

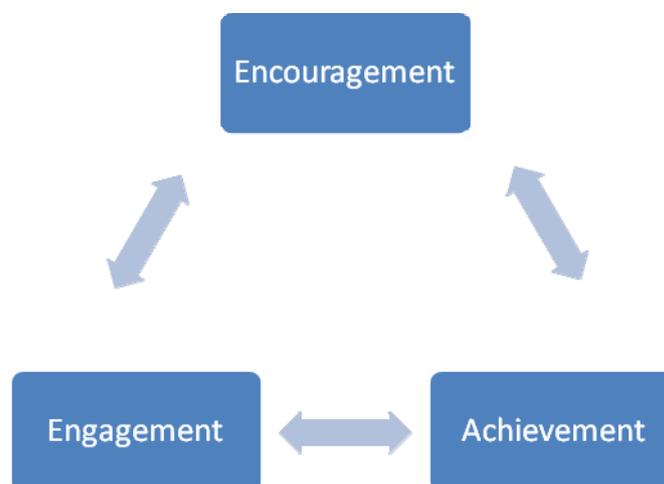
Feedback from workshops

The three workshop groups were asked to consider a series of questions based on the data provided:

- How should we respond to the data? At faculty, programme/module and individual level?
- How important is our job role as academics, professional services?
- Does it matter whether we work with students directly or not?
- How should we act to help achieve DMU's Equality Objectives?

1. The first group considered the question: “What does working and studying at DMU mean?”

- They discussed how monitoring student progress and attendance as a way of encouraging study had to be achieved in as transparent a way as possible.
- They considered the differences between formal and informal mentoring that occurs and the effectiveness of each.
- They recognised that both students and staff need to feel that mentoring and support need to be conducted in “safe” places where data on performance and attendance (for example) could be used in ways that helped the student to progress.
- They also recognised that there was an inextricable relationship between student engagement, staff encouragement and consequent achievement represented thus:



2. The second workshop looked at one specific Equality Objective: To improve relationships between staff and students and create a positive culture at DMU (Objective 7).

- The workshop considered that interactions (of all kinds) were key components in the overall educational experience that students at DMU receive and could expect.
- They also recognised the need for “safe spaces” – both physical and metaphorical - for this to occur and identified that these needed to be within the curriculum and in social situations, in personal tutoring exchanges, with groups as well as individuals.
- The feeling of the workshop was clearly that there was a need for value and invest in time spent understanding individual student experiences and situations. It was recognised that this was not an easy thing to achieve within the crowded curriculum as it stands presently.

3. The third workshop group considered “the unheard voice: creating learning and teaching environments”

- They discussed the ways in which inclusive teaching methods would enable this to occur and would also help academic staff to identify with their students. They also felt that there was a need to provide opportunities for students to tell them their stories, both inside and outside of the curriculum.
- In order for this to occur the workshop felt that academics needed to be open to “not knowing” and thus perhaps less defensive. This might mean that they also revisited the styles of assessment being used and ask whether they are “fit for purpose” (it was felt for example that there was still an over reliance on the academic essay). Perhaps there was a need to consider other forms of assessment.
- It was felt that this type of work was best achieved at a module level where more ownership by academics was likely. Reliable and robust data was crucial to any discussion and decision.
- It was also felt that the timetable for a module may need to be looked at again to ensure greater student engagement with the ideas being considered. The group felt that timetabling half-day sessions might provide students and staff with greater flexibility and space for discussion.
- The group acknowledged that the university provided many avenues of support for students but questioned whether these were seen as coherent and thus made sense to students. The group also felt it was important to communicate to students that “support” is not remedial. The group also recognised that there was a challenge of engaging for students with some being reticent to access support available in the Library, for example, as they conceived of this as perhaps beyond their capabilities – a “perception of library excellence.”