

Title: Lessons Learned from the Student-Staff Partnership Process of Decolonising a Psychology Course (De Amicis, L., Vincent, M., Wen, S., Thompson, H., and Chang, H.C.)

This poster shows the findings and our team's reflections about a project to decolonise a course of Psychology of Individual Differences (ID), within a MSc Psychological Studies conversion program, using a Student-Partner Partnership (SPS). Student-Staff Partnership is intended as the meaningful involvement of students in shaping their learning experiences and educational environments as valued partners in education. Research shows that student-staff partnerships enhance student agency, engagement, confidence, and self-awareness while challenging traditional power structures in higher education (Mercer-Mapstone, Marquis, and McConnell, 2018). By fostering collaboration and shared ownership, these partnerships translate equity-focused and participatory educational research into practice, creating meaningful opportunities for curriculum transformation and pedagogical change.

This project, supported by one University of Glasgow Student-Staff Partnership Scheme Fund (SSPS), was carried out by our team, consisting of three former students of the course (Hannah, Hsin Cheng, and Sijia), the course convenor (Leyla), and a colleague from a different School with expertise in decolonisation (Michele). We collaboratively shared our diverse perspectives to co-create a more decolonised version of the ID course. Individual Differences students in the academic years 2024-25 and 2025-2026 also supported this initiative, encouraging transformative change in this psychology course traditionally shaped by colonial perspectives.

The decolonisation of academia has been strongly invoked in UK universities and worldwide, highlighting the harm that current Global West/North based curricula and pedagogy, reflecting an entire system of thinking, mentality, and structure viewed as the only universally acceptable, has on the education/training, practice/social skills and academic experiences of both international and local students. Our SSP- team embraced the definition of decolonisation intended as 'deliberately seeking authentic representation within the experiences of formerly colonised people in order to disrupt the colonial realities that continue to occur' (Matahela & Hildergard van Rensburg, 2023, reported by Roberts, 2024, p.197). The psychological investigation of 'Individual Differences' (ID) has historically excluded knowledge originating from the Global South and marginalised and/or discriminated groups. A decolonial perspective helps students to feel included and represented, and ultimately, to become psychologists who work meaningfully with cultural humility and integrity, with diverse populations worldwide (Phiri, Sajid, & Delanerolle, 2023).

Through this Student-Staff Partnership project, we reviewed course materials, engaged with decolonial scholarship, reflected on our cultural and professional perspectives, interviewed ten former students, and gathered feedback from ten current students. These activities informed the redesign of several aspects of the course. Former students strongly supported the move towards a more decolonised psychology curriculum, while also informing about challenges and offering constructive suggestions for further development. As a result, we revised lectures to include the work of scholars from the Global Majority, redesigned seminars to be more flexible and participatory, introduced co-creation approaches and encouraged greater positionality within assessment. Rather than replacing existing knowledge, these changes promoted a pluralistic approach that values multiple perspectives and broadens students' understanding of psychological theory and practice. During the redesign of our ID course, we recognised the significant value of our Student-Staff Partnership in identifying both the opportunities and challenges involved in decolonising the curriculum. Student partners played a vital role in shaping a participatory approach, highlighting everyday issues relevant to learners, anticipating how proposed changes might be received, and facilitating authentic feedback from both current and former students. Participation in the project also benefited student partners by encouraging deeper self-reflection, enhancing critical thinking about their development as psychologists, broadening their understanding of applied psychology, and fostering a more critical engagement with key psychological concepts. Staff contributed expertise in identifying and evaluating decolonial resources and gathered insights from current students regarding culturally relevant materials and diverse learning preferences during in person and online activities. Although both students and staff initially lacked confidence in their ability to decolonise the course effectively, this partnership provided mutual support and learning opportunities and strengthened our understanding of decolonisation as an ongoing journey of unlearning, re-learning, and reflection.

Interviewed current students strongly valued the decolonisation of our ID course and recognised the importance of adopting a decolonial perspective within psychology. They helped to co-create learning materials for current and future students and emphasised that decolonisation should extend across the entire psychology programme. Students advocated for the inclusion of more diverse and underrepresented voices and for variegated resources to make decolonial approaches more accessible and less intimidating. Their feedback also encouraged the project team to promote decolonisation among colleagues and professional bodies, advocating for broader curricular and pedagogical change. Overall, this project demonstrated the value of student-staff partnerships in facilitating reciprocal learning and the co-creation of culturally diverse educational resources.

Conference & Type of contribution: poster at UIT conference 2026, University of Glasgow

References

Mercer-Mapstone, L. D., Marquis, E., & McConnell, C. (2018). The 'partnership identity' in higher education: Moving from 'us' and 'them' to 'we' in student-staff partnership. *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal*, 2(1), 12-29.

Phiri, P., Sajid, S., & Delanerolle, G. (2023). Decolonising the psychology curriculum: A perspective. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1193241.

Roberts, C. (2024). Re-storying Education: Decolonizing your practice using a critical lens. Page Two.