

**Increasing Access to  
Higher Education in  
Glasgow for Ethnic  
Minority Students**

**Report 2  
The Empirical findings**

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## **PREFACE**

This report is the second of two and forms part of a project jointly initiated by the Scottish Ethnic Minorities Research Unit (SEMURU) at Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) and the Department of Student Services (GCU). The project, funded by the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council under its Flexibility in Teaching and Learning Scheme (FITILS 2) had two complementary strands: research on recruitment and support and the development of student support mechanisms and policies within the Glasgow Caledonian University.

Although the University provides many broad-based learning support services, at the time the project was initiated, there were no specific student support provision in place for ethnic minority students. The specific needs, if any, of this group of students were largely unknown and the importance of consultation in this regard, prior to any service and policy development, was deemed essential.

Report One (Walsh, Hampton and Bain, 1995) which focussed mainly on existing literature pertaining to ethnic minority students and higher education in Britain, published statistical information and the views of the GCU staff regarding their experiences with ethnic minority students. This first report provided a theoretical context against which the present empirical survey was planned. This report (Report Two) presents the key findings of the empirical survey and discusses policy implications.

### **A Note on Terminology**

For the purpose of this study, the terms "ethnic minority", "minority groups" and "black and ethnic minorities" are used to refer to 'people of colour', mainly of African/Caribbean, Chinese and Asian (Indian, Pakistani & Bangladeshi) descent.

"GCU" is used as an abbreviation for "Glasgow Caledonian University" throughout the text.

## BACKGROUND TO THE SURVEY

The first Report confirmed the researchers suspicions that documented evidence relating especially to ethnic minorities and higher education was fragmented and incomplete. In particular, comparative regional research or specific Scottish studies, both qualitative and quantitative, was notably scarce. Moreover, higher education in Scotland, appeared to lag behind schools, for example, in assessing the educational experiences of ethnic minority students as well as in developing and monitoring equal opportunity policies. In particular, Walsh, Hampton and Bain (1995) found that in the West of Scotland, the individual higher education institutions had only recently began to consider the systematic collection and monitoring of ethnic data.

Although the researchers concede that to some extent, certain fundamental issues regarding ethnic minority experiences, for example, matters relating to equal opportunities, low admission rates of certain ethnic students, course selection and poor job prospects are similar, on the whole the experiences documented in England cannot be fully accepted as necessarily relevant for the Scottish student population since the nature and distribution of the Scottish ethnic minority population is essentially different from that in England. As such one can expect their perceptions and experiences in higher education to differ accordingly. This fact concerning the local ethnic population was one of the factors that motivated the researchers to consider an in-depth enquiry into the Scottish ethnic experience of higher education.

Against this background, the primary aims of the empirical research were to establish whether or not the lack of specific provision for ethnic minorities is a deterrent to potential ethnic minority students' increasing participation in higher education and, secondly, to establish the needs of ethnic minority students within local universities together with an attempt to address these by embedding appropriate policies and support mechanisms within GCU.

The overall aims and objectives of the project are detailed in Report 1 (Walsh, Hampton and Bain, 1995) and only a brief summary of the key objectives pertaining mainly to the empirical survey are listed below:

- \* Interview current students to identify any specific or perceived academic or advisory needs and to obtain their views regarding barriers to access, support and

policy issues

- \* Interview members of the local ethnic community to obtain their perceptions regarding students' needs and other issues pertaining to access and student support
- \* Interview school pupils in their final year of compulsory education to establish their career aspirations and any difficulties perceived in accessing higher education.
- \* Develop appropriate support mechanisms within GCU (for example: ESL support, cross cultural counselling provision, information provision, staff development and training) based on the findings of the empirical research.
- \* Pilot and evaluate the success or otherwise of these support mechanisms and inculcate good practice

## METHODOLOGY

Given the objectives of the study, three groups of individuals within the ethnic communities were targeted; students, pupils and members of ethnic communities. The approaches used to target the different sample groups were varied. In the case of students, a researcher simply approached ethnic students at random in the various universities, explained the purpose of the study and encouraged them to participate. Likewise, fieldworkers targeted participants for the community sample by using a snowballing technique.

On the other hand, the process of targeting pupils proved to be far more complex and time consuming. Special permission needed to be obtained initially, from the regional education authority in order to conduct interviews with school children. Once permission was granted, a researcher then approached head teachers within sampled schools who agreed to write to ethnic minority parents informing them of the proposed project and asking for their consent with regard to their children's participation in the project. Once the parents consent was obtained, the head teacher then undertook the task of setting aside time during school hours to allow pupils to be interviewed.

As with the first part of the research, a combination of both qualitative and

quantitative approaches were adopted and accordingly semi-structured interview schedules were used to obtain the views of the participants within each sample group.

As discussed elsewhere (Walsh, Hampton and Bain, 1995), the chosen research approach allows for the flexibility that is usually required when trying to record experiences and processes. Rather than being representative, the findings of this study have to be interpreted as a reflection of real circumstances, experiences and processes which provide greater insight into existing patterns and trends of ethnic minority participation in higher education.

Three semi-structured interview schedules (a student, pupil and community schedule) were designed, comprising a range of open and closed questions to ensure the collection of a wide range of information. While a core of similar questions, to obtain certain comparable data, formed the basis of all three schedules, a set of variable questions were also included in each schedule to ascertain specific information from each of the three sampled groups. The semi-structured nature of the recording schedule was especially useful to fieldworkers conducting interviews with community members as it allowed them the opportunity to conduct the interviews in different languages where required. Likewise, interviews with pupils were worded in a manner that suited the level of pupils' understanding.

Interviews with the students and pupils were conducted on a one-to-one basis by a researcher while a group of bi-lingual field workers were employed and trained to conduct the community interviews. All participants were assured of confidentiality and the interviewers adopted an informal manner to encourage healthy discussion. Most interviews lasted between 30 to 60 minutes, with the community participants being the most eager to discuss issues at length.

The quantitative data collected were processed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and summaries of the data, tables and graphic representations were prepared to highlight the key findings. Content analysis techniques were used to process and evaluate the qualitative data and, where relevant, certain findings are presented in the participants own words to retain the essence of the discussions.

## THE PARTICIPANTS

The empirical survey was confined to the West of Scotland where the majority of the ethnic communities are known to reside (Dalton and Hampton 1996). Since the study was mainly qualitative, it was not necessary to draw very large samples. The researchers felt that a sample size of 120 would be adequate for the purposes of this study and subsequently a total of 60 students, 30 pupils and 30 individuals from the various ethnic communities within the Greater Glasgow Area were interviewed.

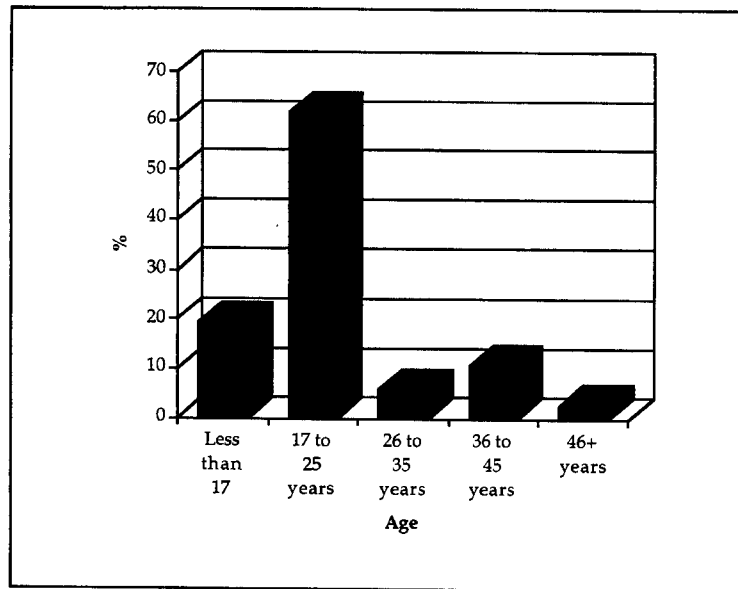
Over half (54.1%) of the participants came from the outskirts of Glasgow and about a third (31.7%) from inner city areas. Only a small proportion (14.2%) were from outside Glasgow, mainly students. Most participants (93.3%) considered themselves to be permanently settled in Scotland and the majority (90%) indicated that they had lived in Scotland for more than 10 years (Table 1)

TABLE 1: LENGTH OF RESIDENCE IN SCOTLAND

Years	Number	%
Less than 1	1	0.9
1 to 5	7	5.8
6 to 10	4	3.3
More than 10	108	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

Understandably, the majority of the participants were fairly young with almost two thirds (61.6%) being between 17 to 25 years of age. Only a small proportion of the total sample (2.6%) were older than 46 years of age. (Figure 1)

**FIGURE 1: AGE PROFILE OF PARTICIPANTS**



In terms of gender, slightly more females (57.5%) than males (42.5%) were interviewed and more than half (51.6%) of the participants were of Pakistani origin. The rest were either Indian (18.4%) or Chinese (17.5%). This accords with the known ethnic profile of the city. Regarding religion, while approximately one in ten of the participants indicated that they were either Sikh (10.8%) or Christian (9.2%), it is not surprising, given the overall ethnic pattern of the participants, that the majority were of Muslim faith (59.2%).

The rest of this section provides information pertaining to the profile of the respective sub-samples ie: students, pupils and members of the community.

#### The students

Overall, 60 students were interviewed, 30 from Glasgow Caledonian University and 30 (10 each) from three other universities within the West of Scotland (specifically the Universities of Glasgow, Strathclyde and Paisley). The inclusion of 30 non GCU students allowed for possible comparative analysis in terms of patterns and trends. All participants in the student

sample indicated that they were registered full time students and about a third (31.7%) were in their first year of study (Table 2).

**TABLE 2: STUDENTS' YEAR OF STUDY**

Year of Study	Number	%
First	19	31.7
Second	17	28.3
Third	16	26.7
Fourth	6	10
Postgraduate	2	3.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>100</b>

By comparison, fewer fourth year (10%) and post graduate students (3.3%) were interviewed during the survey. Most students were funded by SOED grants (90%) with only 5% indicating that they were self funded.

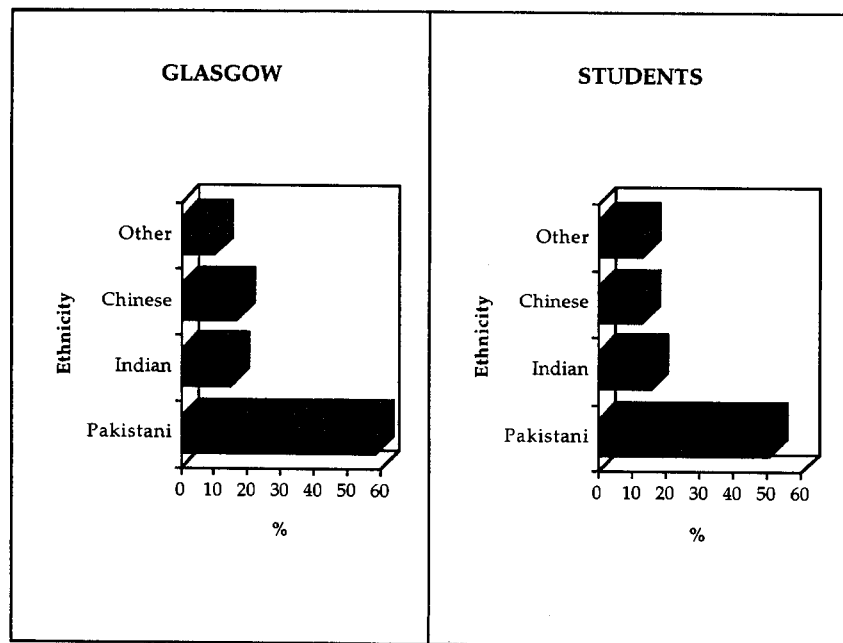
All, but one student, considered themselves to be permanently settled in Scotland and as many as 93.3% have lived in Scotland for more than ten years. A little over half (52%) the students indicated that they were currently residing in the inner city areas of Glasgow while the rest came from the outskirts (25%) or areas outside Glasgow (23%). These patterns of residences could be linked with other similar research findings on residential location and students (Goulbourne and Lewis-Meeks, 1993) which suggest that ethnic minority students prefer to attend universities closer to home.

In terms of gender, a more or less even distribution of male (48.3%) and female students (51.7%) were interviewed, the majority (91.6%) being between 17-22 years of age.

Regarding ethnic origin, Figure 2 shows that the pattern of distribution of sampled students in terms of ethnicity resembles the overall distribution of ethnic groups in Glasgow. As with the ethnic population in Glasgow, the Pakistani group tends to predominate the student sample.



**FIGURE 2: ETHNIC PATTERNS OF DISTRIBUTION**



\*Glasgow data source: Dalton and Hampton, 1996

\*\*Figures exclude the Black and Bangladeshi communities

Approximately two thirds (63.3%) of the students were Muslim and bi-lingual (91.6%). Second languages spoken by the students included Urdu (58.2%), Punjabi (16.4%), Cantonese (13.3%) and Hindi (6.7%).

### The Pupils

The pupil sample comprised 30 participants from 4 secondary schools within the Glasgow Area (one in the North West, two in the South West and one within the City Centre of Glasgow). The schools were especially selected as they were located within known areas of high ethnic minority concentration.

As with the students, most pupils considered their households to be

permanently settled in Scotland and the majority (86.6%) indicated that they have lived in Scotland for more than ten years.

An equal number of male and female pupils (15 each) were interviewed and the majority (73.3%) were approximately 15 years of age. About a third of the pupils were either Pakistani (36.7%) or Indian (33.3%) while 20% were of Chinese origin. As with the students, the vast majority of the pupils (93%) were bi-lingual with half (50%) indicating that they were able to speak Punjabi and the rest, either Urdu (37%) Cantonese (23%) or Hindi (10%).

The religious patterns pupils were closely related to their ethnic origin with about a third being Muslim (33.3%) while the rest were either Christian (23.3%, mostly Chinese) or Hindu (13.3%).

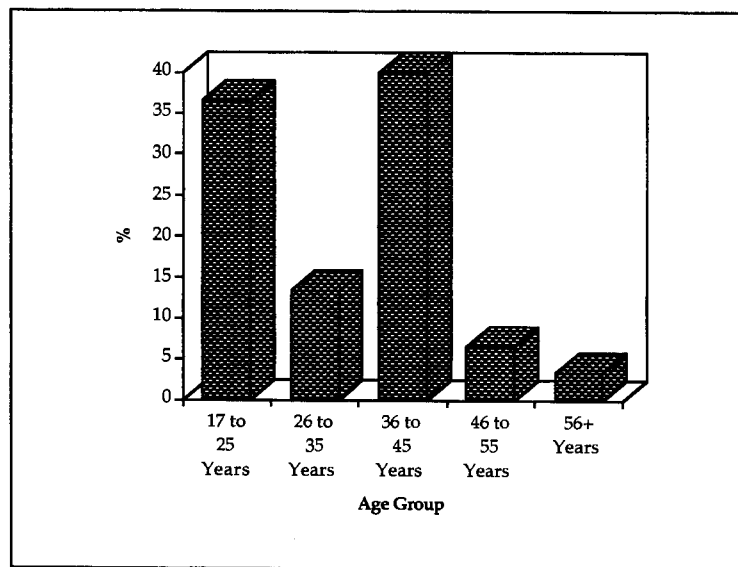
### The Community Participants

Thirty adult members of the ethnic minority community, again from the North West (Strathkelvin, Bearsden, Milngavie), South West (Giffnock, Newton Mearns, Eastwood) and the city centre of Glasgow were interviewed. The selected residential areas were located in close proximity to the sampled schools. Although most (66.7%) participants in this sample were born outside Britain, as with the other two samples the vast majority (80%) also considered themselves to be permanently settled in Scotland.

Regarding ethnicity, again most participants (53.4%) were of Pakistani origin with the rest being either Chinese (16.6%) or Indian (10%). As with the student sample, the pattern of ethnic distribution of respondents in this sample population was again similar to that of Glasgow, as a whole. Likewise, although some respondents (13%) did not provide information on their religious affiliation, more than three quarters of those who did indicated that they were Muslim (76.7%)

Interestingly, the community participants were also fairly youthful with more than a third (36.6%) being under 25 years of age (Figure 3).

**FIGURE 3: AGE PROFILE OF COMMUNITY SAMPLE**

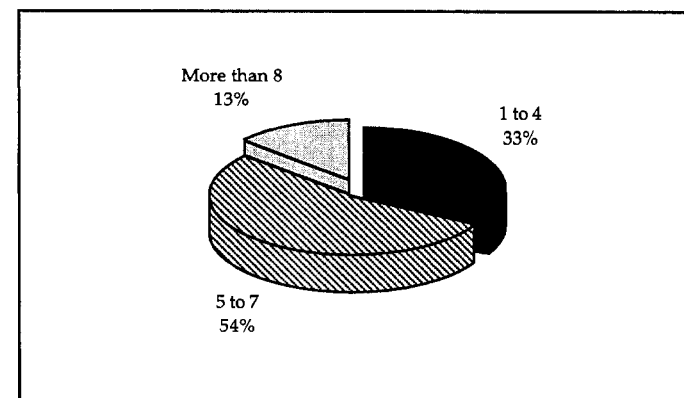


Nonetheless, the majority (40%) were between 36- 45 years old. Only one participant was over 56 years of age. More females (76.7%) than males (23.3%) were interviewed and the majority of the respondents (63.3%) were married.

A large majority of the participants in this group (77%) were multi-lingual. Among the various languages spoken by participants, Urdu proved to be most popular with at least 3 in 4 participants (77%) indicating that they were able to speak the language. Other languages spoken by participants included Punjabi (63%), Cantonese (17%), Hakka (13%) and Hindi (7%).

The figure below (Figure 4) shows that the community participants tended to come from fairly large households.

**FIGURE 4: HOUSEHOLD SIZE OF COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS**



Although the average ethnic minority household size for Glasgow as a whole is 3.5 persons rising to 4.4 for the Pakistani community (Dalton and Hampton, 1996), over half the participants (53.4%) in the community sample belonged to households which comprised between 5-7 members and indeed, at least 4 respondents (13.3%) were from households which comprised more than 8 members. In keeping with the overall trend in Glasgow, most of those who belonged to larger households (approximately two thirds) were of Pakistani origin.

In terms of economic status, a large number of participants in this group (86.6%) indicated that their head of household was employed and, although about a quarter (23%) declined to provide information on the type of employment engaged in, it was clearly evident from the data collected that the majority were involved in fairly well paid jobs. It was possible to surmise for example, that in terms of the Registrar Generals Occupational Scale, at least 20% of the sampled participants fell into the social class 1 category and as many as 53% into social class 2.

The key findings in the following sections should be viewed against the background of the above profiles.

## THE KEY FINDINGS

The first Report (Walsh, Hampton and Bain, 1995) highlighted various pieces of research conducted in England (Vellins 1982, Bird et al, 1988; CRE, 1992; Panesar, 1995) which argued that despite their growing commitment to higher and further education, access is not always easy for ethnic minority communities and that ethnic minority students often face numerous barriers in this regard. The CRE (1992) for example, provided evidence to illustrate how some minority ethnic students have different and inferior experiences of higher education compared to their white peers. Further, Bird et al (1988) pointed out that the lack of appropriate student support mechanisms within higher education institutions often contributed to black students experiencing isolation not only within universities, but also within courses. One of the primary goals of this present research was to establish the extent to which the barriers identified in England, are similarly experienced by the Scottish ethnic minority population.

Consequently, the research addressed some of the key issues that affect access, as identified in the first Report, and focussed primarily on the following:

- \* the importance of higher education to ethnic minorities
- \* access to information on higher education and careers advice
- \* knowledge of enrolment procedures
- \* appropriate strategies for disseminating information on higher education
- \* access into universities and ethnic minority representation within higher education institutions
- \* choice of university and courses
- \* specific needs of ethnic minority students, particularly in terms of student support services
- \* experiences of racism and awareness of equal opportunities policies

## The Importance of Higher Education to Ethnic Minorities

Recent research in this area often discusses the desire and strong commitment by most ethnic minority communities to educate their children to allow them better access to jobs. While numerous researchers (Knox and Siann, 1990; Brennan and McGeever, 1990; Singh, 1990) have documented the importance that ethnic minority families attach to higher education and the relatively high educational aspirations among ethnic groups, others (Taylor, 1976; Hamilton, 1994) provided evidence to support the view that certain ethnic groups are substantially more likely than their white counterparts to pursue higher education after leaving school.

The empirical survey gathered considerable evidence to confirm the notion that ethnic minority communities attach a significant degree of importance to higher education. For example, more than two thirds (69%) of the community sample indicated that their household head possessed a higher or further education qualification and the majority (96.7%) discussed the value of higher education qualifications at great length. In particular, Table 3 shows that many community participants (60%) believed that higher education was especially crucial in terms of job and career prospects while the rest (40%) believed that higher education qualifications lead to a better quality of life, heightened status and a privileged position in society.

TABLE 3: WHY HIGHER EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT:  
COMMUNITY SAMPLE

Reasons	Number	%
Better jobs/career prospects	18	60
Better quality of life	7	23.3
Status/esteem	3	10
Personal fulfillment	2	6.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>

During the discussions, specific comments were made by *members of the community* to emphasise the importance of higher education. These included, for example:

"... higher education is essential to make the best of opportunities available, it can give you a better future..."

"... it prepares you for later life, helps one mature personally..."

"...quality of life is better...education for children is very necessary..."

"...speaking from a black perspective, to be competitive we have to be more than qualified to get a job..."

"...better start in life...good for self esteem...helps get you a better job..."

"...foreigners find it difficult enough to find a job therefore with a degree it is easier to find a job..."

"...more opportunities for jobs, more chance of having a good lifestyle. Status and recognition linked to having a degree..."

Likewise, approximately two thirds (61.6%) of the student sample also cited similar reasons for pursuing higher education and typical comments made by *students* in this regard included, for example:

"...felt (I) needed to go to university in order to get good career and good job later... always thought that I would be going to university..."

"... wanted to better myself, a lot of ethnic people tend to be confined to shops. A lot of parent pressure as well...they encourage you to do well. A lot of them were poor when they were brought up so want their children to have a better life..."

"...older brothers (are) all academics. Mother would like me to follow in footsteps. Want to educate myself and better (my) employment prospects..."

"...better chance of a job. Rest of family are in higher education so it would be expected..."

"...people (community and family) look up to you if you are at university rather than work, especially if you are just nineteen..."

"... to get a decent job, can't without a degree..."

The pupils also held similar opinions regarding the importance of higher education and the overwhelming majority (93.3%) indicated that they would like to go to university after completing secondary school, mainly because they felt that this was expected of them by their parents (73.9%).

More than two thirds (69.5%) mentioned that they were advised by their parents that higher education was essential for obtaining better jobs. Judging by certain comments made by the pupils, it became apparent that many parents encouraged and indeed, expected their children to go into higher education. Typical comments made by *pupils* included:

"...so I can become a doctor and also because of parents...mum tells me that if you leave school and do not get a higher degree then you have problems in life. Since I was little I was given examples of people who are struggling, so I thought that I will go to university..."

"... (will) make parents happy and I want to have a good future and to be recognised as someone who has a good job and reputation..."

"...want to do something academic, I want a degree, I always wanted it as far as I can remember. Parents did influence me and advised me on how useful it would be to make money..."

"...want to study, my choice in life but parents want and expect me to go. It will be bad news if I don't get in..."

"... my mum wanted to be primary school teacher, her parents did not allow her, so she encouraged me to realise my dream..."

"...good status, relatives have studied and parents expect me to follow the good example..."

"...just want to get the best education I can to get a good job. Was encouraged by parents, so that I can do better than them really..."

#### Access to Information on Higher Education and Careers Advice

Limited access to relevant information on higher education is frequently mentioned as one of the many barriers confronting ethnic minority communities in terms of higher education (Bird et al, 1988; Panesar, 1995). In this regard, the findings revealed that certain sectors of the population, especially older members who have not studied through the British system and individuals who experience language difficulties, are most disadvantaged in terms of access to information on higher education. Indeed, at least 1 in 5 community participants pointed out that age, ethnic

**background, language barriers and inadequate or inappropriate information in particular** contributes to difficulties in terms of accessing relevant information. *Community members'* discussions on this issue included comments such as :

"...children at school do not have a problem, but for people who are not studying currently and are not in touch with education it is difficult..."

"...depends on background: age; environment...ie, pupils already in educational institutions would know how to go about it whereas others might not. Depends on educational level ie, whether or not you have been through the system before..."

"...people don't know about systems. The procedures are not straightforward and simplistic. The procedure does not encourage you to talk to tutors and professors, although when I made contact with the professor he was helpful. But how do you break down the barrier first? I needed more support..."

"...own personal experience is that I didn't have sufficient information and advise on what was available and what I could do. It was just like hit or miss. It wasn't through informed choice or information..."

"...not if they are in school but yes if they are outwith the educational system. it also depends on age, older people may have problems getting information..."

"...they (universities) have no focal points for information, for example, they (the community) do not know where to go for the information and end up going, for example, to organisations like the CRC for information..."

Nevertheless, about a third (36.6%) of the community sample indicated that they had personally approached the universities for information and advice in the past, as they felt that it was most appropriate to contact the main source of information directly.

Likewise, at least 2 in 3 *pupils* (66.6%) also held similar views regarding access to information about universities and higher education:

"...quite hard for them, Dad was born in India, so very difficult for those not educated in Scotland, don't know where to go for information..."

"...language would be a big problem, if not born here. Most people speak in mother tongue, will not know where to go or be able to read material..."

"...harder if not in school, don't know how they would find out..."

"...not that easy, would not know where to go..."

"...not very easy, don't know where to go except school..."

"...if not born here, bit difficult, will ask other people where to go..."

"...easy for us, harder for older Asians..."

The majority of the pupils indicated that they presently depend on family members (66.6%) and the school (33.3%) for information about universities and although most pupils had previously sought advice and information from family members (Table 4), a third (33.3%) felt that the advice received was inadequate.

**TABLE 4: SOURCE OF CAREERS ADVICE IN THE PAST: PUPIL SAMPLE**

Source of Advice	Number of Responses
Family/ Relatives	20
No One	7
Friends	4
Teachers	4
Careers Adviser	4
Careers Convention	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>41 *</b>

\* Pupils provided more than one source

When asked whom they would most likely approach for careers advice in the future, more than three quarters (76.6%) of the pupils indicated that they would approach the school (careers officer, adviser, guidance teacher). This was considered the most appropriate source of information and one that was most closely 'linked' to universities:

"...stick to guidance teacher because they know you personally and have the prospectus and information you need..."

"...school careers officer because they have more information..."

"...teacher/careers officer because they can sort out appointment or someone in the field ..."

"...teachers and school careers officers because they know how to get the stuff you need..."

Despite this reliance perceived experts, a notable proportion of the pupils mentioned that the information handed out at schools, especially prospectuses were usually out of date:

"...schools need to do more, get someone who is able to answer all questions, and give updated information like what is expected, what to read, different requirements..."

...school provides prospectuses... but not always up to date, someone from universities would be more useful and have updated information..."

Significantly, even though universities were recognised as the primary source of information, only 10% of the pupils felt that they could approach the universities directly. This was largely due to the fact that many pupils believed that it was more appropriate to go via the school as teachers and school careers advisers were often in a better position to secure appointments and obtain information more successfully.

Understandably, some pupils (33.3%) still saw the value of consulting with family members for advice and information as they believed that family members possessed first hand experience, having been through the system, and felt more comfortable consulting a familiar person:

"...parents... because you can talk freely with them, it is easier..."

...older brother because he has been to university and has experience and knows a lot..."

"...mum and friends because I have to take responsibility for my future, teachers don't seem to be interested and cannot provide me with the information I need, other friends from Hong Kong seem to have similar problems..."

"...my sister because she know better and is doing it herself, she will tell me all I need to know..."

Interestingly, students tended to be more positive about access to information and perceived fewer difficulties in this regard. The vast majority (80%) felt that the current education information services cater adequately for ethnic minority communities. *Students* generally believed that information on higher education was generally available for all and that most people are unlikely to experience any difficulties if the necessary effort was made to obtain the information:

"... everyone can send off for prospectuses, go to libraries or phone and find out about open days..."

" ...if someone wanted to find out more then the facilities are there..."

"...I never had problems in finding out what I was interested in finding out..."

Although the main sources of information regarding universities for most students had been schools (66.6%) and prospectuses (61.6%), a range of other sources including, for example, open days, visits to universities, local careers officers, advertisements, libraries and family members, were also mentioned as being useful (Table 5).

**TABLE 5: SOURCE OF INFORMATION REGARDING UNIVERSITIES: STUDENT SAMPLE**

Source of Information	Number of Responses *	% of Total Sample (n 60)
Schools	40	66.6
prospectus	37	61.6
Open Day	9	15
Universities	7	11.6
Careers Adviser	6	10
Advertisements	5	8.3
Libraries	5	8.3
Family/Friends	4	6.6
Careers Convention/Fair	3	5

\* Students provided more than one source

Despite their overall positive attitude regarding access to information, some students did feel that the existing information and higher education services were often not adequately advertised:

"...adequate information and help out there for those who want to look...but (universities) should emphasise services they provide..."

"...the services may be there but publicity about courses, entry, access trends etc are not readily available..."

"...there isn't anything specific, not active advertising..."

### Knowledge of Enrolment Procedures

Ethnic minorities' limited awareness of enrolment procedures and numerous difficulties encountered during this stage, was discussed as a potential barrier in Report 1. Although the findings of this survey did not uncover any direct indicators in this regard, there was nevertheless ample evidence to support the notion that individuals with limited experience within local higher education systems are likely to possess lower levels of awareness of enrolment procedures.

For example, despite the overwhelming majority of pupils (93.3%) who had a desire to pursue higher education, only one was confident about the procedures involved with applications to, and enrollment at, Universities. Similarly, whilst 4 (14.2%) pupils indicated that they had a "fair idea" the rest 23 (82.1%) indicated that had no idea of the procedures involved with enrolment at universities.

When asked how they intended to obtain information on enrollment procedures, most pupils indicated that they would ask around the school or seek family advice prior to enrolment:

"...school might let me know prior to highers..."

"...I'll ask my teacher and brothers..."

"...not really, will get guidance from school, but will go to sister if desperate..."

"...will go to parents, school, family when time is right..."

"...ask a guidance teacher eventually..."

As with the pupils, despite the large number (50%) of community

participants who have been through higher education institutions previously, more than a third (36.6%) most likely those who had not previously studied through the British system, indicated that they were unaware of the procedures involved in applying to or enrolling at Universities.

Interestingly, although the majority (91.7%) of the students indicated that they had not personally experienced any difficulties with admission and enrollment, at least a third (33.3%) pointed out that they too had not been fully aware of the admission and enrolment procedures prior to enrolment:

"...not told enough from the start...many don't realise what universities are about..."

"...did not know where to go initially..."

"...enrollment procedure can be very complicated, too much red tape...should improve this..."

Indeed, the vast majority (85%) of the students indicated that they no contact with the university prior to applying.

Given that schools are perceived as the main source of information, universities ought to consider strengthening their liaison with careers and guidance teachers to ensure that current, relevant and updated information is regularly passed on to pupils.

### Appropriate Strategies for Disseminating Information on Higher Education

The majority of the students and pupils thought that, in addition to the prospectuses, universities ought specifically to target the ethnic community in various ways. The strategies most frequently mentioned by students and pupils were as follows:

- \* Leaflets, posters and advertising in appropriate languages (students: 41.6%; pupils: 30%)
- \* Providing information via community/religious centres (students: 15%, pupils: 30%)
- \* Organising open days and presenting talks (students: 16.6%;

pupils: 50%)

- \* Providing positive role models (pupils: 10%)
- \* Providing updated information via careers officer/adviser at schools (pupils : 40%)

In addition, at least 25% of the students felt that *specific information* relevant to ethnic minorities should be included in student information packs including, for example:

- \* Lists of services/facilities that are available within universities for ethnic minority students
- \* Information on whom to contact/talk to regarding ethnic minority matters
- \* Information packs in different languages, where possible, for overseas and ethnic minority students
- \* Positive aspects about the university that would encourage ethnic minorities to apply

Further, over half the students (53.3%) felt that the existing prospectuses and information packs could be *improved* in various ways and, although many did not describe the manner in which this could be achieved, suggestions included:

- \* Additional details about courses and programmes
- \* Procedures could be explained better
- \* Additional information on further options
- \* The inclusion of aspects that may be of interest or concern ethnic minority students for example information on social clubs, cultural activities and religious facilities
- \* The inclusion of contact persons who will be able to answer questions regarding ethnic minority issues

### Access into Universities and Ethnic Minority Representation within Higher Education Institutions

Various education researchers (Singh, 1990; Taylor, 1992; Goulbourne and Lewis-Meeks, 1993; Modood and Shiner, 1994) have pointed out that the proportion of acceptances at higher education institutions is far lower than the proportion of applications from ethnic minority candidates and have argued that ethnic minority students are under-represented within higher education institutions.

Regarding this debate, Walsh, Hampton and Bain (1995: p 24) found the admission rate patterns in the West of Scotland to be somewhat different. The authors recorded that acceptance of ethnic minorities into universities varied according to ethnic origin and that, while the acceptance rates for black (African-Caribbean and African other) applicants were indeed, lower than any other ethnic group, the rates for the other ethnic groups were often higher than that of their white counterparts.

Consequently, given the small size of the black (African-Caribbean and African other) population in the West of Scotland, the admission statistics for 1994/1995 show that overall, more domiciled ethnic applicants than white had been successfully accepted into Universities in the West of Scotland. More specifically, regarding GCU rates, Walsh, Hampton and Bain (1995: p 2) pointed out also that, the university was performing fairly well in terms of its recruitment of ethnic minority students (5.3% of all registered full time students).

Despite these findings, most participants in the survey were inclined to agree with the earlier researchers that ethnic minorities, both in terms of staff and students, were generally under-represented in higher education institutions. The majority admitted, however, that their feelings in this regard were based on mere speculation and participants suggested that the access and progress of ethnic minority students needed to be systematically monitored to ensure that accurate information is available to all. They believed that this strategy would assist in highlighting any under-representation when it occurs thus enabling universities to take appropriate action to address the matter:

"... need accurate statistics to locate problems of racism etc that may be festering before things develop too far..." (community participant)

"...To monitor under-representation, imbalances, problems, needs of ethnic



students and implement equal opportunities..." (student)

"...they should monitor, what if students are dropping out, who will know? What are the reasons? is it because of Racism?..." (community participant)

"...in terms of equal opportunities and in terms of research, to create a picture of what is happening to ethnic minority students..." (community participant)

"... will give a clear picture would enable the universities to look at specific gaps in access and progression. This can only be recognised through monitoring..." (student)

"...they can then see the groups that are under represented and the courses that certain communities prefer..." (community participant)

When asked whether ethnic minorities experience greater difficulties than other groups in terms of gaining entry into universities, participants appeared to be divided in their opinions. Whilst the vast majority of students (93.3%) indicated that they had not personally experienced any difficulties in obtaining a place at university, more than half of the community participants (53.3%) and a little more than a quarter of the pupils (27.6%) felt that entry into universities was more problematic for ethnic minorities. They also added that the main difficulties perceived in terms of entry into universities were frequently related to racism and discrimination:

"... teachers can downgrade marks ie: indirect discrimination, some pupils feel that they are downgraded certain subjects..." (community participant)

"... there is racism, they say that they are refusing you on grades, but it is really your colour, happened to my friend, know it is happening a lot..." (pupil)

"...there is a problem even before qualification. If the qualifications are correct there could be the issues of racism, for instance two people, one white, one black applies, who is likely to get the place in University?..." (community participant)

"...bit more difficult, sister had difficulties because she is ethnic minority..." (Pupil)

"...more difficult for us because of our skin colour, I hear that they look at names and exclude us..." (pupil)

To an extent, the above findings suggest, that certain members of ethnic communities, especially those with limited personal experience of local universities, appear to hold negative images of higher education institutions. The issue of image is an important aspect of themselves where universities ought to consider developing more concerted strategies to encourage ethnic minority participation.

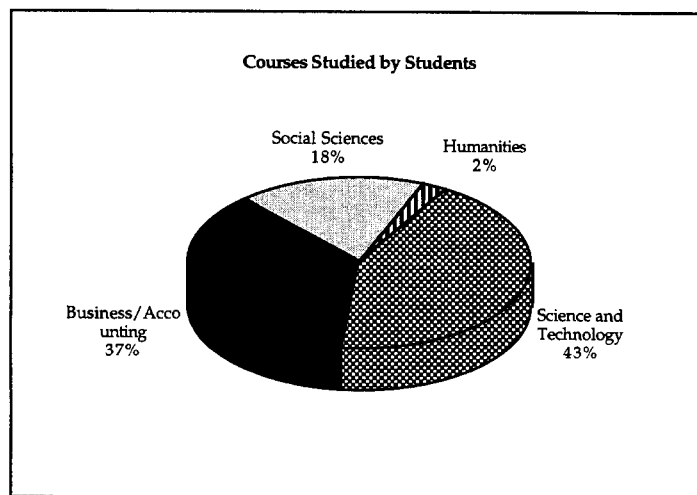
### Choice of Courses and Universities

In terms of the choice of courses or preferred courses, the findings of this study are similar to those documented previously in England (Hamilton, 1994; Goulbourne and Lewis-Meeks, 1993; Singh, 1990). This survey confirmed the view that ethnic minorities are not evenly distributed across all types of courses in higher education institutions and that the majority of Asians, in particular are attracted to Science, Business and Medical courses.

For example in the community sample, 93.3% of those possessing higher education qualifications indicated that they had graduated either in Science (57.1%) or Business/Accountancy (35.7%). Similarly, half (50%) the pupils who planned to attend higher education institutions indicated a desire to pursue degrees in the Sciences, mainly Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy, Bio-chemistry and Optometry.

Likewise, **Figure 5** shows that the majority of the students interviewed were studying either Science and Business course while relatively smaller numbers by comparison were enrolled in the Social Sciences and Humanities.

FIGURE 5: COURSES CURRENTLY STUDIED BY STUDENTS



\* Due to rounding, figure does not add up to exactly 100%.

However, unlike previous research findings (Singh, 1990; Siann, 1990) where cultural or race related reasons were attached to ethnic minority course choices, this study found that the majority of the students (73.3%) and pupils (50%) had chosen or were planning to pursue certain courses because they found it "easy to cope with", "interesting" or "enjoyable". Nonetheless, a notable proportion of pupils (39.2%) in particular, indicated that their choice of subjects and proposed courses was to an extent, influenced by the advice received from parents and family members. Comments on choice of courses included, for example:

"...electrical engineering: I like technical stuff and working with my hands..." (pupil)

"...primary school teaching: like to work with kids: parents encourage me, a lot of Asians do higher and get married, but I would like to make something of my life..." (pupil)

"...wanted to do since school, leads to a job, sounded interesting..." (student)

"...medicine/pharmacy: interested in the sciences; parents quite happy with my choice..." (pupil)

"...Interested in the course, done part at school and quite enjoyed it. Seemed more interesting than anything else..." (student)

"...Accountant; Good wages, easier to get a job, like it..." (pupil)

"... Interested in subject at school, enjoyed it, good at math, best subject..." (student)

"... quite liked it at school, find it interesting..." (student)

As with the Jewson et al (1991) study, data relating to the choice of universities indicated that ethnic minorities are more likely to apply to local universities as many indicated a desire to remain close to home. For example, as many as 82.1% of the pupils who wish to attend universities mentioned that they intend applying to local ones. Indeed, whilst a substantial number of pupils indicated that they would apply to more than one University in the West of Scotland, at least half (50%) planned to apply to Glasgow University in particular as they believed it offered the courses they intended pursuing and because of its close proximity to their home:

"...Glasgow University is the best and I live in Glasgow and want to remain here..." (pupil)

"...Strathclyde/Glasgow University because brother and sister are there and I want to stay with family..." (pupil)

"...depends on the courses available, but will apply locally... prefer to stay close to home..." (pupil)

"...Somewhere in Scotland, parents won't let me go too far, Strathclyde or Glasgow..." (pupil)

Similarly, while 41.7% of the students indicated that they had applied to more than three universities and the majority had applied to universities within the West of Scotland (Table 6).

**TABLE 6: UNIVERSITIES TO WHICH STUDENTS HAD APPLIED**

Universities	Number of Students	% of Total Sample (n 60)
Glasgow Caledonian	32	53.3
Strathclyde	30	50
Glasgow	27	45
Paisley	14	23.3
Other	33	55

Although a range of reasons was provided by students, for preferring local universities, it was evident that the majority wished to remain close to family and friends and indeed many (*students*) mentioned that their parents would not be keen to let them to move away from home :

"...knew people and people said it was quite good. Wanted to remain in Glasgow, scared of moving away, want to stay close to family and friends..."

"...didn't think I was clever enough for Glasgow so applied for places with low entrance requirements. Preferred to stay in Glasgow, parents wouldn't have liked it if I moved out..."

"... near, in city, parents not happy if went away. Preferred to stay here, miss family and friends and big adjustment in 1st year..."

"...because of course and in Glasgow. Wanted to stay because of family and friends..."

"...convenient, live in Glasgow. Wanted to move away but not allowed by parents. Don't really regret it. Went to Napier to start but got transferred, didn't like people etc..."

It was interesting to note that although most community participants had attained their higher education qualification at institutions outside Britain, a substantial number (40%) had, in addition, attended higher education institutions in Britain and all chose to study at universities closer to their home mainly because of family ties and obligations.

**Specific Needs of Ethnic Minority Students: Particularly in Terms of Students Support Services**

Previous research findings (Bird et al, 1988; Vellins, 1982) argued that ethnic minority students tend to experience isolation and other difficulties within higher education institutions due to a lack of relevant student support services. Although there was little evidence to support the notion of student isolation in Glasgow, there was nonetheless some evidence to suggest that ethnic minority students desired certain services to support their particular religious and cultural needs. The discussion that follows is based on Student and Community responses only.

At least 70% of the community sample believed that ethnic minority students have specific religious and cultural needs which universities ought to consider in terms of student support services. In particular, respondents in the community sample felt that most ethnic minority students, especially Muslims, needed prayer facilities (rooms) and appropriate (halal/vegetarian) food (Table 7).

**TABLE 7: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES REQUIRED: COMMUNITY SAMPLE**

Support Services *	% of Total Sample (n 60)
Prayer Rooms	30
Halal Food	30
Flexibility in Timetables	20
Separate Social Facilities	13.3
Language Support	13.3
Provision of Religious Education	10
Black Role Models	6.6
Financial Support	3.3

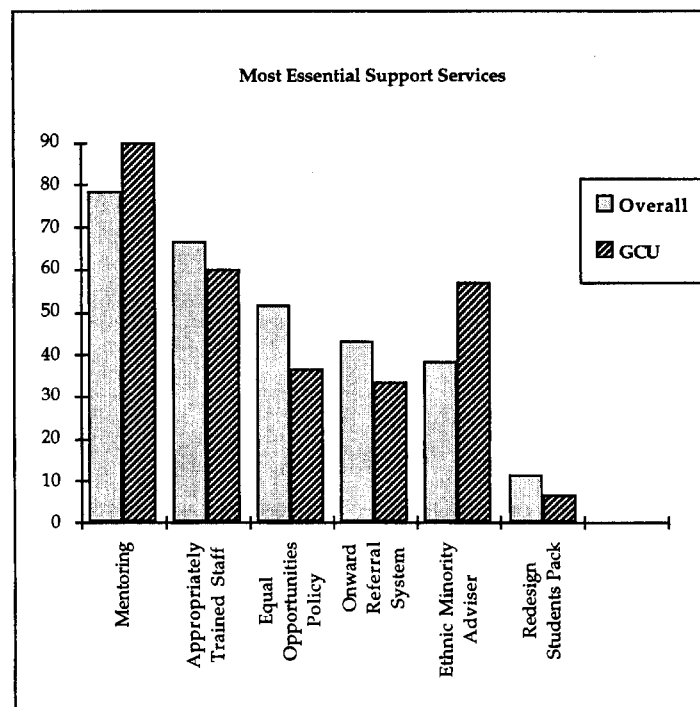
\* Participants mentioned more than one service

Similarly, in terms of services required, almost half the students (Overall: 43.3% ; GCU: 46.6%) mentioned prayer facilities and appropriate food (Overall:

18.3% ; GCU: 23.3%). In addition, students also mentioned appropriately trained staff and student counsellors, mentoring schemes, language support, support with handling racism and discrimination and separate sport/social facilities.

More specifically, Figure 6 lists the services rated as most essential, by students.

**FIGURE 6 : MOST ESSENTIAL STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES: STUDENT SAMPLE**



The above Figure show that the three services regarded as most essential by students at GCU were mentoring (90%), appropriately trained staff (60%) and ethnic minority advisers (56.6%).

### Experiences of Racism and Awareness of Equal Opportunities Policies

Throughout the literature survey for this report, racism and discrimination were cited as fundamental barriers confronting ethnic minorities in terms of access to higher education. The evidence in this survey, revealed that, although these concerns were mentioned by some participants, particularly pupils and members of the community, overall fewer students by comparison, discussed personal experiences of discrimination.

Only 13.3% (GCU: 20%) of the *students* interviewed mentioned and discussed experiences of racial harassment, mainly indirect:

“...name calling, rare but still insulting...”

“...not overt, but is very strong in terms of slogans in toilets, peoples reaction in terms of attitude and behaviour, some staff have preconceived ideas...need to educate them accordingly...”

“...politics lecturer did not like ...aggressive manner, felt that I was being harassed so stopped attending lectures and had to manage with seminar group only...would be useful to have an unbiased person whom you can talk to about such feelings...”

“...was the only Asian throughout the four years as all the others left...did not feel comfortable with the lecturer...ignored us and did not give us any help...spoke to lecturer concerned who claimed it was a misunderstanding...”

Nonetheless, about 40% of the respondents in the community sample described personal experiences of racism and discrimination (both direct: 16.6% and indirect: 83.3%) in terms of higher education. Numerous pupils also made references to racism especially in terms of getting into universities (53.3%) and with regard to problems they foresee in terms of fulfilling their future aspirations (10%). The following are some examples of comments made by pupils and community participants:

“...maybe harder for me because of racism, hear about it all the time...” (pupil)

“...son goes to ..., he was chased by someone with an axe and wanted to change university, the university is not giving him information on how to change...” (community participant)

"...very subtle form of racism and discrimination, very difficult to challenge, for example, no positive feedback and support ..." **(community participant)**

"... not overt discrimination but access has been affected. i have not been able to attend various meetings held in certain places (pubs, union halls) or because they were held too late..." **(community participant)**

"...always thought there would be problems, more difficult for us because of our skin colour..." **(pupil)**

Although most participants in this survey, appear not to have experienced much overt racism or discrimination in higher education, it is dangerous to assume that these do not occur as often individuals are reluctant to discuss such sensitive matters, fearing victimisation. In this regard, the importance of systematic monitoring and adequate equal opportunities policies within higher education institutions is most essential. Interestingly, as many as 80% (GCU: 70%; Other Universities: 90%) of the students indicated that they had no knowledge of their university's equal opportunities policy nor of whom to approach for assistance and advice in cases of harassment. A clear indication of the need for universities to address this issue as a priority.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- \* Report One confirmed the researchers suspicions that documented evidence relating especially to ethnic minorities and higher education is fragmented and incomplete. In particular, comparative regional research or specific Scottish studies, both qualitative and quantitative, were notably scarce. Walsh, Hampton and Bain (1995) recorded that in the West of Scotland, the individual higher education institutions had only recently began to consider the systematic collection and monitoring of ethnic data.
- \* The researchers concluded that although, certain fundamental issues regarding ethnic minority experiences, for example, matters relating to equal opportunities, course selection and poor job prospects, can remain consistent, on the whole the experiences documented in England could not be accepted as necessarily relevant for the Scottish student population. This view was linked to the nature and distribution of the Scottish ethnic population which is essentially different from that of the English.
- \* The empirical survey gathered substantial evidence to confirm the notion that ethnic minority communities do indeed attach a significant degree of importance to higher education. The vast majority specifically emphasised the value of higher education qualifications in terms of obtaining jobs and better career prospects, a reasonable quality of life and a position of heightened status and privilege in society.
- \* Regarding access to relevant information on higher education, it was evident that certain sectors of the population, in particular older members of the community, those who have not studied through the British system previously and individuals who experienced language difficulties were most disadvantaged. Indeed, at least 1 in 5 community participants specifically mentioned that age, ethnic background, language barriers and inadequate or inappropriate information contributed significantly to difficulties in terms of accessing relevant information.

- \* Schools and prospectuses were regarded as the main sources of information and, overall, certain students believed that the information on higher education and services within universities were not adequately marketed and publicised to ethnic minorities.
- \* The survey uncovered evidence to suggest that individuals with limited experience within local higher education systems had lower levels of awareness of enrolment procedures. In this study pupils in particular were most uninformed about the procedures involved.
- \* Despite the overall high acceptance rates of ethnic minorities within West of Scotland Universities, most participants in the survey were inclined to believe that ethnic minorities, both in terms of staff and students, were generally under-represented in higher education institutions. The majority did, however, admit that their feelings were not based on any known statistics, but rather on speculation.
- \* Most participants felt that the access and progress of ethnic minority students needed to be systematically monitored to ensure the availability of accurate information. Many believed that this strategy would assist in highlighting under-representation, where it occurs thus enabling universities to take appropriate action to address discrepancies.
- \* In terms of the choice of programmes or preferred courses, the findings of this survey support the view that ethnic minorities are not evenly distributed across all types of courses in higher education institutions and that the majority of Asians, in particular, are attracted to Science, Business and Medical courses.
- \* However, unlike previous research where cultural or race related reasons were attached to ethnic minority course choices, this study found that the majority of the participants preferred certain courses because they found them "*easy to cope with*", "*interesting*" and "*enjoyable*".
- \* Data relating to the choice of universities revealed that ethnic minorities are more likely to apply to local universities as many indicated a desire to remain close to home (Jewson et al, 1991).

- \* There was ample evidence to suggest that ethnic minority students desired certain services to support their particular religious and cultural needs. In particular, participants felt that most ethnic minority students, especially Muslims, needed prayer facilities and culturally appropriate food. More specifically, the three services regarded as most essential by students at GCU were mentoring, appropriately trained staff and ethnic minority advisers.
- \* Although concerns relating to racism and discrimination in terms of higher education were mentioned by some participants, especially pupils and members of the community, very few students discussed personal experiences of discrimination. It is, however, dangerous to assume that these do not occur, as often individuals are reluctant to discuss such sensitive matters.
- \* In this regard the importance of systematic monitoring and adequate equal opportunities policies within higher education institutions, is most essential. Yet interestingly, the vast majority of students (80%: GCU: 70%; Other Universities: 90%) indicated that they had no knowledge of their own universities' equal opportunities policy nor of whom to approach for assistance in cases of harassment.

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The development of student support services is a strategic goal of GCU and the needs of various sectors (for example; gender, ethnicity, disability, age) of the student population are regularly evaluated using a range of measures. Because of the diversity of the student profile and to avoid marginalising or stigmatising groups within the student population, the University aims to provide services in an integrated manner, and as part of mainstream guidance provision. The development of an educational guidance policy, informed by this project, is a medium term goal of the University as part of its Learning and Teaching strategy. This project was designed to test whether or not distinct and specialist provision was more appropriate for ethnic minority students. The project highlighted various practical concerns which are especially relevant to ethnic minorities, for example, prayer facilities, appropriate food and language support, which have to an extent, been considered and addressed by the University. The rest of this section discusses longer to medium term policy implications for GCU.

### **Policy and Practice for Student Support Services**

The recruitment of ethnic minority staff to work as specialist student advisers is no longer seen as priority. What the project has indicated is a clear need for training and awareness-raising amongst all staff, teaching, administration and support, so that more appropriate support, understanding and referral is available. In addition, the University may consider some specialist support by an ethnic minority adviser in its Department of Student Services but appropriately trained staff at the point of delivery is a greater priority.

Several practical aspects of support for ethnic minority students have emerged, which have led to improvements in the provision of prayer facilities for Muslim students, the development of integrated sports provision for Muslim women, a review of language support and active consideration of the range of food available through University outlets.

The project has re-inforced the view that the development of mentoring schemes, particularly in relation to role models and support through potential employers, should be a priority for the University's Careers Service. The importance of graduate profiling to include information on employment of students by ethnicity has been underlined and will be taken up by the Careers Service in relation to HESA and other Statistical returns. (The monitoring of

staff applicants in terms of gender and ethnicity has been up and running since 1992).

### **Equal Opportunities Policy and Implementation**

There are strong messages for the University in relation to equal opportunities policy and implementation. It is clear that, although many policies and procedures are in place, including one on harassment, ethnic minority students are unaware of where and how they can find assistance. The University is reviewing all of its student-orientated publications and staff information to ensure that such signposting for ethnic minority students is clear. University restructuring, planned for implementation in 1997/98, will establish a cross-university forum on recruitment and retention of students which will allow for implementation of the findings of this project in relation to University printed and other information materials. The University is also addressing this issue through the development of a training programme for Academic Advisers based on the new training programme for harassment advisers.

In line with the general implications of the research this will be done as part of mainstream training and publication, not as separate or specialist activity.

### **Conclusion**

The University will continue to work towards removing or reducing barriers to access to higher education for ethnic minority students. This project has indicated that these barriers are somewhat different from those which had been assumed in some quarters and, in many cases, are not as great as elsewhere. However, there is certainly no case for complacency. What the project has also demonstrated is that there is still a significant gap between the needs and expectations of ethnic minority students and how these are currently being met.

The gap can be reduced through the development and implementation of comprehensive guidance, equal opportunities and monitoring policies and strategies and it is hoped that doing so will contribute towards increasing the representation of Scottish ethnic minority students in higher education.

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