



Tackling racial harassment: Case studies

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University Diversity Fund

University of Cambridge

Created with support from the vice-chancellor, the University Diversity Fund (UDF) was launched in spring 2019 to fund projects that aim to address inequalities. **The UDF aims to empower bottom-up local initiatives, and is based on the premise that addressing inequalities cannot be driven solely by top-down effort.** To be successful, initiatives need to be underpinned by local knowledge of issues and what may work in specific circumstances.

The call for applications had a strong focus on submissions that would tackle racism. The equality and diversity (E&D) section is conscious that discussion of race and racism needs to be incorporated into workplace and classroom discussions to empower staff and students to challenge racism. The first UDF round received 13 successful applications, including several related to race.

The UDF is managed by the E&D section and involves:

- supporting an annual call for applications from staff and students
- setting up an independent selection panel
- evaluating submissions
- supporting fund recipients throughout the project cycle.

Close collaboration with UDF project leads is required to identify any issues that might lead to difficulties in fulfilling the project aims. It can also be challenging to ensure that the positive outcomes of the projects are widely communicated and embedded across the university. To that end, the E&D section has run an event inviting project leads to discuss their initiatives, and two case studies were published on the university website. The E&D section continues to promote wide recognition of the projects throughout the year

Some highlights from the 2019 round include:

- embedding results into departmental policies to achieve a lasting legacy
- changing people's attitudes towards having difficult conversations
- creating recommendations and guidelines for wider university institutions (see also 'Anti-racism in pedagogy workshop' below).

Learning points

Have a clear communication strategy in the run-up to the application deadline, and throughout the project cycle.

Ensure project leads are supported, including creating spaces for them to network.

Anti-racism in pedagogy workshop

University of Cambridge

This case study focuses on one successful UDF project (see ‘University Diversity Fund’ on page 3), a one-day workshop, called ‘Anti-racist education: history, theory, practice’. This was led by academics from the faculties of education and history. **The workshop’s aims included raising awareness of the history, theory and practice of anti-racist education in Britain**, sharing insights and tools for implementing anti-racist pedagogy, including the emergence of similar initiatives in contemporary higher education, and developing anti-racist curricula content and teaching approaches within departments. The workshop has contributed to the development of teaching and pedagogy that challenges conscious and subconscious forms of racism.

The data gathered from the university’s Race Equality Charter (REC) surveys showed that diversity of curriculum was important to students, and that they noticed the absence of discussion of issues of race and racism (both historical and contemporary) within their everyday teaching and learning experiences.

A challenge in delivering the workshop was ensuring the participation of senior and influential colleagues in the area of teaching and learning. Evaluation suggests that more targeted emails, as well as a longer lead-in time, would be needed to maximise senior leadership attendance,

The impact of the workshop was measured through a survey six months after the event, which was distributed to all 22 attendees (nine responses were returned). Impacts included raising awareness among participants of how racism can operate in universities. Respondents also appreciated the opportunity to discuss issues with colleagues from across the university, and over 60% of them have shared learning from the workshop informally in conversations.

Answers to the survey question, ‘Since the workshop, have you made use of any insights from the day in your role?’ included:

- *increased emphasis that we need to continue conversations and discussions – less fear about continuing the conversation.*
- *I have felt empowered to use the term anti-racism and to stress the need to be actively anti-racist in my discussions with others.*

Establishing the Office for Institutional Equity University of East London

The University of East London (UEL) became the first UK university to establish an Office of Institutional Equity (OIE) in October 2019. The OIE has specific responsibility for addressing inequalities within the institution by creating sustainable cultural changes that will have a positive impact on the university community. **The goal is to create a culture and environment where institutional equity is embedded into the hearts and minds of every individual and is automatically considered in everything that is done.**

Because equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are central to the university's 10-year strategic plan, responsibility for EDI was shifted from the human resources department to the office of the vice-chancellor and president to form OIE. This ensures that its profile and presence are central to all decision-making. There is representation from the dean of the OIE at senior leadership level and all executive board meetings, as well as the relevant governor meetings. This representation is important for setting the strategic direction of EDI across the university: equality is embedded in initiatives and projects that are approved at senior level and not 'bolted on' as an afterthought.

The UEL was rated at the top of The Times Global Impact Rankings 2020 for reducing inequalities in the UK (and came second globally to RMIT University). This provided the audit, benchmark and renewed focus for continuing development.

Although the OIE has the remit to address inequalities across the institution, arguably the most significant is the degree-award gap. Across the sector, white students are awarded good degrees (1st or a 2:1) at a higher rate of 13.2% compared to Black and minority ethnic students.¹ The OIE has been focusing work on this area and has developed an institution-wide operational plan to close the gap. Senior leadership ensures buy-in from all staff, and management is held accountable. Having a dedicated team to deliver the equalities agenda means that EDI is recognised as a priority across the institution.

Providing senior leadership on addressing harassment University of London

The University of London (UoL) is a federation of 17 independent member institutions, ranging from larger universities such as University College London to smaller specialised institutions such as the Royal Academy of Music.

In May 2020, senior representatives of these member institutions agreed on a federal approach to meeting a number of the recommendations of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) 2019 inquiry into racial harassment, with the goal of developing cohesive practices, simplifying reporting and promoting confidence in the institution's collective response to racial harassment. **The subsequent UoL project aims to promote a more consistent approach to addressing harassment.**

The initiative will address harassment in respect of all the protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, but racial harassment will be a particular focus in recognition of the recent Black Lives Matter protests that have highlighted the prevalence of racism here in the UK and around the globe.

The six key objectives are:

- Develop standards in respect of student and staff complaints procedures that can be adapted by member institutions to ensure prompt and robust investigations.
- Provide clarity on the details that can be shared with reporting parties without breaching confidentiality or duty of care.
- Establish a central resource of support services across Greater London.
- Identify effective training on the investigation of complex complaints to develop skills and build confidence in processes.
- Consider the potential benefits of retaining expert external agencies to investigate the most serious complaints.
- Develop a protocol for responding to complaints involving geographically co-located institutions.

As an initial step, member institutions are completing a survey describing their approach to addressing harassment. Responses to this survey will provide a detailed understanding of the actions currently being taken across the UoL federation, and identify opportunities for joint working, simplifying reporting and consistency in the investigation of complaints.

It will be important to ensure that approaches will work within the unique setting and framework of each member institution, and enable meaningful consultation with relevant stakeholders without losing the overall momentum of the initiative. The UoL is committed to working with members and subject matter experts to develop standard practices and shared resources for a launch before the academic year 2021–22, although it is hoped that a number of the objectives will be achieved before that deadline.

Co-creating solutions

Norwich Medical School at University of East Anglia

In order to address the well-evidenced issue of differential attainment among Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students,² and to respond to the racial harassment and microaggressions experienced by students, Norwich Medical School took action. **An opening event in 2019 discussed differential attainment and gave students the platform to share their experiences. The event generated a shared set of priorities of work for the school to address**, including the launch of a school-wide staff and student BAME working group.

Two projects were identified as priorities:

- BAME mentoring scheme for junior medical students from a BAME background
- bystander intervention training.

These projects were led by Norwich Medical School's lead for diversity and inclusion, and assisted by the employment of two medical students as BAME ambassadors. The BAME ambassador scheme was funded by the students' union to tackle the attainment gap, with an explicit intention to pay for the expertise of BAME students. The ambassadors worked on co-creating these two projects.

The BAME mentoring scheme pairs first- and second-year medical students with senior medical students from a BAME background to provide them with one-to-one academic support, as well as a safe space in which to discuss their experiences. This will be an invaluable opportunity for mentors and mentees to gain valuable transferable skills, develop confidence and spotlight key role models to junior medical students. Current, the school plans to implement the scheme in the 2020–21 academic year.

Bystander intervention training will be taught alongside consultation skills on medical degree and physician associate courses. Role play is used to teach students key skills for patient consultations, while also allowing students to practice facing more challenging situations. This provides students with a safe environment in which to learn how to intervene as an active bystander in situations of racial harassment. Training will be rolled out to all students and staff.

The main challenge in setting up these initiatives was time. The ambassadors were full-time, fourth-year medical students with ongoing academic studies. This was overcome by having the dedicated time of the diversity and inclusion lead, and collaboration with the BAME working group.

The success of the initiative is helped enormously by senior management commitment. There are plans to evaluate the impact over the next year and beyond, as well as writing up and disseminating the process and initiatives to achieve wider reach.

Learning points

Ensure you co-create projects with staff and students.

Ensure BAME voices are at the centre of all decisions and developments.

Gain senior management buy-in.

Create a diversity and inclusion lead to demonstrate true commitment to the issues.

Pay for expertise where possible.

Don't do more 'finding out' research, take action.

Slavery, abolition and the University of Glasgow

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the University of Glasgow played a leading role in the abolitionist movement to end slavery. However, at the same time, our predecessors accepted gifts and bequests from people whose wealth was derived, wholly or in part, from slavery.

To help redress this historical failure to live by our values, the university commissioned and published a report into its historical links to slavery, quantifying the university's financial gains from links to slavery and focusing on a robust nine-point reparative justice programme.

For some, the 2018 report, *Slavery, Abolition and the University of Glasgow*,³ made uncomfortable reading. Many groups wanted us to go further. Some felt we had done too much. It could have been a public relations disaster. We chose to be open and honest and to show willing to do more than say 'sorry'. This approach, led by our senior team, kept a sustainable reparative justice programme at its heart, allowing us to own our history with integrity and to plot a positive way forward.

Since the report was published, the university has:

- established, in partnership with University of the West Indies, the Glasgow-Caribbean Centre for Development Research
- committed to raising and spending £20 million over 10 years on the project
- created UK BAME student scholarships
- named a new building in honour of James McCune-Smith, a 19th century alumnus, born into slavery who went on to become the first African American in the world to be awarded a medical degree
- held exhibitions and lectures, and erected a prominently placed plaque in our grounds, recognising the money we have received indirectly from slavery.

Glasgow became the first in the UK to join the global Universities Studying Slavery (USS) network and the research team has to date supported five other UK universities to conduct similar studies. Glasgow has been lauded as a leader, taking a brave yet correct step to both atone for the past, but more importantly to create links and programmes that will be of future benefit. In an Economist article on UK universities and historic slavery, Dr David Duncan, our Chief Operations Officer, when asked why we had launched this project, said: "This was the right thing to do".

Race equality strategy and action plan

University of Sheffield

The University of Sheffield launched its race equality strategy and action plan in March 2019, recognising that in order to prevent and respond to incidents of racial harassment, a number of different initiatives have to work in coordination.

This strategy has five overarching aims, one of which is to ‘create an inclusive campus culture that facilitates belonging and promotes respect for BAME students and staff, and the wider BAME community’.

The strategy is overseen by a race equality steering group, with membership from the students’ union, academics, BAME staff network committee members, the BME students’ society, human resources, security, student recruitment and admissions, the strategic change office and student welfare services. The group oversees the work involved in delivering the strategy to ensure that it is embedded within every aspect of the university’s work as mainstream and business as usual.

Actions that have been implemented to address racial harassment include:

- Report + Support, an online tool to help staff, students and external visitors notify the university of incidents of harassment and to access help
- full-day introduction to race equality workshops for senior staff and those in critical roles, with over 130 staff having attended to date
- three-phase race-awareness session for first-year students (see ‘Race equality awareness training’ below)
- creating modern and effective equality, diversity and inclusion training for staff
- implicit bias training in key areas, such as decision-making panels.

Success is measured by tracking incidents of racial harassment to see whether there is a pattern or a particular area that requires further intervention. Numbers of staff undertaking race equality training, including in-person training, as well as the number of students engaging in race equality awareness sessions, are also monitored, as is qualitative feedback received from stakeholders.

Learning points

Tackling racial harassment is a long-term, collaborative and extensive task. It involves bringing together multiple stakeholders.

Have a plan that outlines success factors.

Convert these success factors into actions that can be worked on.

Identify resources, risks, assumptions and dependencies that are associated with the plan.

Don’t be afraid to challenge and be challenged: a university is a place where people, thoughts and ideas come together to seek the truth and do what is right.

Embrace this as a learning opportunity that will go beyond just tackling incidents of racial harassment.

Race equality awareness training

University of Sheffield

The University of Sheffield piloted its first institution-wide student anti-racism training programme in September 2019. The programme, peer led by student race equality champions reached 6,000 new students, receiving outstanding positive feedback.

This was implemented as an element of the university's race equality strategy and action plan (see 'Race equality strategy and action plan' on page 9), which has identified culture change as a key factor in closing the attainment gap.

The race equality awareness and training working group consists of cross-departmental members of the university, the students' union and students. A three-phase approach to training was designed through detailed research, insight and continued engagement with the BAME student community.

Key concepts of the training were:

- bystander intervention
- decolonising and diversifying our curriculum
- microaggressions
- white privilege

Students viewed a race equality awareness video during welcome talks. They were then invited to a 50-minute lecture delivered by the champions, which was built into their departmental introductory programmes, to expand on key concepts. Finally, race conversations were held in university accommodation. These interactive workshops were facilitated by the champions.

The costs involved were the salaries of champions, video production and workshop materials.

Some challenges included the role of the champions being misrepresented in the media. The corporate communications team prepared a detailed press release that clarified their role. The university is currently creating a mini-site with detailed information about the programme. Some students, particularly white students, were initially defensive, but understood the rationale of the initiative after attending the programme.

Feedback from the race equality lectures showed clear understanding from participants, with 85% more confident in their understanding of racism and microaggressions, and 82% more confident in challenging and reporting racism and discrimination.

Feedback from the race conversations had to be halted due to the Covid-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, but 100 sessions were held in two weeks. Initial feedback suggests that the workshops enabled students to have more proactive discussions about racism, with an increased understanding of issues of racism. Nearly 86% of students said they would know where to access support if someone experienced racial harassment or bullying.

We are focusing on improving the lectures and workshops based on student feedback. The training programme will now be a vital part of every student's introduction to the University of Sheffield.

Race Equality Charter UK-wide

The Race Equality Charter (REC), overseen by Advance HE, provides a framework for universities to improve the representation, progression and success of their minority ethnic staff and students. Building on the success of the Athena SWAN Charter, which aims to advance gender equality, the REC requires institutions to identify institutional and cultural barriers to staff and student success and to take action to address these.

Its scope covers:

- representation and progression of all staff, whether in academic, professional or support roles
- student progression and attainment
- diversity of the curriculum

After joining the REC and signing up to its guiding principles, institutions are required to apply for an award within three years. The application process involves providing significant evidence on a wide range of issues, such as the ethnic profile of individuals involved in grievances procedures, ethnic profile of senior committees, and student attainment. The application must also include an action plan of solutions identified by the university.

Members may then receive a Bronze or Silver REC award, depending on their level of progress. At present, the REC has 66 members, and 15 institutions hold a Bronze award, with several more working towards this.

Undertaking self-assessment is a lengthy process in recognition of the challenge and effort required to make changes to institutional culture. While achieving an award is not a sign that an institution has eliminated racial inequalities, it provides assurance that the issues are understood and that the institution is taking action to address this. Institutions that have received a REC award have found it a positive experience in supporting them to advance racial equality.

The REC is currently under review by Advance HE. In the longer term, it is anticipated that the REC criteria will change as the sector makes progress in advancing race equality.

There is a database of good practice initiatives identified through the REC.⁴

White anti-racist/ affinity groups

University of
East London

The University of East London (UEL) was awarded the Race Equality Charter Bronze award in May 2019. The university has been working through a three-year action plan to address institutional racism over the past year, and is one of 15 universities to have received the award.

One area where the university realised they could go further was in creating opportunities for all colleagues to be involved in dismantling racism.

Although colleagues shared the same vision about what an anti-racist institution should look like, some felt they lacked knowledge of how they could contribute to making this a reality. A cursory look at who was contributing to this agenda revealed that it was the most marginalised staff across the institution. Adopting models from the University of Richmond, Virginia and the University of Pennsylvania, UEL established white anti-racist/affinity groups in various schools. The purpose of the group is provide a safe space for white staff to learn about institutional and structural racism, and also learn how to be allies in the dismantling of racism.

The groups come together every couple of weeks and share resources about the impact of whiteness on racism. Although there are terms of reference, the main condition is that staff must centre their discussions on whiteness, what it means to be white and developing allyship. To date, we have established two groups and there are another two in development.

Initially, staff were cynical about the groups and expressed reservations about divisiveness. The counter argument is that since marginalised staff are dealing with the consequences of racism, divisiveness is already present. Although the groups have only been established since the beginning of 2020, staff have expressed positive sentiment about their knowledge in working towards being anti-racist and focusing on taking constructive action within the institution.

Decolonising DMU

De Montfort University

Decolonising DMU is a holistic, whole-institution approach that aims to address structural inequality at De Montfort University.

It recognises that in order to address institutional racism and discrimination, all university processes, procedures and practices need to be scrutinised, with the engagement of staff from across the university. The work is led by the pro-vice-chancellor for equality, diversity and inclusion and divided into four workstreams focusing on institution, staff, students and library, underpinned by a fifth workstream on research and evaluation. This case study focuses on the staff workstream.

The staff workstream was set up in November 2019 to start staff conversations about racism and its manifestations, and what decolonising means in different contexts, including within individual working practices. The workstream allows staff to influence the direction of Decolonising DMU and so far has:

- run workshops that enable staff to discuss what decolonising means in their own work contexts
- run drop-in sessions for staff to ask questions about the project or about decolonising their working practices
- created a community of practice for staff to discuss the journey of decolonising and its future
- developed an online resource that includes FAQs, good practice, narratives of what decolonising means to individual members of staff, and staff experiences of racism
- contributed to relevant committees to ensure that the decolonising agenda is integral to decision-making and strategic planning across the institution
- contributed towards staff development opportunities, such as the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP)

The main challenge has been the slow engagement of staff across the institution. The team is seeking to increase participation by offering staff different methods of engaging with Decolonising DMU via one-to-one drop-in sessions, interactive workshops and the online toolkit.

This work is complemented by evaluation work that directly monitors project activity for changes in processes and practices, alongside the perceptions of staff and students.

Learning points

Adequate staffing and resources are crucial.

Buy-in from senior management is essential.

The staff workstream did not operate in isolation and is part of the broader strategic objectives of the institution and Decolonising DMU.

Consider different ways of engaging staff in the conversation.

‘Tell Us’ **reporting tool** Abertay University

In summer 2019, Abertay University began work on a tool aimed at improving confidence in reporting racism and other forms of unwanted behaviour on campus.⁵ Over nine

months, the project team, comprised of those from across the university, including student representatives, oversaw the creation of the ‘Tell Us’ site. An associated digital marketing campaign was also created to raise awareness of the reporting site and the existing support available to those experiencing discriminatory behaviours.

Several online training modules were developed and rolled out to staff and students to improve understanding around reporting incidents and promoting respect for others.

The team focused on:

- developing a suitable reporting tool, independent of the university’s corporate website, to ensure confidence in its anonymity, and to provide students and staff with the opportunity to report incidents of racism, homophobia, gender-based violence and disability-related incidents
- highlighting the support available to individuals who experience or report issues of misconduct
- creating and promoting training opportunities for staff to respond to student disclosures
- signposting students and staff to support, advice and guidance

The digital marketing campaign, ‘Tell Us’ and ‘ChALLENGE all of it’ were developed with engagement from the student body, and shared regularly on the university’s social media accounts throughout the year. From September 2019 to August 2020, over the site has received 2,100 visitors. Within the first year of the reporting site going live, a total of 16 reports were made via the reporting site, 12 of them anonymously. Ongoing promotion of the reporting tool and the campaigns will be prominent on the main university website, social media accounts, intranet and internally via digital signage and posters throughout the next academic year. Training and awareness-raising opportunities for staff and students will be ongoing throughout the academic year, and engagement will be measured.

Abertay is currently the only Scottish university to hold a Race Equality Charter award and next year will be going through this externally assessed process for a second time.

Race equality supervisory panel Cardiff University

The race equality supervisory panel (RESP) was established in May 2018 to raise awareness of racial inequality across the university, and to encourage the reporting of racial hate incidents or crime by providing an accessible, effective route for complaints. It also offers advice and guidance on the many forms of racial harassment experienced within society and the institution. Since its inception, there has been a steady increase in reported incidents.

Cardiff University understands the need to prioritise race equality to prevent and combat racial harassment. The RESP promotes conversations about race and aims to redress the balance of voices who have agency in these discussions.

The RESP provides advice and guidance across the university on concerns about racial inequality and harassment, including complex cases. While complaint-handling or disciplinary action remains the responsibility of the relevant school or department, the RESP is able to offer expert advice to any of the parties involved, such as investigators or those supporting the reporting party. This includes advice on appropriate sanctions or reparations. It provides a professional sounding board with a diverse membership, including professional and academic staff, and the majority of members have previous experience of managing racial harassment issues within the university.

The establishment of the RESP means that the wider university community has a forum through which to report and seek advice safely. This helps to build environments where all BAME, EU and international students and staff feel safe and have a sense of belonging. The panel prioritises the well-being of all involved, and offers support to both the reporting and responding parties.

The panel is led by a senior compliance advisor and is supported by the deputy vice-chancellor and dean of EDI, with yearly reports to the university EDI committee. Support and resources for the panel have been driven through the senior management team, with the endorsement of the vice-chancellor.

There has been an increase in uptake and engagement with the panel, including for help with specific incidents, general enquiries, development of new race equality initiatives and invitations to present the work of the RESP. The university views the increase in engagement as a positive outcome, recognising the need to increase reporting levels and create an environment of trust where race equality is part of the conversation.

Endnotes

- 1 UUK & NUS (2019) Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment at UK universities: #closingthegap available at www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/bame-student-attainment-uk-universities-closing-the-gap.pdf
- 2 Woolf K (2020) 'British medical journal' Differential attainment in medical education and training available at www.bmj.com/content/368/bmj.m339
- 3 University of Glasgow Historical Slavery Initiative available at www.gla.ac.uk/explore/historicallaveryinitiative/
- 4 Advance HE REC and Athena Swan Good Practice Initiatives available at www.advance-he.ac.uk/charters/rec-athena-swan-initiatives
- 5 University of Abertay Tell Us available at <https://tellus.abertay.ac.uk/>

"I feel comfortable in the students' union, I have instances on the uni front which make me think reporting an incident is a big no. I don't feel comfortable. The kind of response you get to different issues... makes me feel I won't get a good outcome."



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