

IMPERIAL

Fostering Inclusive Access and Transition to Higher Education:

**Reflections from a widening participation program supporting students into
healthcare careers**

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“None of us are white...”

Overview of today's session

- Introduction to Widening Participation
- Overview of our WATCCH programme
- Small group work
- Whole group discussion
- Final thoughts and take away points

Widening participation strategy aims to address discrepancies in the take-up of higher education opportunities between different under-represented groups of students.

UK Parliament House of Commons

Widening participation in practice

Female students face a wave of misogyny in British universities

The shocking sexism displayed in a video of Stirling University men's hockey team is a stark example of the misogyny women students are experiencing in the name of 'banter'

UK universities are institutionally racist, says leading vice-chancellor

Prof David Richardson cites systemic issues that disproportionately affect black and minority ethnic students



It's not banter, it's racism: UK students accuse universities of brushing complaints aside

Statements supporting Black Lives Matter are meaningless without action over racist incidents, students say

UCL apologises for 'bullying and sexual misconduct' at architecture school

London university investigation finds 'culture of unacceptable behaviour' going back decades

News > Education > Education News

Disabled students and staff face discrimination at leading university, as documents reveal bullying is 'rife'

Exclusive: Less than a quarter of disabled University of Sheffield students get support they need, poll finds

Holly Bancroft • Thursday 27 January 2022 14:00 GMT • [Comments](#)



UK's top universities urged to act on classism and accent prejudice

Investigation finds widespread evidence of students being ridiculed over their backgrounds

● **Case studies: 'It's had a lasting impact'**



'A demeaning environment': stories of racism in UK universities


Students and staff tell of prejudice that runs right through the higher education system



Widening Participation Maturity Model


First generation: Widening access and retention

Individual champions undertaking projects to help non-traditional students get in and stay in an unreformed HE institution/system (fixing up students)



Second generation: Academic success across the lifecycle

Pockets of excellence as some teams work together across the student lifecycle to improve academic engagement, belonging and success through curriculum change



Third generation: An inclusive institution achieving excellence for all

A whole institution approach as all staff work across the lifecycle and student experience, changing the institution's culture and structure

<https://studentsuccessjournal.org/article/view/1455>



WP in the context of healthcare careers

- **Diversity in healthcare degrees is complex and varies by degree type**
- **In medicine:**
 - 40% of medical students are from ethnic minority groups
 - Issues of access remain for more disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds
 - 80% of applicants to medical school were from just 20% of UK high schools.
 - Medical schools receive 3x as many applicants from most affluent quartile to the most deprived quartile
 - 25% of applicants were from private schools (compared to 6% of UK students educated privately)
 - Ongoing differential awarding problem
 - Issues of access remain alongside participation
- **Vocational degrees; direct link to diversity of healthcare workforce**

RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE CLINICAL TEACHER 

‘I sound different, I look different, I am different’: Protecting and promoting the sense of authenticity of ethnically minoritised medical students

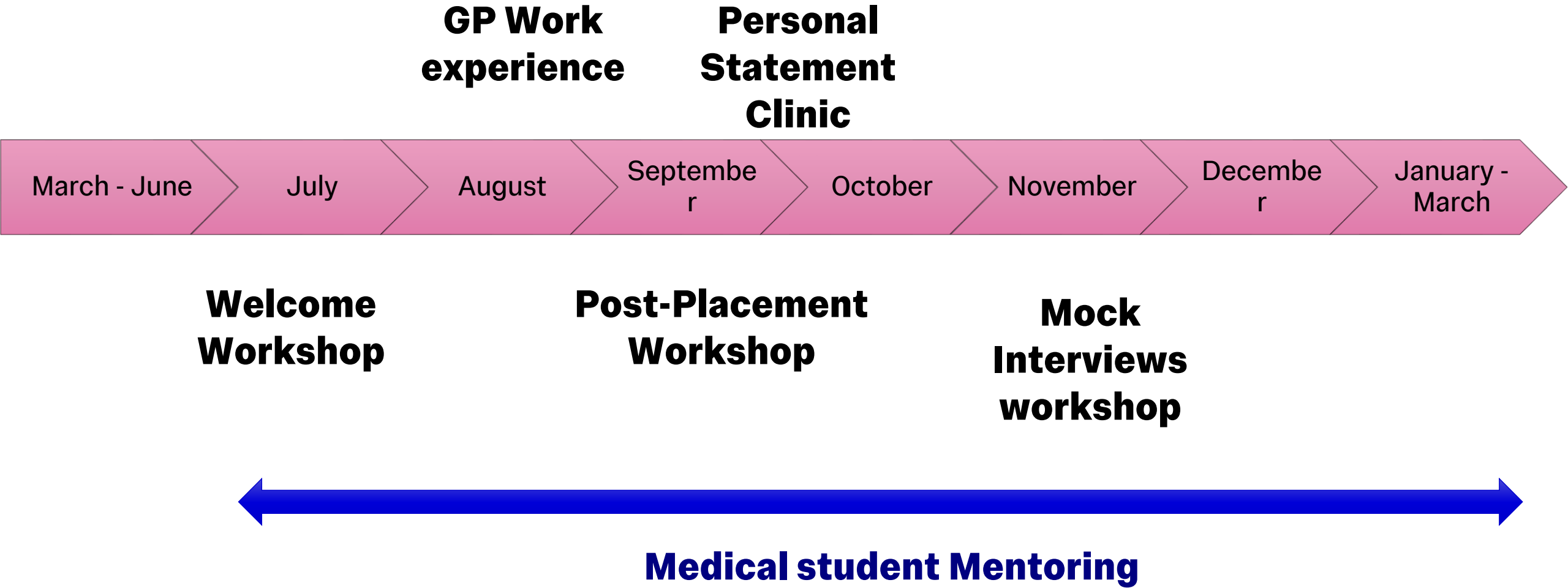
Zoe Moula¹  | Albertine Zanting²  | Sonia Kumar¹



What is WATCCH?

- A widening *access* programme supports 40 x Y12 students from a WP background with an interest in a community healthcare career with:
 - **3 day in person GP work experience**
 - **Series of workshops (reflection, personal statements, interviews)**
 - **Mentorship with a medical student**
- Subsidised food and travel
- WATCCH is run by faculty and a WATCCH medical student mentor committee
- Supported by funding from NHSE/HEE/SPH

WATCH overview



WATCCH experience

Dinushan Raveendran

Previous WATCCH student, current Imperial Medical Student and WATCCH Medical Student Mentor Lead

Leila's Story

Leila is a year 12 student who wants to pursue a career in a healthcare profession. She hasn't decided which but is interested in medicine - despite her schoolteachers advising her against this as her predicted A Level grades aren't great.

To get a place at medical school, Leila's needs to have relevant healthcare work experience. Leila calls and emails local GP practices and dental surgeries but does not hear back from them.

Leila turns to the internet for tips on how to get work experience and finds that most people arrange this informally via a family member or friend who is a healthcare professional. Leila doesn't know anyone working in healthcare. Perhaps it's time to consider another career, she thinks.

Leila finds the WATCCH website and is excited that it offers work experience and workshops to support attendees' applications to medical school. She is less excited that all workshops are run on a Saturday, when she works, meaning it will be difficult for her to attend them. She hesitates but decides to apply anyway - at the very least I'll get some good work experience to talk about in my personal statement and interviews, she thinks.

Key Themes From Our Evaluative Work



Awareness



Time



Support



Anxiety & Imposter syndrome

Group Work – access

In your groups:

- Brief introductions (discipline, position and interest/experience in WP)
- Allocate scribe
- Allocate speaker to feedback – be ready to share thoughts

Discuss:

- What are the barriers in your context that you think exist for WP students to access your courses?
- **(e.g. In medicine - work experience, interview training & coaching, external courses)**
- **What solutions are there (or could there be) to address these barriers which you could enact?**

Feedback 10 mins



Group Work – thriving

In your groups:

Discuss:

- What are the barriers in your context for WP students to thrive in your courses?

Consider: course materials, assessments, fieldwork, course expectations, culture, hidden curriculum, role models, belonging, identity formation

- **What solutions are there (or could there be) to address these barriers which you could apply in your context?**

Feedback 10 mins



Take aways

- Widening participation is about more than just increasing access
- Consideration of the specific discipline barriers for WP students to access AND thrive
- Requires a shift in culture, mindset and practices
- Efforts should be co-developed with target communities
- Initiatives should be continually evolving and regularly evaluated
- Shifting from a deficit model to an asset model

Resources

- WATCCH website - <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/school-public-health/primary-care-and-public-health/research/medic/watcch/>
- Supporting Identity Development of Underrepresented students - <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/education-research/our-work/identities-in-education/sidus/> <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/education-research/our-work/identities-in-education/sidus/>
- Excellent Outcomes for All Students: A Whole System Approach to Widening Participation and Student Success in England - <https://studentsuccessjournal.org/article/view/1455>
- Moula et al (2023) Clinical teacher 'I sound different, I look different, I am different': Protecting and promoting the sense of authenticity of ethnically minoritised medical students - <https://asmepublications.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/tct.13750>
- Higher Education outreach Advance HE toolkits: <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/higher-education-outreach-widen-participation-toolkits-practitioners>

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Thank you