approaches in the work it supports with providers.		✓
Events		
Focus on hosting a small number of high quality/impact events, rather than multiple poorer quality events.	✓	

Host events at popular times in public spaces as this will increase footfall as students stumble upon the event.	✓	
Host events at the start of the year so that attendees can join follow-up activities.	✓	
Create opportunities for project teams to engage with sector bodies.		✓
Provide community/event spaces for different religion and belief groups on campus, creating an opportunity for different faith groups to communicate in a safe and supportive environment.	✓	
Run events with an inter-faith focus. These do not necessarily have to be events directly related to religion and belief.	✓	
Senior leaders		
Projects should find opportunities to amplify the voices of students impacted by project work by sharing their experiences with senior leaders in the providers. This will ensure those in senior positions have a clearer idea about the type of work taking place but also ensures religion and belief work remains on their radar.	✓	
Senior leaders should demonstrate their engagement and support of funded projects. This can be by establishing their 'buy-in' or presence at events.	✓	
Work with senior leaders' personal assistants to gauge diary availability to attend events.	✓	

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