Mapping Decolonisation in Geography – Project Summary 2021/2022



'Mapping Decolonisation in Geography' is a student-led project designed to map existing decolonial approaches, practices, and curricula within the geography discipline at the University of Exeter. Over the 2021/2022 academic year, we conducted student and staff surveys and ran student focus groups, to highlight key areas of decolonial interest and activities. These results enabled us to design a map of goals to reflect potential areas of improvement and guide the discipline to a more decolonised future.

Key problems:

The geography department at the University of Exeter wants to decolonise their discipline, however there are practical barriers to this, in particular, a lack of knowledge. Without knowing what decolonial approaches have been implemented, which have been successful, and what needs improving, it is difficult to effectively attempt to decolonise. This project combatted this uncertainty through providing an overview of current decolonial geography approaches to help close the knowledge gap, enabling staff to feel more confident in decolonising their modules.

Whilst initial focus was on conducting ELE page reviews and interviewing staff members, from early conversations, it quickly became apparent that a lack of student input was presenting a secondary knowledge problem. Therefore, we refocussed to incorporate student opinion on decolonising geography, through separate but comparable staff and student surveys, and follow-up student focus groups.

Through modifying and adapting the project to the needs of the staff and students, the primary output of the 'map' also transformed. Instead of describing where geography has been, it transformed to looking ahead to where geography is going, providing a 'roadmap' for future decolonial initiatives.

Who has been involved?

The main project team has comprised Dr Caitlin Kight (Manager, Academic Development & Skills), Professor Ian Cook (Professor of Cultural Geography), Dr Thomas Roland (Lecturer in Physical Geography), Dr Saffron O'Neill (Associate Professor in Geography), Dr Ruby Grantham (postdoctoral researcher in Geography), BSc student intern Sebastian Podraza and BA student intern Eleanor Cook.

A second stage of the project running from June 2022 – August 2022 involved much the same team, though with the departure of Dr Grantham and the replacement of Sebastian Podraza (following graduation) with Joel Palmer (Student Experience and Success Officer in Geography).

Overview of accounts:

The entire budget for this project was requested to cover student contributions. There were two main areas of expenditure: salaries for the interns, and remuneration for students who contributed to surveys, focus groups, and programme mapping. Costs are outlined in the table below

Item	Cost
Salary for Ellie Cook	£852.04
Salary for Seb Podraza	£452.80
Remuneration for participation in focus	£350*
group + provision of programme map (5 x	
£70)	
Remuneration for participation in focus	£100*
group only (2 x £50)	
Prizes associated with student survey (4 x	£250*
£25; 11 x £10; 8 x £5)	
TOTAL =	£2000.85*
	*Because of a clerical error, these charges were
	made to an existing Academic Development
	account, so did not actually come out of the
	project budget. As a result, we only used
	£1304.85 of the allocated budget for this project.

Key stages and methods:

December 2021 – Formulation

Eleanor and Sebastian began working in December, therefore this first stage focussed on discussions and gathering ideas from both the staff and student members of the team. Whilst the initial aim was a dual process of analysing ELE pages and conducting staff interviews to examine what was taught, this quickly adapted to focus on student opinion and what was learnt. Following this change, early conversations became brainstorming sessions to find the best ways to amalgamate staff and student views into an eventual map of geography.

January 2022 – Surveys

Surveys were chosen as the best way to gather staff and student opinion because they were simple to disseminate and could be completed at the convenience of the participant. Surveys also allowed for multiple topics to be explored simultaneously, whilst gathering administrative information including what modules staff ran, and what course students were enrolled on. After several iterations, the following series of open- and closed- answer questions were chosen as the best approach for gathering opinion on decolonising geography. The primary aims were to gather information on what decolonial activities were currently occurring, and how

geography (staff and students) wanted to progress with decolonisation. The staff survey was completed first because it was easier to distribute and was given a brief introduction at the January departmental Learning and Teaching meeting.

At the start of the survey, a brief definition of decolonisation was included which was distilled from one developed during a University-wide consultation¹ as part of the Decolonisation Toolkit project:

"We are focusing on decolonisation as an active part of the physical world, for example through the return of land to those from whom it was stolen, and in education through how, what, from and with whom we learn. Higher Education Institutions have implicitly been involved in colonial oppression through privileging Western norms of knowing and learning. Therefore, we view decolonisation as integrating into the curriculum new voices that have been previously overshadowed, physically/socially/and intellectually marginalised, and/or have only been the subject of study. Decolonising the curriculum does not simply involve including these voices in our modules, but also includes enriching them by engaging with a plurality of contemporary and historical viewpoints to actively challenge colonial knowledges and power structures."

Staff survey questions:

1

- Please choose from the pulldown menu a 2021-22 module that you convene. NB if you convene more than one module, please repeat this survey for each one.
- To what extent do you consider decolonisation relevant to your module? A 1-10 scale.
- Please explain the answer you gave in response to the question above.
- What are the first three thoughts or feelings which come to mind when you hear the term 'decolonisation'?
- Please share five words which capture any discussions you've had about your module and the decolonisation agenda.
- The following methods are often advocated by decolonial scholars as ways to decolonise the curriculum. Please indicate which (if any) you have employed when designing and delivering your curriculum.
 - Considering the importance of identity (of lecturer, students, people in the field more generally, etc.; positionality, intersectionality).
 - Think about where, how, and by whom different core ideas were produced and consider wider context and potential alternatives?
 - Selection of learning/teaching activities (e.g., co-creation and flattened hierarchies).
 - Increasing inclusiveness of learning spaces (whether digital, face-to-face, field trip, etc).
 - Reading lists and other forms of representation (e.g., guest lecturers, demographics of lecturers and students, what knowledge and people are considered valid).
 - Inclusivity and accessibility (languaging, addressing marginalisation, being aware of bias and assumptions).
 - \circ Forms of assessment (variety, creativity, allowing students to self-select options).
 - \circ $\;$ Assumptions made about what this information will be used for, by whom, and where

https://universityofexeteruk.sharepoint.com/sites/DecolonisationatExeter/SitePages/Definition.aspx?cid=e15 26486-4422-4448-bb29-d4492103b495

- Impact of the broader University context (e.g., student body makeup, policies, strategies, etc. -- the wider environment in which learning takes place).
- Linking to extracurricular decolonial activities, experts, and resources.
- \circ $\,$ Other (please elaborate in the text box below).
- If you selected 'other' in the above question, please provide more information here.
- Which of these statements most closely matches how you feel about your module since we began to discuss decolonising the geography curriculum in Exeter?
 - \circ The module I convene was designed with decolonising in mind from the ground up.
 - All, or part(s), of the module I convene have had decolonial content for many years.
 - Parts of the module I convene have recently been changed to include decolonial ideas and/or practices.
 - I am interested in adding decolonial content but am not sure how to and/or don't have time to.
 - o I cannot see how any area of my module could or should benefit from decolonising.
- In what ways do you think you could begin to decolonise your module, or increase the extent to which it is already decolonised? [You may find the list above to be a useful source of inspiration.]
- How do you think students fit into the process of decolonising your module?
- Please use this space for any other comments/questions (e.g., to share information, ask questions, make suggestions). We would be particularly keen to hear if there is any specific advice or support that would help you take the next step in decolonising your curriculum.
- If you would be interested in taking part in a focus group with students discussing decolonialisation, please share your address below.

February 2022 – Surveys

Although the staff survey was live, uptake was slow. Therefore, the student interns sent personal follow up emails, asking for more responses, and offering to guide staff through the survey to answer any questions. These steps encouraged more responses. Analysis was ongoing whilst the responses came in, e.g., counting responses in the closed questions, and commenting on the open responses. Whilst this continued, we created the student survey. Following a similar process to the staff survey, the questions were complementary to the staff questions, but instead of asking what they had done, focussed on what the students had experienced.

The same definition on the staff survey was added to the student survey, and the questions were as follows:

- What are the first three thoughts or feelings which come to mind when you hear the term 'decolonisation'?
- Please indicate your programme and year. (If you have a specialism -- e.g., 'geography and...', then choose whichever option is the best fit for you.)
- Please indicate how you feel about the following statement: decolonisation is relevant to the geography curriculum at Exeter.
- Please explain the answer you gave in response to the question above.
- Please share five words which capture any discussions you've had about the decolonisation agenda in the geography department or the University as a whole.
- The following methods are often advocated by decolonial scholars as ways to decolonise the curriculum. Please indicate which (if any) you have encountered in your geography modules.

- Considering the importance of identity (of lecturer, students, people in the field more generally, etc.; positionality, intersectionality)
- Think about where, how, and by whom different core ideas were produced and consider wider context and potential alternatives?
- Selection of learning/teaching activities (e.g., co-creation and flattened hierarchies)
- o Increasing inclusiveness of learning spaces (whether digital, face-to-face, field trip, etc.)
- Reading lists and other forms of representation (e.g., guest lecturers, demographics of lecturers and students, what knowledge and people are considered valid)
- Inclusivity and accessibility (languaging, addressing marginalisation, being aware of bias and assumptions)
- Forms of assessment (variety, creativity, allowing students to self-select options)
- o Assumptions made about what this information will be used for, by whom, and where
- Impact of the broader University context (e.g., student body makeup, policies, strategies, etc. -- the wider environment in which learning takes place)
- Linking to extracurricular decolonial activities, experts, and resources
- o I'm not sure
- None that I'm aware of
- Other (please elaborate in the text box below)
- If you selected 'I'm not sure' or 'other' in the above question, you can provide more information here.
- In which of the following modules have you encountered some or all of the techniques listed above? List of modules provided
- In what ways do you think educators could begin to decolonise geography modules, or increase the extent to which they are already decolonised? [You may find the list above to be a useful source of inspiration. You can also indicate that you do not think this should happen, or are neutral on the issue.]
- How do you think geography students could contribute to the process of decolonisation? [You are welcome to indicate that you do not think this is appropriate or that you are neutral on this topic.]
- Please use this space for any other comments/questions (e.g., to share information, ask questions, make suggestions).
- If you are interested in being entered into the prize draw associated with this survey, please enter your email below. Prizes include vouchers to shops and cafes on campus and in the Exeter city centre.
- If you are interested in taking part in a focus group on decolonisation in geography, please provide your email address below. [Note: This opportunity is paid.]

March 2022 – Ongoing analysis

During March, students and staff were still responding, and ongoing analysis was occurring. Analysis involved creating an Excel workbook and separating each question into a new sheet. The individual question answers were then grouped and sorted through Excel functions to make analysis easier.

April 2022 – Ongoing analysis and team presentations

By April, responses had slowed. Analysis continued. Smaller staff and student results presentations were created by the student interns to show the team the main results. Discussion turned to how to share the results generated. The June Learning and Teaching

meeting was highlighted as an effective forum for presenting our results to the geography Staff.

May 2022 – Student focus groups

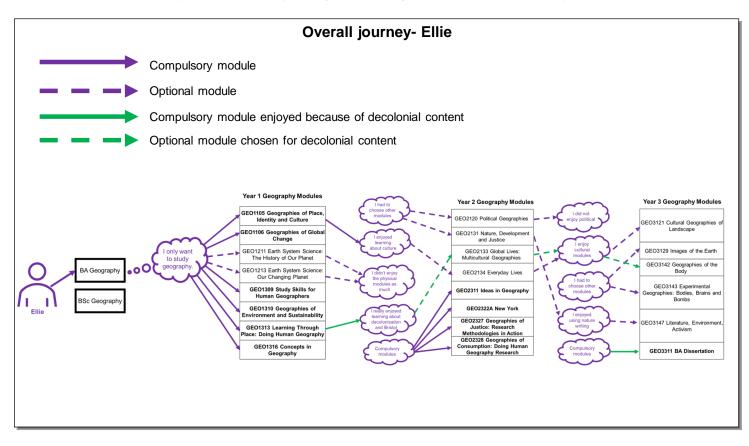
Following the results of the surveys, interesting trends began to emerge regarding the importance of first year for learning about decolonisation, and the division between the BA/BSc sides of geography. Therefore, we designed student focus groups to gather more information, on these topics in particular, to enhance the data already collected. Two groups were created and run by the student interns at the end of May. The questions were designed to promote storytelling, avoiding closed prescriptive answers. Ten guide questions were created to direct the conversation, but students were free to take the conversation in different directions and had space at the end to speak about their own decolonial interests.

The questions were as follows:

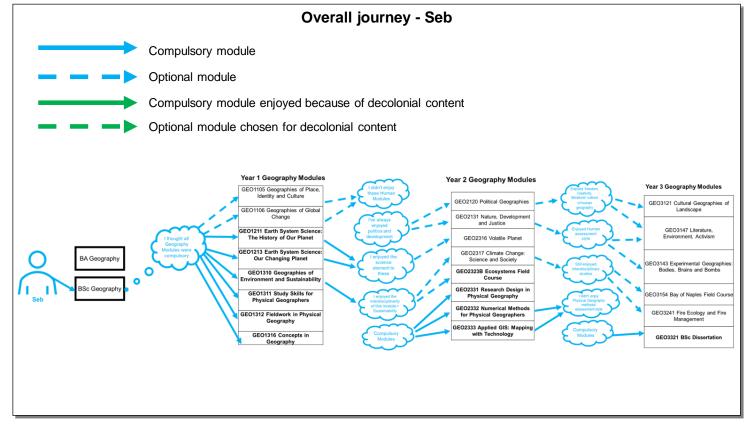
- To start, why did you want to take part in this focus group?
- What experience or interest did you have in decolonisation before starting University? How did this influence how you learnt?
 - Prompts: Did it change how you saw module topics? Approached assessments?
- Would you define decolonisation, and decolonisation in geography, differently? Why/Why not?
- Now you have experienced learning geography, have your thoughts and interests in decolonisation changed? How?
- What do you feel is the best way to learn about decolonisation? Why?
 - Prompts: Videos, academic papers, guest speakers? Should you learn or do? Is there a difference? Collaborative learning?
- What is the relationship between (if any/relevant) how decolonisation has been approached in physical and human geography modules? Should there be a difference?
- From the survey, decolonial methods appear most prominent in first year modules. What are your feelings on this?
- Have you used or seen what you have learnt about decolonisation at the University in your everyday life? Can you think of examples?
- How will you carry forward what you have learnt about decolonisation into future studies, employment and living? Will you continue to build your knowledge?
- Finally, can decolonisation be complete? Is there an endpoint in modules, the University, everyday life? What does this look like?

As an optional follow-up to the focus groups, interested students were given the opportunity to share their journey map with the research team. The students filled in a table with their modules and indicated why they had enrolled on each module. This could be as simple as: "this module was compulsory", "I needed to fill space", or could be more developed, such as, "I chose module X because of Y", etc. These tables were converted into module journey maps to visually map the student module choosing experience. Decolonial thinking was then highlighted in a different colour to isolate where decolonisation had impacted their module journey.

This is an example of a module journey, created by Eleanor Cook of her experience:



Here is another example of a module journey, created by Sebastian Podraza.



June 2022 – Learning and Teaching meeting

By June, the focus was on the Learning and Teaching meeting at the end of the month. This would be the first opportunity to create and deliver a presentation of the results to all staff who wished to attend. Eleanor Cook created, prepared, and delivered the presentation for 40 minutes followed by 20 minutes of questions and discussion. Discussions revolved around both the future of the geography curriculum and pedagogy, with the goal of decoupling from Western knowledge domination to make geography at the University of Exeter more inclusive. Following the success of the presentation, handouts were created and circulated for interested staff, and a masters information report was created to respond to an additional request from the staff.

July 2022 – Next Steps

The project has now refocussed from gathering data to working on decolonial goals. Three main goals have been highlighted as initial steps:

- 1. Visibility of decolonial work through discipline posters,
- 2. Encouraging the use of decolonial resources through an annotated bibliography
- 3. Discussing with staff how to add a module showcase to highlight decolonial work.

These correspond with sectors of the decolonial goal map. To further the visibility of this project, the work completed so far is being disseminated through the Decolonisation Toolkit to act as a case study and guide for other disciplines to use, and to contribute to a wider University of Exeter decolonisation effort.

The project was also presented at the Advance HE EDI Colloquium: Decolonising Pedagogies² on 21st July, as part of a wider higher education conference. Dr Caitlin Kight and Eleanor Cook led a 15-minute presentation that received positive feedback; particularly noteworthy were comments by other Geographers who were interested in learning more about our process and potentially exploring a cross-institutional collaboration in decolonising the discipline. This was a great opportunity to show our work outside of the University of Exeter, and to listen to a variety of projects on equality, diversity, and inclusion, to further our own learning.

Finally, on 29th July, Dr Caitlin Kight and Eleanor Cook have been asked to join The Food Geographies Research Group³ to give a presentation and workshop at their final Dialogues in Food Geographies workshop titled 'Practices for Decolonising Teaching in Food Geographies'

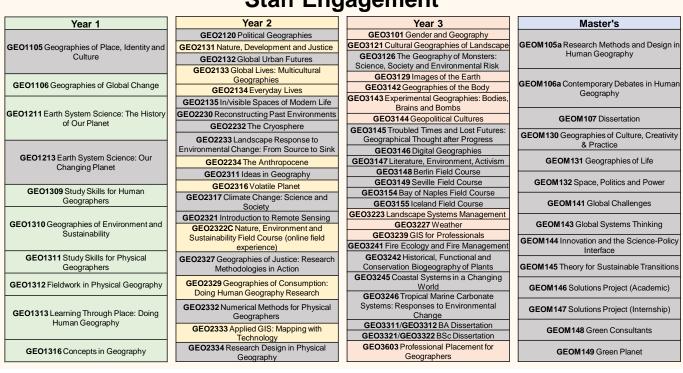
² <u>https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3Vi4pS1qqnHWaPs0bKh-HbLEyfuy9yOV</u>

³ <u>https://foodgeographies.wordpress.com/</u>

at the Royal Geographical Society building. This opportunity will allow the work of this project to be circulated amongst a wider group of geographers. By making this an interactive session, feedback will be welcomed, and any suggestions on what more could be done will be considered in taking this project further/creating new projects.

Key findings and discussions:

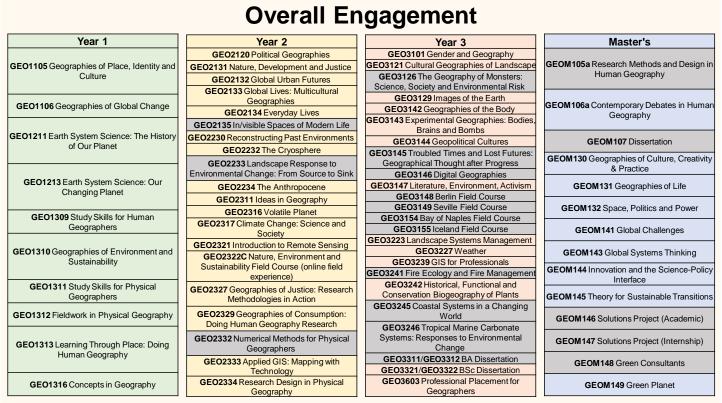
*all quotations in these findings are faithful to the original, reproducing respondents' own formatting and spelling unless edits are required for comprehension.



Staff Engagement

The above chart contains tables of the available modules for each year in geography and shows whether staff completed the survey for their module. Overall, educators provided data for 26 modules. If the boxes are grey, no feedback was received at the time of creation (staff were told at the June L&T meeting they still could submit). A key point is that thus far, is that engagement has been exclusively concerning the undergraduate modules. Furthermore, within the undergraduate programme, greatest engagement occurred in first year, with this decreasing through second and third year.

The table below shows the combined engagement of staff and students. Here, the grey boxes are modules which neither staff nor students have responded to. The inclusion of student opinion has provided information on master's courses that previously were an information gap, which showed the value in including student views. Of the 56 students who responded, 33 were on the BA programme, 20 on the BSc, 1 FCH, and 2 master's students. Similar, to the staff, highest engagement occurred in first year with 22, compared to 12 in second year and 20 in third year. The importance of first year was a recurring finding in this project.



What is decolonisation?

Despite including an overview at the beginning of each survey, an exact definition of decolonisation was kept open and personal to the respondent. One of the interests of this project was finding out how people thought about decolonisation. In the student survey, students were asked: "What are the first three thought or feelings which come to mind when you hear the term 'decolonisation'?" Some of the popular responses were:

Racism	Important	Guilt	Equity
Progress	Reversing/	Overdue	History
Necessary	returning	Recognition	
Liberation	Inclusivity	Awareness	

From this, there is a sense that students are both hopeful and positive in changing our current social context. However, they are also acknowledging the continual division between people in this world, which can often result in inter-generational trauma or guilt.

Staff were asked the same question, with some of their most popular responses being:

Bias	Difficult	Engaging	Important
Complex	Diversify	Enhancing	Justice/Injustice
Critical	knowledge	Exciting	Progress
Challenge	Empowering change	Норе	Trust

The staff were equally balanced in their hope for the future, but perhaps showed greater awareness of the challenge of decolonising.

Decolonial discussions:

Students and staff were also asked about discussions they have had around decolonisation. Students were asked: "please share five words which capture any discussions you've had about the decolonisation agenda in the geography department or the University as a whole."

Popular responses included:

Awareness	Diversity	Identity	Representation
Change	Education	Important	Slavery
Collaboration	Engaging	Inclusive	Understanding
Colonialism	Equality	Justice	Brief
Difficult	Future	Race	Informative
Discrimination	History	Racism	Necessary

Staff were asked to share more specific thoughts: "please share five words which capture any discussions you've had about your module and the decolonisation agenda."

Popular responses included:

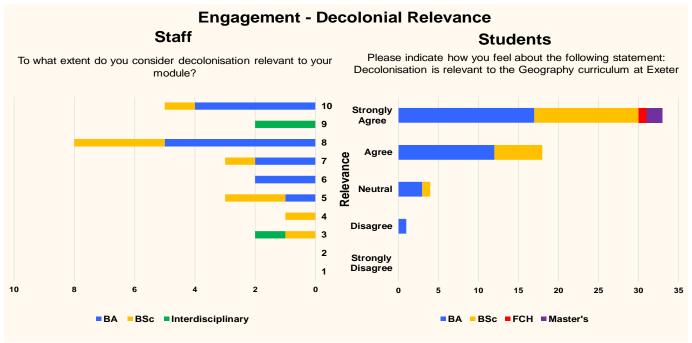
Assessments	Diversity	Legacies	Unconscious-
Barriers	Identity	Racism	bias
Climate	Indigenous	Representation	Whiteness
Critical	Injustice	Solutions	Western
awareness			Knowledge

There are crossovers between the two groups, particularly with diversity, identity, representation, and awareness, with many similar terms also being used such as knowledge and understanding. Overall, both staff and students displayed evidence of already occurring proactive discussions.

Decolonial relevance:

One of the main starting points of this project was determining how relevant geography staff and students believed decolonisation to be to their modules and learning. The staff survey asked: "To what extent do you consider decolonisation relevant to your module?" As seen below there was a positive response, with most responses being neutral (5) or above. Similarly, students were asked to indicate how they felt about the following statement: "Decolonisation is relevant to the geography curriculum at Exeter'". Again, there was a positive response, with most students either agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. Whilst a couple were neutral towards decolonisation, only one student disagreed. This BA student said "I feel that the curriculum is already decolonised" showing not that they disagreed with decolonisation, but that it had already occurred.

It is notable that, whilst BA/BSc student opinion was largely balanced, there was more disparity on the staff side. Whilst BA staff responded neutral (5) or above, of the three members of staff that felt decolonisation was not relevant to their module, one was interdisciplinary, and two were BSc. This is shown in the chart below:



BA/BSc divide:

The divide between the BA and BSc strands of geography was prevalent throughout the surveys and focus groups. Responses included:

The perceived greater relevance of decolonisation to BA rather than BSc geography:

 "I mostly view decolonization as a human geography issue, and... to think about it as a physical geography issue I ...have to shove my brain into another direction... but I guess that's just maybe how I've been exposed to it so far" – Master's Student (Focus group)

This quotation highlights the current mindset of physical being objective, and a potential critical disposition of changing how *objective* subjects are viewed.

 "It's important in understanding power structures etc. However, I do BSc so decolonisation is not of too much importance when looking at the natural world not the cultures within it" BSc First Year (Survey)

The disassociation between the physical world and decolonisation.

- "the knowledge [has] come from... the same types of people... so it kind of needs to be addressed in the same way" – BA First Year (Focus group)
- "there's an issue with both, but they do need to be approached differently" BA Third Year (Focus group)

These two quotes are agreeing there's an issue but have different approaches to how to solve it.

 "I don't think physical geography has as much emphasis on decolonization as perhaps human geography does" – BA First Year (Focus group)

The importance of the context and scope of the module:

- "for physical geography specifically, I think what has really worked is a module that I took in second year introduction to remote sensing actually... I think the module convenors were really good in that the scope of that module was basically worldwide ... [it] encouraged us to seek ... alternative sources of knowledge that aren't just Western academics so for me, it's not just the reading list, but also the scope of the module as well" BSc Third Year Placement (Focus group)
- "The module is built around local field work to understand our local environment. In that light, I have a hard time seeing elements that can be decolonised; to my mind, they weren't "colonised" to begin with." Staff (Survey)

Both quotations equate global with decolonisation.

The use of technology within BSc modules:

- "Whilst I am committed to decolonising my teaching in a number of areas, this module is structured in a way that focuses on atmospheric laws and processes. In this respect, whilst some knowledge is provisional and contested, much of it is firmly embedded in scientific methods (observation, measurment and modelling), as opposed to recognising other ways of knowing about the weather. Nonetheless, I am intending (in 2023/24) to produce a new video resource for the module, which not only charts the history of meteorology as established in textbooks and journals, but looks at decolonisation of meteorology" Staff (Survey)
- "I think on the bsc side decolonisation is covered a lot less than on the ba side. Perhaps because science is seem more of an objective fact. Lots of the people who contributed to traditional knowledge production were really racist/ xenophobic/ etc. I think this should be made aware of. I think it would also be really interesting to integrate this into GIS teaching (some of this is already done). For example, why GIS isn't always a 'good' thing and is biased based on the context it has been produced within." BSc Third Year (Survey)
- "And I was doing the GIS module and I really wanted to do ... just a location other than in the UK, but the software that we were using and the software that was recommended to us was very Eurocentric... we had to download some maps from certain locations ... across the world, and it was just easier to download maps from either North America in the US or in the UK" – BSc Third Year (Focus group) – student intern.

Again, these quotations highlight how scientific and physical is seen as objective with objectivity, naturalness, and computer modelling being reoccurring conditions that meant decolonisation was seen as less relevant to physical geography. However, a focus group conversation on GIS, a mapping software, revealed that European and North American maps were easier to download. Therefore, despite the perceived scientific objectivity of the programme, it was still Western-centric.

Knowledge and the design of the degree programmes:

• "in terms of physical geography, I am inclined to agree that even though in terms of curriculum, there has been progress being made in terms of where we look at in the

world, but in terms of the sources we look at, even if it's by authors from around the world, we are very still much looking at sources that [are] published in a scientific journal because that [is] sort of seen as the standard of it being credible." – BSc Third Year – Placement Focus (group)

 Staff: "ample opportunity for discussion around the broad themes of decolonising knowledge production and scientific racism (e.g. in lectures on human/socetial evolution, climate crisis etc) - as a first year module, this setting could also be used to set the scene for future decolonising discussions that might come later in BSc programme"

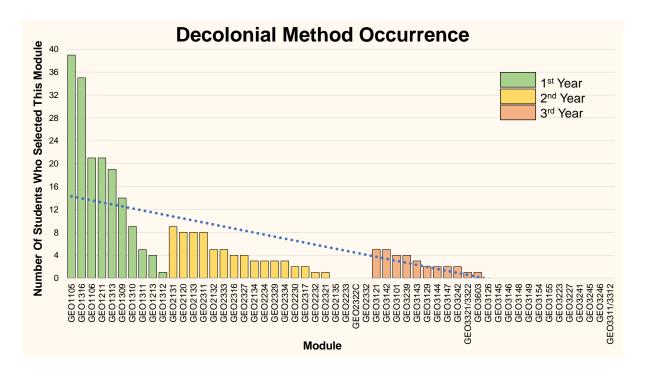
These quotations focus on the teaching and structure of the degree programme. The first, questioning why valid knowledge must come from journals that are not accessible for all, and the second, again returning to the importance of first year in creating a base decolonial knowledge.

This diverse mix of responses indicated a deep decolonial divide in geography between the human and physical strands and shows a need to find a way to decolonise both strands.

Importance of first year:

First year was the first interaction point with decolonisation for many students. For example:

- "I never really was exposed to the idea of decolonization, and I think even in like history and things like that, like um we did touch on slavery, but it wasn't a focus and it was... just a tick off the box... covering it in the curriculum, so being able to come to uni and... really engage in depth with... decolonization I think was really important and I think it should be introduced earlier in the education process" BA Third Year (Focus group)
- "I hadn't really heard of the term at all before coming to uni" BA First Year (Focus group)
- "Coming into university and learning the extent of geography's colonial history has been really interesting and something I didn't think would ever be part of the curriculum and am glad that we are taking steps in the right direction. Overall, I'm really happy to be learning about this." – BSc First Year (Survey)



The culmination of staff and student engagement shows decolonisation mainly occurring in first year in the undergraduate programme which translated to the visibility of decolonial methods. In the staff survey, staff were given a drop-down list of methods (see above survey) and were asked which they had used. Students selected modules if they had experienced these decolonial methods. In first year, every module was selected, in second and third year there was a large drop in the number of methods seen with many modules in third year not being selected. This to a large extent is expected because of the greater choice of modules available in third year coupled with the smaller amount chosen because of the dissertation module. Furthermore, whilst all students could select first year modules, only those who had completed second year modules could select them, with the same occurring for third year. Despite this, the graph does support that more decolonial approaches are occurring in first year, as this was the only year where every module was selected and received the most responses.

(Note: this only shows the undergraduate programmes)

When probed about this in the focus groups, students had supporting opinions to this conclusion:

- "a possibility for you to go down the decolonising route and in … second and third …
 [year] modules, but it's not really explicitly … encouraged" BA Third Year (Focus
 group)
- "first year it was such a kind of tick box kind of procedure like they're kind of like we've taught you about it now you're aware of it... we need to be introduced to these ideas

and that's a lot of what first year is, I was super surprised like especially part of the reason why I went to Exeter was I saw that decolonization was kind of mentioned as like quite a departmental focus" – BA Third Year (Focus group)

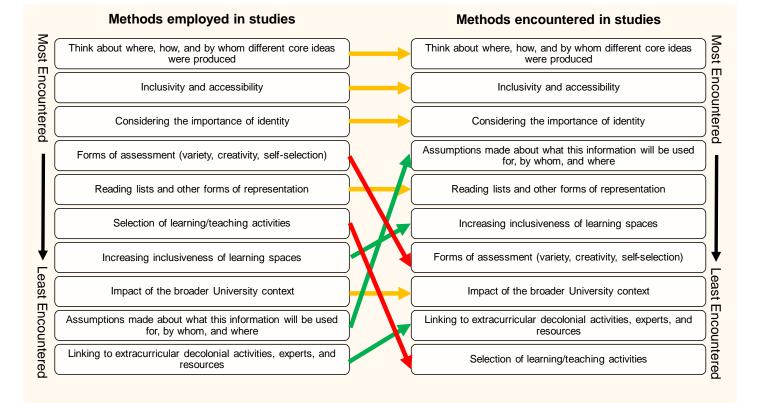
- "in first it was very explicit and I'm very grateful for that caus that's sort of set the tone for the research that I've done in ... my second year, but after first year it was very much that, in second year modules especially because most of my modules were physical geography, [it] almost sort of fell off the map in that it wasn't very explicitly talked about" – BSc Third Year Placement (Focus group)
- "there's nothing about first year that makes decolonisation more important than it is in the other years" – Master's Student (Focus group)
- "I can't particularly comment that ... much being a first year student, but I would hope that going into second year, especially with all the research that the department's doing at the moment, there would be more sort of optional modules available that were explicitly or ... within the sort of module descriptions would have references to decolonizing. I think there was only one and maybe two that ... explicitly mentioned decolonization." BA First Year (Focus group)
- "definitely important that it should be compulsory and it should be part of second and third years more definitely" – BA Third Year (Focus group)

This means that greater attention is needed in the second and third year to replicate the success of first year in using decolonial methods.

Methods:

A more detailed analysis of the methods showed which were successfully translated to students, and which required more work.

The left-hand side of this chart shows the methods implemented by staff; the right-hand side shows methods seen by students. Orange arrows indicate the same position. Green arrows are methods which were higher positions for students than staff. Red arrows are methods which were in a lower position for students than staff.



The top three methods used by staff, were also the top three methods seen by students which showed a successful translation between teaching and learning. Equally reading lists and other forms of representation (e.g., having guest lecturers, the demographics of lecturers and students, what knowledge and people are considered valid), and the impact of the broader University context (e.g., student body makeup, politics, strategies etc – the wider environment in which learning takes place) translated well to students.

Some methods translated better than would be expected from the staff response. These included: assumptions made about what this information will be used for, by whom, and where; increasing inclusiveness of learning spaces (whether digital, face-to-face, field trip etc) and linking to extracurricular decolonial activities, experts, and resources. Students responded particularly well to these methods.

However, two methods suggested by staff to be widely implemented were not seen by many students. These were: forms of assessment (variety, creativity allowing students to self-select options) and selection of learning and teaching activities (e.g., co-creation and flattened hierarchies).

Assessments:

The best way to approach decolonising assessments was perhaps the most disputed area in the project. Whilst staff focused on the choice of the students, iterating that there was no reason they could not take a decolonial approach, students wanted more guidance. Students also focussed on the balance between learning about decolonisation, whilst learning other new concepts and content.

- "no presumption that students will only select western-dominant forms..." Staff (Survey)
- "Things are largely in their hands as to whether they explore this or not, but it's also not something I'm placing in front of them as something to consider." Staff (Survey)
- "Perhaps including themes of decolonisation in certain assessments could help students become more involved in the process." – BSc Third Year (Survey)
- "I think it's harder for students. Especially if we're grappling with firstly trying to understand a new concept. I think critically assessing the colonial history naturally comes second. So I guess then in assessing topics decolonialism could play a bigger role." – BA Second Year (Survey)
- "Lastly, I would like academics to offer more opportunities to be creative in our assessments, not necessarily sticking to the Western norms of what academic work looks like (ie. lists of citations, essay format...)" – Master's student (Survey)
- "More creative assessments everything in geography is an essay!!! I liked the zine making in GEO3147." – BA Third Year (Survey)

What these quotations show, is that if decolonisation is not central to assessments, and is not supported, it will become secondary to more familiar module content. However, some students were ready to embrace different forms of assessment styles and learn different approaches.

Learning and teaching activities:

One of the central concerns of the second focus group was that there was a hierarchy within the University, consistent with the banking module of education, where students were considered as empty vessels to be filled with knowledge without contributing their own. Instead, students wanted to embrace dialogic teaching, which focussed more on collaboration and conversation.

"dismantle the hierarchy even within the classroom, of, like the professors talking at us and not really engaging with us as much and I think this will help" – BA Third Year (Focus group) The involves bringing personal knowledges into the classroom, valuing experience, and learning in a collaborative way. This is aligned with an andragogy-based approach which is both collaborative and process orientated. This is inspired by the work of Freire in creating a horizontal learning system where knowledge is chosen to be listened to and is combined with pre-existing different experiences.

Geographies of the Body (GEO3142) was noted as an example of good practice in employing alternative learning and teaching activities.

"We are learning alongside each other - I am hoping they will have lots to say. Many
of the readings I am including and have found have come from reading my PhD
students work, so I am also learning from them in this. One of the essay questions I
have set this year is to ask the students to reflect on the significance of decolonisation
for geographies of the body, so I'm looking forward to reading those reflections (which
may range from insignificant to vital, I guess)." Staff (Survey)

The co-creation of assessment criteria, the collaborative room-based activities, and the encouragement to be brave and explore new angles of thinking, culminated into an engaging module that reflected well in the opinion of the students in the focus group.

Structural Change:

Although not directly asked about, structural change through diversifying staff and student bodies, recurred as a decolonial departmental method.

For example:

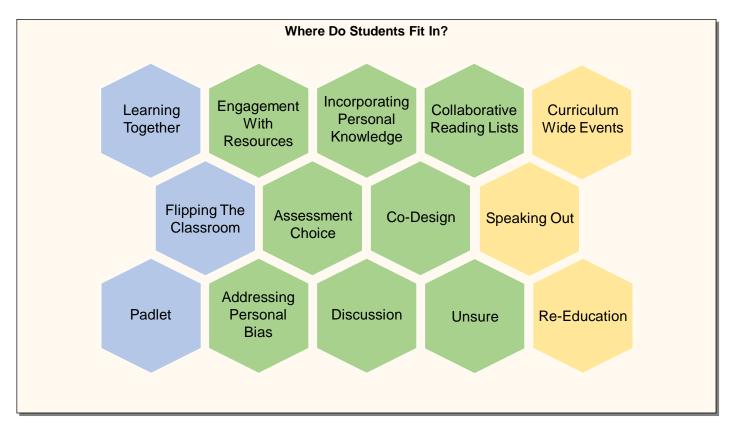
- "I think we have gone as far as we can at the moment without decolonising student admissions and staff appointments. That's where the major limits to progress are..." Staff (Survey)
- "I think decolonising the curriculum is a great initiative, but it's not enough on its own.
 A more radical decolonial transformation of the university (its staff and student recruitment) and the discipline of geography has happen too." Staff (Survey)
- "I have only been taught by people with Western backgrounds. Not that this is a bad thing, as all my teachers have been excellent, but it could be better to have more diversity in the teaching staff." – BSc Third Year (Survey)
- "exeter is a very white space its important that we are aware of the whiteness of the area and also of the curriculum eg white authors and academics that influence and shape our work" – BA Third Year (Survey)

 "I am aware that there are many reasons behind this but regardless of the work the university do, seeing a staff and student body which is not particularly diverse makes these changes hard to see visibly within geography " – BA Second Year (Survey)

An important conclusion to this point was the emphasis on *inclusion* rather than *exclusion*. It was not the presence of a Western influence which was a bad thing, but the neglect and absence of other voices which are equally as valuable and necessary to the curriculum and staff/student bodies. Furthermore, this method is not a pre-requisite – it should be implemented alongside other methods. It does not stop other initiatives from taking place but would greatly enhance them.

The integration of students:

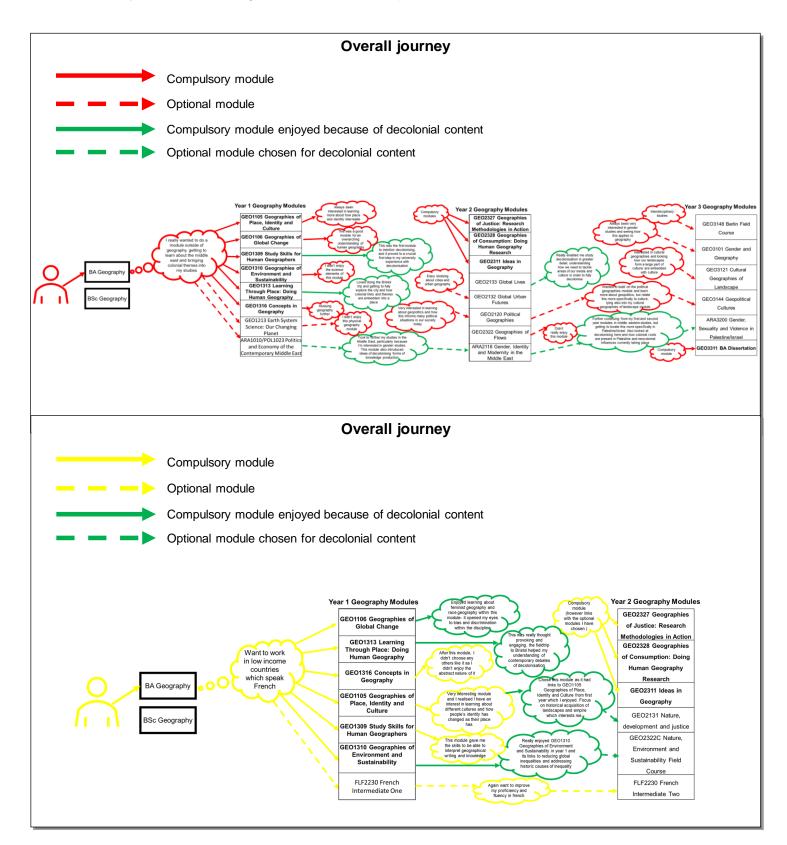
The role of students in decolonial learning was the last point of interest for the project. Blue ideas were only suggested by staff, yellow ideas only suggested by students, and green ideas suggested by both. The staff-only ideas suggest that students were unsure of taking an active role in teaching. The student-only ideas suggest that they are interested in expanding their learning beyond the module and empowering themselves.

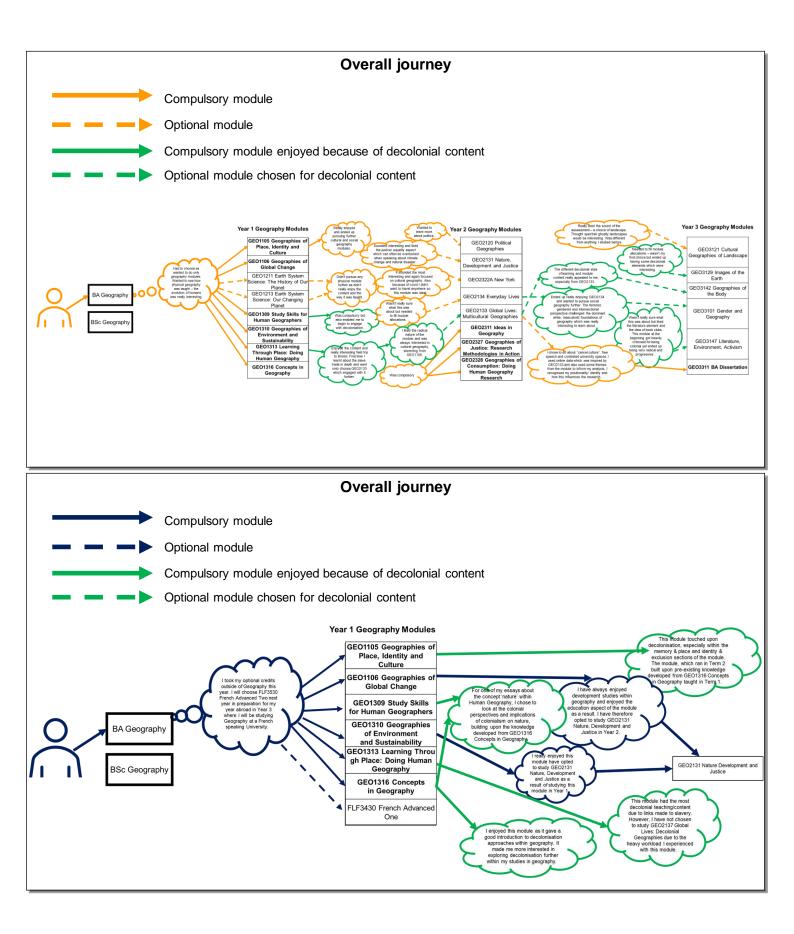


This shows the arrangement of ways lecturers and students are attempting to connect through their work. It is now about making the connection effective, using collaboration to innovate the curriculum.

Module journey maps: Undergraduate

These optional module journeys highlight the thought process of undergraduate students when choosing their modules. Whilst some made direct choices of correlating decolonial content with choosing that module, for many modules choices decolonisation was a secondary choice or a benefit. These are useful, not only in the context of this project, but also more widely for understanding the module selection process.





Module journey map: Postgraduate



Outputs:

Work completed:

Presentation

The L&T presentation was completed and circulated in handout form to staff after the event.

<u>Goal Map</u>



The first output is the decolonial goal map, shown above and on the front cover of this report.

It involves five core sections:

- 1. Structural
- 2. Visibility
- 3. Normalising
- 4. Encouragement
- 5. Interaction

Within these categories, there are smaller examples such as work showcases in Visibility, or seminars in Interaction, as approaches staff can use to incorporate decolonisation into their modules. The aim is that this map will be a reference point for staff unsure of where to begin

with decolonising their module. They would be able to choose a section to work on, in a focussed and directed way.

It is also a SMART map; these goals are:

- Specific: Each area able to be isolated or worked on as part of a larger project.
- Measurable: The outcome can be mapped through comparable surveys.
- Attainable: They can be completed by staff individually, or part of the broader discipline team.
- Relevant: These goals were all highlighted by staff and students throughout the project.
- Time-based: They can be completed in a 1–2-year timeframe.

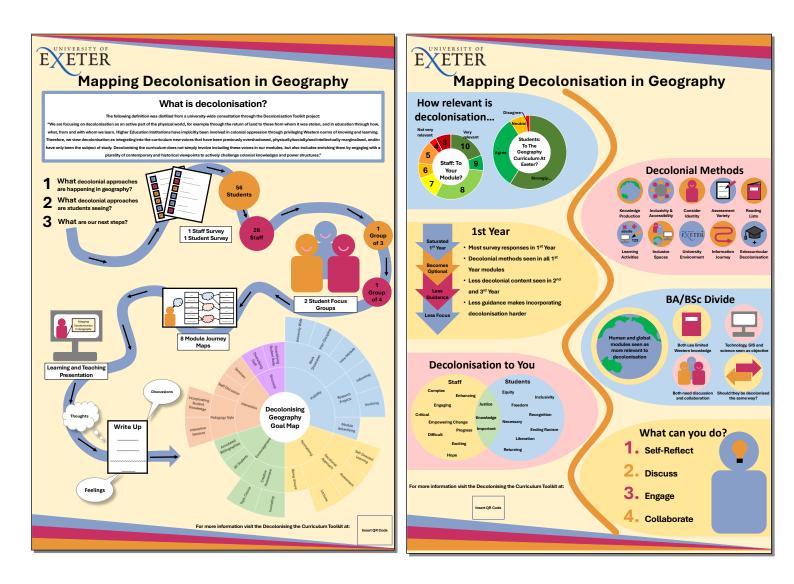
Further work under development:

Annotated bibliography

An annotated bibliography is under the Encouragement section of the decolonial map. This is because, having accessible and identifiable decolonial resources can help encourage their use. Within geography, it is usual to have a core list of readings set by the module staff, these readings would be used in conjunction with wider resources students will choose based on their essay direction. If decolonial resources are a part of the core list, they are more likely to be used by more people. Therefore, having an annotated bibliography staff can refer to for resources, and which students can also access, makes decolonial learning easier. This also eliminates time pressures for staff who may want to decolonise but are struggling, by having a document in one place that they can use. This bibliography is being created and will be shared on the Decolonial Toolkit page for easy dissemination.

Department posters

As part of increasing the visibility of decolonial projects within geography, two department posters are being created to showcase the project work. These will be placed in the 4th floor geography corridor of the Amory building to maximise the chance of them being viewed by geography students. Below are pictures of the works in progress. These are first iterations and are likely to change:



Future plans:

Along with EDI and RGS talks, the project will be presented at the University's Success For All conference in September. Although the initial aims of the project, have been completed, the results have opened a myriad of potential topics to explore in greater detail. A fantastic addition to this project would be to repeat the surveys in the coming years facilitating a longitudinal comparison for examining the success of decolonial strategies in geography that are occurring now.

Open, supportive discussions have been central to this project and will continue to be fundamental in implementing decolonial approaches. It is the aim of the project team members to encourage staff-staff, student-student, and staff-student discussion groups and workshops to stimulate conversation and to collaboratively think of new ways to decolonise the curriculum.

A couple of key issues have been raised from this project which will be central to how this project progresses:

- First Year. The results have shown that first year is where decolonisation is occurring the most, yet the results also show that students are not happy with the reduction in decolonial content and approaches after first year. Staff should consider redesigning second and third year modules to carry on the successful work of first year.
- The BA/BSc divide. The division between the strands of geography needs to be addressed, either through having an interdisciplinary course (radical change), more interdisciplinary modules, or concentrating on having decolonisation being central to both strands, using different methods to recognise the differences in the courses.
- Assessments. Assessments are a key area for change. Increasing opportunities for self-reflection, incorporating individuality, and responding to prompts and tasks creatively will be at the forefront of future geography work.

Evaluation of the scheme: Eleanor

What worked well:

- The balance between staff, and students, human and physical geography created a great team dynamic, which meant we had a variety of viewpoints and worked productively together. From the beginning, it felt student-led, using the expertise of the staff to have proactive and productive conversations to help decide the best way to approach creating a decolonial geography map.
- Teams was incredibly useful for having regular meetings and for sharing documents in our private folder. Furthermore, the ease of working from home meant we were more productive because meetings could be organised to work with everybody's schedule.
- The flexibility of the project was very helpful in having both students and staff work on the project. It meant that during exam season, as an intern, I could do lighter tasks, and when I had more time, I could dedicate myself more to the project.
- Dr Kight was an incredible employer, it can be intimidating working with staff, but I felt welcome, valued, and encouraged throughout this project. The support has been exceptional from the team and the opportunities I have had to present, listen to presentations, take an active part in decolonising geography has been invaluable.

What was challenging:

- Engaging staff and students to take part was an initial challenge. The follow up emails to staff were necessary to get more people to fill out the survey. It was difficult to find a time when students were not busy for focus groups, for example because of moving out of term-time accommodation or because of completing assessments.
- I had a couple of administrative challenges. I encountered several difficulties setting up e-Claims and receiving help to rectify them.

Future support:

- There should be greater opportunity for projects to be longer. Our project is a catalyst for a multitude of next steps, to keep the momentum, they should be worked on immediately.
- Furthermore, it would be great to have more support for the student interns wishing to continue with the project. Finishing the project mid-way is difficult when there are still so many ideas to be explored. Having new students and adding new opinion is a good thing, but equally, this should be in addition to, not replacement of, the current voices. Having support to convert from a student to graduate would be a great thing.

Evaluation of the scheme: Caitlin

What worked well:

- Ellie and Seb were wonderful to work with. It was great luck that we were able to hire interns from both the BA and BSc streams, which gave us insider knowledge and allowed us to draw on useful lived experience. I was pleased that the interns felt comfortable disagreeing with certain suggestions, and putting forward their own ideas as alternatives; I felt that this, and their ownership of the resulting methods, made the project successful. I was pleased to note, in association with our Advance HE EDI Colloquium presentation, that educators from other institutions were particularly struck by the prominent role of students in our project, and the real respect we had for student contributions.
- The project team represented a real synergy of different views, talents, and roles. I do
 not think the project would have happened without the funding provided by CfSM or
 the administrative support (i.e., project management) provided by me in my academic
 development role. However, if I had initiated this alone, even with the help of students

it would have been a struggle; we needed the unique insights, contributions, and internal leadership provided by the engaged academics within the discipline. Only with all of us working together could this have gone as well as it did.

- Throughout the project, we focused on generating useful data and an actionable output. This helped with decision-making because it ensured we were prioritising the most useful activities – things that would help us concretely answer questions and provide a steer in the next Learning & Teaching planning meeting and provide a tool that other disciplines could access via the Decolonisation Toolkit.
- I am very grateful to have the opportunity to apply to CfSM grants, which are pretty much the only means available to me as a PS staff member to be able to engage in pedagogical research and fund partnerships with students. These projects are also good for highlighting what teams like mine can achieve, and of course it is gratifying to add this accomplishment to my own CV, and I hope that there is continued support for these opportunities outside of the standard route (e.g., Education Incubator, external funding agencies).

What was challenging:

- As always, I found it very time-consuming to prepare and receive an outcome on ethics paperwork. I am glad we have a rigorous process at Exeter, but it is worth acknowledging that if you want wiggle room to adjust a project in response to student feedback, you need time to plan before submitting the ethics application, and then you need further time to await the results – all of which can delay initiation of the project.
- The internships team was very supportive, and in general I found the recruitment process fairly streamlined. However, I do not understand why I need to submit a TR2 and get approval from my head of department when funding for the role was secured by me personally, and does not affect our team budgets, and when the roles we are recruiting are not standard staff positions. There must be a way to make this overall process quicker and less onerous.
- Remunerating students has become more difficult recently. I have received conflicting
 advice about the best way to do this, and at one point someone from Finance queried
 my requests. I wish the advice on this were more straightforward along with the
 process, which, surely, can be automated rather than necessitating completion of a
 DOC file that I have to attach to emails?!

Future support:

- I agree with Ellie that it would be wonderful to have the opportunity to apply for a longerterm project if possible – as can be done with, e.g., Annual Fund grants. In some cases, I can visualise requesting 2 years of funding right from the start, but in other cases I can imagine being in a situation like ours where we might like to request an extension and extra funding for further work – so perhaps there could be a special category of grant for each option?
- We have benefitted greatly from the support of the CfSM and wider WP team who, for example, suggested the Advance HE EDI Colloquium opportunity and who invited a contribution at the Success for All conference in September. I wonder how else dissemination (internal and external) could be supported perhaps with the aid of the AD&S team? We have always struggled to integrate and scale up projects from the Incubator, but perhaps because CfSM work is often more practical and overtly actionable, there is more room for success here. I would be keen to think about what more AD&S could do to facilitate dissemination, and how we could use lessons learned here to inform practice with the Incubator (and perhaps the coming EEII).
- While I think we can argue that we have good evidence of impact from this work, I agree with Ellie that longitudinal evaluations would be ideal. I would be keen to think about how we might embed a longer-term evaluation scheme and what metrics we should be focusing on not just for our own internal use, but to demonstrate efficacy to, e.g., funding bodies and regulators.