

Moving from knowledge hierarchies towards a Knowledge Exchange Partnership in development and Development Studies

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Race Equality Review 2021



This report has been produced by the Race Equality Review (RER) team, whose members were:

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The RER team would like to thank many colleagues, from across the University, who contributed to its work and supported the production of this report.

Race Equality Review 2021

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Vice-Chancellor's introduction

I am pleased to share with you the final report of the Race Equality Review. This is an important report for a University that has to acknowledge that not all members of its community are treated equally.

The report reflects the excellent work that the Review group has done, led by Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Parveen Yaqoob and Dean for Diversity & Inclusion Dr Allan Laville. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the Review. Many people have helped to shape its work and its thinking, supporting the exploration of various themes, organising focus groups and events, looking at data and information and, perhaps most importantly, sharing their experiences openly and honestly.

When I requested this Review in June 2020, I said that finding solutions to the biggest challenges of our times is what universities exist for. We are in the position of bringing together some of the best thinkers in their field with those who want to learn from them, and have a duty to take things forward. We offer a space to listen, to encourage debate and to challenge the status quo. Above all, we must practice before we preach, and apply solutions to these challenges to ourselves first.

Racism is one such challenge that continues to blight the life experiences of many Black, Asian and minority ethic people. We can and we must do whatever it takes to ensure that race is not an obstacle to our students and our colleagues achieving their best. And then, we have a duty to wider society to share our experiences and learn from the wider world

The report and its recommendations are based on a lot of listening, a lot of debate and a strong desire to challenge ingrained habits. The report sets out quite clearly where we are on our race journey, and the recommendations propose the way forward.

My University Executive Board colleagues and I are committed to following up on institutional recommendations. I would urge you to read the report and consider what changes you can make in your teams, departments or Schools or Functions to support race equality.

This is an opportunity for us all. We can each make the difference, can push boundaries, and change things for the better.



Professor Robert Van de Noort FSA
Vice-Chancellor

Executive summary

Racial inequality in society is not just reflected in the higher education sector, it is magnified by a conspicuous lack of representation of people of colour, particularly at senior level, differential experience between white students and their Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) peers, a curriculum which largely reflects white histories and cultures, and a sector-wide reluctance to challenge implicit racial prejudice. We must address these inequalities if we want to study and work in an environment which embraces a diversity of voices, experiences and talent.

Like many other higher education institutions, we have made efforts to address the challenges, but these have had varying levels of success. Prior to this review, we set race equality targets in 2016 to achieve by 2020, mainly relating to staff and student representation and student attainment. Many of these targets have regrettably not been met.

A more positive point of progress has been the launch of a [Race Equality Action Plan](#) in 2019, which is being led by the **Race Equality Action Team (REACT)**. REACT reports to our Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board, which in turn reports to the University Executive Board.

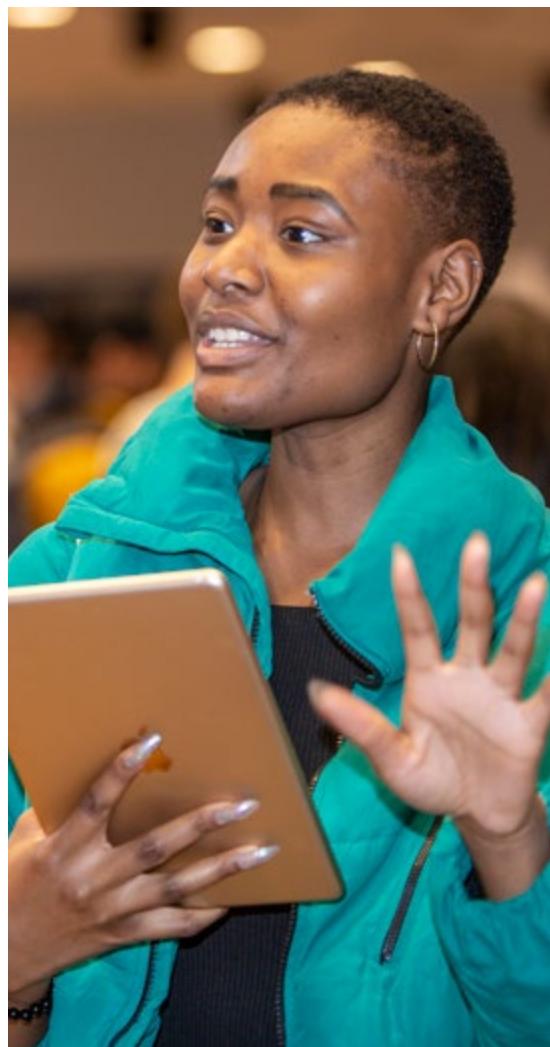
In January 2020, a **BAME Staff Network** was formed, which effectively brought together BAME colleagues and highlighted issues and concerns of importance not only to these colleagues, but to all of our community.

This review set out to reflect on the University's race equality journey to date, to understand the lived experiences and challenges of our community by opening up conversations in a multi-faceted active listening exercise, and to evaluate how we can address the lack of representation and improve staff and student experience and progression, as well as inspire a culture of collective responsibility for dismantling racial inequalities.

The active listening phase of the review highlighted:

- the value placed on the sense of belonging amongst BAME staff and students;
- the negative impact of microaggressions and subtle patterns of racial bias;
- a lack of confidence in the University dealing appropriately with racial harassment;
- a lack of racial literacy around white privilege;
- the importance of collective responsibility for equality, diversity and inclusion within the University.

The need to move away from a deficit model, which assumes that a deficiency in the underrepresented group needs to be addressed, was emphasised and the fact that **anti-racist work falls disproportionately to people of colour** was highlighted.





There is a strong feeling that issues around race are carefully ignored outside the diversity and inclusion agenda and colleagues would like meaningful discussion about racism in a safe environment. Engagement sessions with staff more broadly revealed that while there is motivation and commitment to engage with self-education and anti-racist work, there is considerable anxiety around current lack of cultural knowledge and a lack of confidence and understanding about appropriate positive actions that can be taken at an individual level. **The discussion and motivation initiated as part of this review must be continued and nurtured, and must engage the entire University community, including its governing body.**

The diversity of the University's undergraduate population has increased over the last few years, the gap in offer rates between white and BAME students has decreased and there is no evidence to suggest that retention of BAME students is an issue. It will be crucial to build on current work to instil a sense of community and belonging amongst students prior to arrival, utilising student ambassadors from diverse backgrounds. Improving the diversity of full-time Officers is a key priority for the Reading University Students' Union (RUSU) and actions are planned to make student societies more inclusive, while providing safe spaces. This review proposes structures to eliminate the awarding gap, to address inequalities in the progression of postgraduate research (PGR) students, and to align decolonisation of the curriculum with our current portfolio review of teaching programmes.

Evaluation of staff recruitment data was limited by the fact that the majority of successful applicants did not declare their ethnic background; nevertheless, the data available suggest that BAME candidates for both academic and professional posts are less likely to be invited for interview and less likely to be successful. Improvement in declaration rates, a review of consistency and training in the recruitment process and targets for staff recruitment and representation will be reviewed as part of a wider exercise.

Diversifying membership of senior committees through a consistent and transparent expression of interest process and a review of ways of working to ensure optimal participation are also recommended.

The scarcity of role models in senior positions contributes to a feeling that BAME colleagues hit a glass ceiling that does not exist for their white peers. There is a perception that small clusters and networks of individuals are privileged with key information relating to progression and act as gatekeepers, and there is a lack of confidence amongst BAME colleagues that the process is free from bias. An evidence-based approach to identify patterns and underlying causes of lack of success in academic promotion applications from BAME colleagues and to examine data on progression of professional services colleagues to higher grade roles will be conducted. The analysis will inform targeted action, led by Human Resources (HR) working with Schools and Functions.



An inclusive culture underpins every aspect of an organisation's activities and allows staff and students from all backgrounds to achieve their full potential. Those from BAME backgrounds should be at the forefront, but **it should be clear that efforts to bring about cultural change are a collective responsibility and should not fall to a minority of colleagues.** It is crucial that we address our lack of race literacy and understanding of other cultures through training and allyship at every level of our organisation.

We must instil greater confidence in our racial harassment reporting procedures, make it absolutely clear that the University has a zero-tolerance approach to racial harassment, adopt a transparent approach to sharing outcomes of investigations and provide appropriate support for both the victim and the perpetrator. It is imperative that we collectively own our Race Equality Action Plan by embedding activities relating to equality, diversity and inclusion into our reward and recognition processes.

This review makes twenty recommendations, which are set out with clear lines of accountability. The implementation of the recommendations will be overseen by the REACT and will ultimately be incorporated into the Race Equality Action Plan and a future [**Race Equality Charter Mark**](#) application.



Professor Parveen Yaqoob
Deputy Vice-Chancellor



Dr Allan Laville
Dean for Diversity & Inclusion



Introduction

Global protests against racism, sparked by the death of George Floyd in May 2020, demonstrated public conviction of the need to tackle racial inequalities throughout society. A wave of introspection within the higher education sector followed, often accompanied by expressions of guilt, sadness and discomfort. Many within the sector have published statements of solidarity and commitment to the [Black Lives Matter](#) movement. Some were met with cynicism, because the issues within higher education are well-recognised and well-established: differential experience and attainment between white students and their BAME peers, a curriculum which largely reflects white histories and cultures, a lack of representation of people of colour, particularly at senior level, and a culture which does little to challenge implicit racial prejudice.

The University of Reading initially responded to the unfolding events in the United States with a [statement from Vice-Chancellor Robert Van de Noort](#), in which he recognised the pervasive nature of racism and promised action to address it, initially in the form of a review of race equality within our internal University communities.

It was our view that this review would benefit from considering developments around race in the higher education sector before we set out to understand the experience of our own BAME colleagues and students.

Assessing the sector

The issue of race and how it affects those who work and study in Britain's higher education institutions has regularly been in the news. Listed below are some of the recently published reports that have featured in the headlines:

- [The white elephant in the room: ideas for reducing racial inequalities in higher education](#)
(Higher Education Policy Institute, September 2019)
- [Tackling racial harassment: Universities challenged](#)
(Equality and Human Rights Commission, October 2019)
- [Tackling racial harassment in higher education](#)
(Universities UK, November 2020)
- [Halpin Sector Report: UK Universities' Response to BLM](#)
(Halpin, November 2020)
- [Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment at Universities: #CLOSINGTHEGAP](#)
(Universities UK and National Union of Students, May 2019)

The findings of these reports paint a consistent picture across the higher education sector.

According to the [#CLOSINGTHEGAP](#) report, there is a 13% gap between the likelihood of white students and students from BAME backgrounds getting a 1st or 2:1 degree classification. Within the BAME group, Black students fare the worst, being almost one and a half times more likely to drop out than white or Asian students. The report also found that fewer than 1% of Professors are Black, of which only 0.2% are female.



The reports [Tackling racial harassment: universities challenged](#) and [Tackling racial harassment in higher education](#) stress the urgent need to make universities safe places to work and study. The urgency is underlined by evidence from the [EHRC inquiry](#) that almost a quarter of students from minority ethnic backgrounds had experienced racial harassment and more than half of the staff who had experienced racial harassment described incidents of being ignored or excluded because of their race, with nearly a third being victims of racist name-calling, insults and jokes. In a large proportion of cases, the harassment had not been reported to the institution, revealing substantial under-reporting by both staff and students. Microaggressions were commonly reported in a variety of settings and, together, these experiences had an impact on mental health, educational outcomes and career progression. Around one in twenty students who experienced racial harassment left their course and around three in twenty members of staff left their job as a direct result of racial harassment.

While racial inequalities remain in higher education, statements of commitment are simply not enough: the [Halpin Report on UK Universities' Response to Black Lives Matter](#) concludes that the UK higher education sector needs to acknowledge its part in systemic racism and must take direct action to bring about meaningful, long-term change. The report also provides a checklist of thirty-one recommendations to "turn the conversation and a search for answers into action." In a similar vein, [The white elephant in the room](#) emphasises the need for senior leadership to lay the groundwork in facilitating conversations about race.

Our approach to the Race Equality Review

In seeking to understand the experience of our own colleagues and students, we conducted the review in two phases – an active listening phase, and an examination of our performance against a number of themes.

We wanted to hear from as many people as possible. We initiated conversations in Schools and Functions, invited students and colleagues to focus groups aimed at understanding their experiences better, and invited alumni through the alumni network and others through social media. An all-staff event and online panel of BAME colleagues and students complemented the listening exercise.

Many members of our community also wrote to us directly. Some told their personal stories, some expressed anger that it needed the death of a Black man for the University to acknowledge the need to take action against racial inequality, and some were frank about their discomfort in discussing racism, but pledged to overcome it. Some realised that not being racist simply is not enough – that you have to be actively anti-racist to make a difference, and one comment described the task ahead as being akin to "turning around a tanker".



While the events of May 2020 placed a spotlight on racial injustice for Black people, who face particular challenges, this review addresses racial inequalities which extend across all BAME groups. The acronym, BAME, has often been used when making comparisons with the white population in the UK and features commonly in published statistics.

However, it is increasingly criticised for over-simplification of a heterogeneous population, within which different identities may have significantly different experiences. Some perceive the term 'People of Colour,' to be more positive, although it also groups together people of different ethnic identity and experiences, does not represent white minority ethnic groups and can result in masking of the true inequalities that Black people face, presenting a falsely optimistic picture of progress. Although the term BAME is used throughout this review, it is with the acknowledgement that this does not refer to a single homogeneous group and where possible, the review team sought more detailed data and insight in order to recognise, understand and reflect the experiences of different minority ethnic groups.

The report is structured around four themes, which both cover the breadth of the University's activities and address its key challenges with respect to race equality; **representation, student experience and attainment, staff experience and progression and culture.**



Part 1: Where is the University of Reading on its race equality journey?

It is important, for context, to understand the University's race equality journey, which can be mapped by systematic review of [relevant sections of the annual Diversity & Inclusion \(D&I\) reports from 2014–15 onwards](#). A significant milestone was reached in 2016, with the appointment of the University's first Dean for Diversity & Inclusion and creation of a strategic framework for delivering diversity and inclusion objectives. These objectives were intended to be achieved by 2020 and included six targets for race equity (based on national census data), with the understanding that they would be embedded into work programmes in HR and Student Services:

Race-related D&I targets set in 2016

Target (baseline as at February 2016)

- 1 All key University committees to match academic staff BAME representation by 2020.
- 2 Council and its sub-committees to set targets for BAME representation on their committees consistent with national census baseline for BAME.
- 3 Representation: a minimum of 15% in each of grades 1–5 professional services staff and 12% in grades 6–9 professional services staff to be BAME by 2020 (levels set by local and national census data respectively).
Feb 2016 baseline across all professional services staff was 8%.
- 4 A minimum of 14% of academic staff in grades 7 and above to be BAME by 2020.
Feb 2016 baseline was 11%.
- 5 Reduction of the degree awarding gap (proportion of 1st/2:1) between BAME and white undergraduate students.
Target 12% by 2020.
- 6 Reduction of the postgraduate BAME student's failure rate.
Target 12% by 2020

The following summarises the objectives and activities relating to race equality since the [University's first D&I report was published in 2014–15](#). These have been aligned with the four themes of this review: representation, student experience and attainment, staff experience and progression and culture.

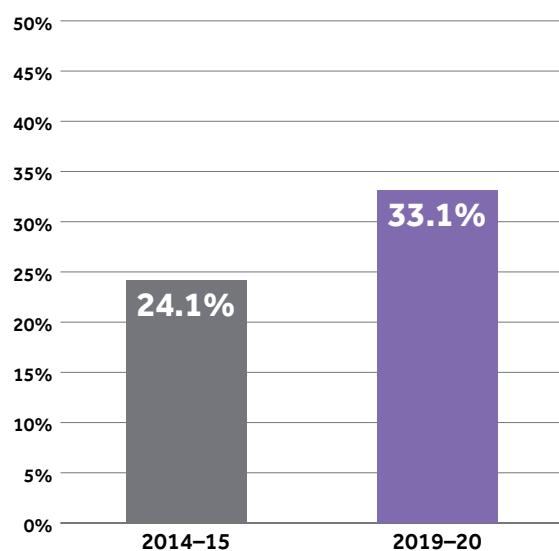
1.1 Representation

1.1.1 Student representation

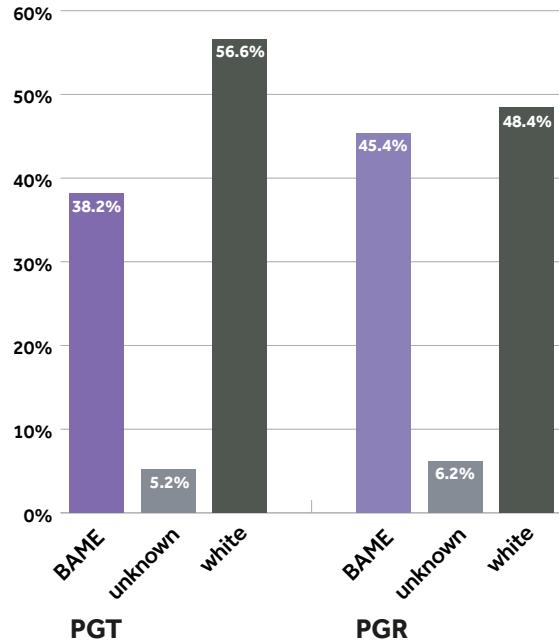
Although the University's student population has diversified over the last five years, it still represents a disproportionately advantaged section of society. Socio-economic disadvantage is measured using [Participation of Local Areas \(POLAR\)](#), which quantifies the rates of participation in higher education of those aged 18 or 19 across the UK, and [Index of Multiple Deprivation \(IMD\)](#) datasets, which classify areas in England by level of deprivation.

The University is committed to increasing the proportion of students from areas of high socio-economic disadvantage via the [Access and Participation Plan](#) and recognises the role of intersectionality in doing so.

BAME students as a percentage of all undergraduates



PGT and PGR enrolment by ethnicity



Entry for BAME students is increasing at a greater rate than is proportionate for the general population and our track record for retaining BAME students once they are enrolled is strong. The undergraduate (UG) student population comprised 24.1% BAME students in 2014–15, but this has steadily increased to 33.1% in 2019–20 and the gap in offer rates between white and Black applicants, which was 12% in 2015, is closing. There is wide variation across Schools, with the proportion of BAME students ranging from 14.5% to 57.8%. Nevertheless, the increased recruitment of BAME students reflects a strategy set in line with the government's 2015 objective to achieve a 20% increase in numbers of BAME students entering higher education by 2020. There is a significant gap between BAME and white students in enrolment to PGT courses, but enrolment for PGR studies is very similar (see the second chart on this page).

1.1.2 Staff representation

In 2014–15, almost 13% of staff identified as BAME. The staff pay grade structure ranges from grade 1 to grade 9 and representation of BAME staff decreases with increasing grade, apart from grade 6, where 11.6% were BAME. There is a cliff edge at academic grade 9, with only 3% BAME in this category. The University set targets to achieve a minimum of 12% in professional services (non-academic) grades 6–9 by 2020 and 16% by 2026; this currently stands at 8.4%. For academic staff in grades 7 and above, a minimum target of 14% was set against a baseline of 11% in 2016; this target was met in 2019–20, when the proportion of academic BAME staff reached 14.3%, an increase from 13.8% the previous year.

The D&I annual reports also discuss targets for representation on key University decision-making bodies, including Council, Senate, the University Executive Board (UEB), Strategy and Finance Committee, the University Board for Teaching and Learning (later University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience), and the University Board for Research and Innovation. The aim was that ethnicity across the committees should match that of the representative staff body, that Council should set targets for BAME representation consistent with the national census baseline and that University leadership roles should comprise a minimum of 18% BAME staff by 2026. Section 3.1.2 explores this in more detail.

In 2017, the University commissioned a review conducted by TMP Worldwide, a talent advisory specialist, funded by the University Strategic Fund, the purpose of which was to support the University in developing a workforce reflective of the local population and to explore the perceptions of people living in and around Reading of the skill sets required for employment at the University. The dissemination of the review has remained somewhat obscure, a matter of disquiet for those who contributed and were unable to ascertain the outcome. The review was mentioned in the D&I annual report for that year and was also presented to the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board. The relevant section in the 2017–18 annual report states the following:

"The University's Race Equality Charter team carried out a detailed analysis of quantitative and qualitative data /research and sought the views of both internal and external stakeholders to prepare the REC submission and develop an action plan. This included the review of the feedback from research carried out by TMP Worldwide to seek feedback on our recruitment practices in relation to race and ethnicity. The findings of this research helped us identify the views of internal staff on how ethnicity affects their experience of the University as an employee and explore whether potential BAME employees amongst the local public perceive any barriers to working at the University. This research has informed the development of our Race Equality Charter Action Plan, and the Employer Identity Project within the broader People Plan."

The presentation delivered to the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board summarised the outcomes of the TMP Worldwide review, which involved two focus groups and eighteen staff interviews, as well as a focus group and eight interviews with external BAME individuals.

Reflections from University staff were broadly similar to those revealed by activities of the active listening phase this review (see Section 2):

- a sense that 'power' and knowledge sits with a largely white majority that likes the status quo
- opportunities are often perceived to be out of reach for minorities
- a lack of senior role models makes aiming for progression more daunting.

White staff were largely unaware of barriers to free self-expression or for progression for BAME staff, although some did have a sense that there may be subtle exclusion of some groups and were aware of 'banter'. There were a number of things that staff alert to the lack of representation wished to see; these included change 'led from the top', visible challenging of inappropriate behaviours, greater cultural sensitivity, and greater transparency around equal opportunities.

External perspectives suggested that the University itself did not have a strong local profile as an employer; local residents were surprised to hear how big an employer the University is and that workforce diversity was a challenge. Recommendations made in the TMP Worldwide review included strategies to create the right environment for recruitment, placing a greater emphasis on outreach and awareness of brand as an employer, communication about the breadth of roles that exist and accessibility to those roles, establishing a physical presence in the town and using specialist media.

As indicated, these were embedded into the Race Equality Charter Action Plan and the Employer Identity Project, where relevant actions include:

- piloting anonymised shortlisting for grades 1–5 posts in Marketing, Communications and Engagement
- building quarterly interrogation of the Applicant Tracking System for ethnicity bias into business as usual
- interrogating the new online exit interviews for any examples of perceived race-related reasons for leaving
- monitoring of ethnicity and gender of Early Career Researchers (ECRs) interested in and supported to apply for fellowships.

1.2 Student experience and attainment

The [D&I annual reports](#) review efforts to close the awarding gap and the 2014–15 annual report specifically describes implementation of the recommendations of a BAME attainment gap project, which included:

- raising awareness of the ethnicity gap in Schools
- enhancement of monitoring of the ethnicity gap
- effecting change in a number of targeted areas likely to have impact on the largest numbers of BAME students
- developing staff confidence and skills in supporting an ethnically and culturally diverse student community
- strengthening ethnic minority student voice/representation
- monitoring of the BAME attainment gap project as part of the work of the REACT.

The project led to a number of outcomes, including significant awareness-raising, a conference, development of 'inclusive curricula,' as one of the pillars of the [Curriculum Framework](#) project, which itself fed into a 2016 Teaching and Learning Showcase on Diversifying the Curriculum and the development of a toolkit and agreement to consider D&I as part of routine curriculum review.

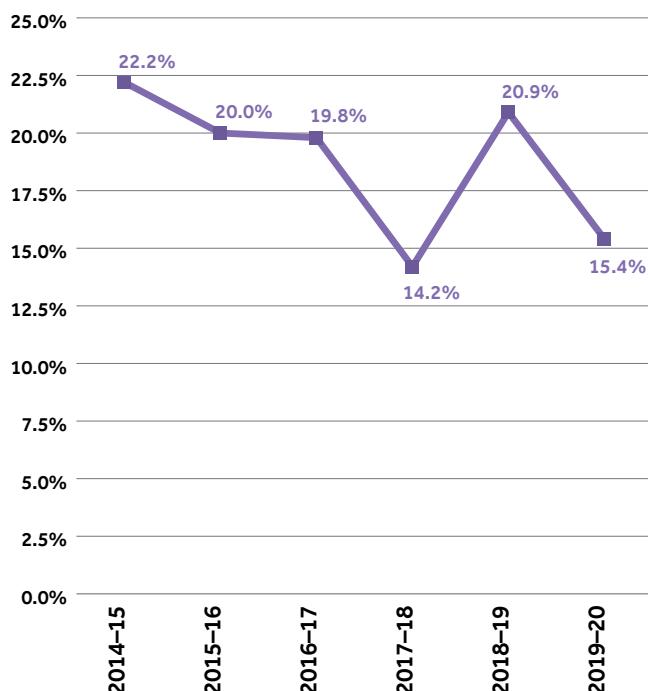
Despite these actions, the BAME attainment gap has persisted, with stark gaps between ethnic groups – and Black students the least successful and the most likely to be awarded a third-class degree. However, the attainment gap fluctuates from year to year and it may be important to consider longer-term trends rather than focus on individual yearly results. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, it will also be important to reflect on how the introduction of a '[safety net](#)' influenced the attainment gap, as it meant that marks for modules would be no lower than the average mark achieved through coursework and other assessment prior to the end of the Spring term in 2020. It will also be important to determine whether the pandemic exacerbates inequalities in subsequent years.

In 2018–19, there were plans to evaluate whether the [Student Progress Dashboard](#) could be deployed to help close the attainment gap and to monitor targeted local BAME initiatives to consider applicability and scalability across the University. This has now been progressed and data is available over a 5-year period, broken down to School level. In line with the wider higher education sector, the University is moving to use the term awarding gap in place of attainment gap. This recognises the complexity behind the issue and the role that institutional structures play in exacerbating existing disadvantage.

1.3 Staff experience and progression

The 2014–15 annual D&I report notes a need to encourage more staff from a BAME background to apply for promotion, to review how best to support and develop BAME staff ready for promotion, and to continue to require unconscious bias training for all decision-makers. Applications for promotion by BAME staff subsequently increased, but success rates lagged behind and disaggregation of the data indicates that some ethnic groups (Black staff in particular) have a particularly low rate of success. There is a consistent theme running through the annual reports of a gap in recognition and reward of BAME staff and the 2016–17 report identified deeper analysis of the underlying issues as a priority for action, but it is not clear whether this was followed up.

Ethnicity pay gap, 2014–2020



The 2014–15 annual D&I report notes an ethnicity pay gap of 22%, mainly within the professorial salary band, and indicates that action to tackle this would be led by the Deans for D&I. In subsequent years, up to 2018, the ethnicity pay gap was closing faster than the gender pay gap, standing at 14.2% in 2017–18. In 2018–19, it increased to almost 21%, but subsequently decreased in 2019–20 to 15.4% for reasons which are unclear, but which we wish to understand.

There are several challenges associated with both reporting and understanding the ethnicity pay gap, chiefly inequality in representation across the grades. The majority of BAME staff are in grades 1, 2 and 6, which in itself contributes to an ethnicity pay gap.

Furthermore, a gradual upward shift in the National Living Wage has meant that salaries at the lowest spinal points in the lowest grades have increased disproportionately and this has resulted in compression

of salaries in lower grades, which may have contributed to some reduction in the ethnicity pay gap in Grades 1–5 in the last year (although this is uncertain).

Discussions relating to becoming an accredited Living Wage Employer, which would also impact on staff employed at lower grades, and therefore mitigate against the ethnicity pay gap, were held at the University's Staffing Committee in 2015 and subsequently considered by the UEB and the University Council.

The Council concluded that the benefits, recognition and reward package offered in addition to core salary to all directly-employed staff were sufficient not to justify such accreditation. Furthermore, commitment to additional costs, which would not be under the University's control, was considered to be difficult to justify at a time of particular financial constraint.

1.4 Culture

The 2014–15 annual D&I report suggests that there was no evidence of discriminatory behaviour or practices across the University by members of staff, but notes that raising awareness of the role of staff and students in minimising and challenging inappropriate behaviour and practices was key. It is evident that the analysis of complaints and grievances through the race equality lens only records information about the ethnicity of the complainant and not the nature of the complaint. A Cultural Diversity Group was established in 2015–16, as well as the TMP Worldwide project. There was also a review of D&I training (which up to this point had chiefly comprised unconscious bias training), with the following race equality-related outcomes:

- The online mandatory 'Introduction to Diversity and Inclusion' training was revised and updated in early 2020.
- Revisions were made to unconscious bias training for colleagues on REF panels, so that online development was followed by facilitated group discussions to contextualise and embed the learning.
- Unconscious bias training for panel members also aimed to support those who will be interviewing job applicants.

- The RISE (Ready for an Inclusive and Supportive Environment) programme was piloted and updated following evaluation. Due to Covid-19, this was then adapted into an online trainer-led version and delivered to 20 delegates.

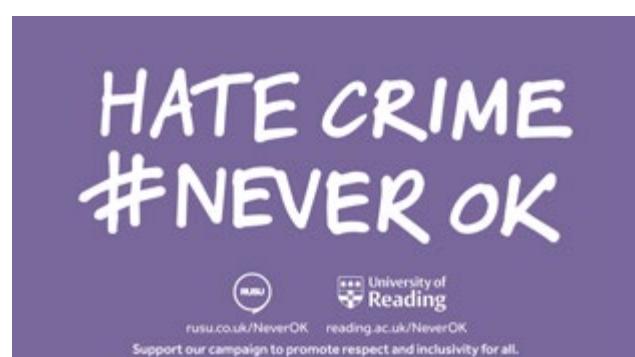
The RISE programme will contribute to developing a more inclusive culture by identifying actions that can be taken at a personal and organisational level, including role modelling behaviours, contributing positively to D&I initiatives within a School or Function, calling out negative behaviours, reflective self-development, fostering effective networking, and allyship training for both staff and students.

2018–19 saw increased participation in Black History Month and a Muslim chaplain was appointed. The University was also a founding member of the **Thames Valley Race Equity and Cultural Harmony (REACH) Network**, which brings together over 30 companies from the Thames Valley region committed to working together to attract, progress and retain diverse talent at every level by ensuring that workplace cultures are inclusive for people from diverse backgrounds. The benefits of the network include cross-industry networking, mentoring and reverse-mentoring, creating a platform to share best practice, collaboration between senior leaders and working towards signing up to a collective charter.

In 2018–19, the University of Reading and Reading University Students' Union (RUSU) jointly launched a #NeverOK campaign as a public commitment to creating an inclusive and respectful environment for all staff and students, and to encourage students to report harassment of any form and to easily access relevant support and services. RUSU also developed a further Zero Tolerance policy in the same year that #NeverOK was launched. The #NeverOK committee recently extended its membership to include representation from the Welfare team to ensure joined-up support for individuals affected by bullying, harassment or discrimination.

The #NeverOK campaign was designed to provide a simple and transparent way for students to report any form of harassment and to easily access the support and services they may require. Since its launch, it has focussed on specific types of bullying, harassment and discrimination and there is work planned to address racial microaggressions in March 2021.

The University values its connections with the local community and seeks to enhance its engagement at many levels. In February 2020, a group was established to work towards University of Sanctuary status, in partnership with RUSU, Student Action on refugees (STaR), Reading City of Sanctuary and the Reading Refugee Support Group. The aim is for the City of Sanctuary support system to befriend and tutor refugees, to provide them with information about studying at the University, and for staff and students across the University to coordinate activities to make refugees feel welcome. However, there was scepticism about the ability to achieve the degree of success with this scheme that other universities have demonstrated because the University's refugee scholarships, which drew considerable publicity, were perceived to lack flexibility with entry requirements and none have been awarded to date. The issues appear to have been resolved and there is a commitment to support seven Sanctuary Scholars annually from 2021/22. University of Sanctuary status would be supported by a number of activities, including consideration of refugee issues in core and optional modules across a number of undergraduate programmes, a new MA in Migration and Intercultural Studies, numerous research and public engagement projects, opening up University facilities for a range of activities and internal communication to raise staff and student awareness.



1.5 Race Equality Charter Mark

In 2016, the University signed up to the principles of Advance HE's **Race Equality Charter** (REC), with the intention to use the [Charter Mark](#) as an audit and improvement tool for its work on race equality.

In 2017, a REC Self-Assessment Team was established to lead work on the REC Charter Mark submission. The team collated and reviewed both qualitative and quantitative information on staff and student experiences and challenges. Qualitative information was collated through a race equity survey for both staff and students, as well as the detailed research conducted by TMP Worldwide, through one-to-one interviews with BAME staff, students, and members of the local community. The analysis of race equity information highlighted the following key issues for staff and students.

Findings of Race Equality Charter Mark self-assessment team, 2017



Representation

Attracting, developing, and retaining BAME talent – particularly in senior academic and management roles.

A lack of BAME staff and culturally monotone curricula, which contribute to a lack of "belonging" for some students, and which affect engagement and attainment.



Staff experience and progression

Significant differentials in BAME staff progression and development.

Ethnicity pay gap – as described in Section 1.3.

Reward and recognition – differential outcomes for BAME staff.



Student Experience and attainment

Degree awarding differential (ethnicity attainment gap) between BAME and white undergraduate students, which is currently 8.4 % (reduced from 16.5% in 2016).



Culture

Racial harassment – the REC survey suggested that 23% of ethnic minority staff and 30% of ethnic minority students had witnessed racial discrimination in the local area.

Lack of inclusive culture.

Application for a Race Equality Charter Mark was unsuccessful on two occasions. Feedback indicated that while the self-assessment was comprehensive, **the institutional action plan did not sufficiently address the structural barriers to race equality in order to deliver transformational change and did not provide sufficient evidence of engagement of the whole organisation.**

Although the applications were unsuccessful, the University committed to continuing its work on race equality and delivering key actions that were included in the University's [Race Equality Action Plan](#), which is led by REACT. The plan will be revised again following the publication of this review.

Part 2: What did the active listening phase of the review tell us?

We felt strongly that the work to tackle racial inequality must be shaped by the lived experiences of BAME students and staff, but without the responsibility of action falling solely onto their shoulders.

Much of the active listening phase took place during the latter part of 2020; we ran a number of focus groups, encouraged conversations about race in Schools and Functions, collated comments on an online discussion board, conducted a race equality survey, led a number of stakeholder meetings on topics covered in the review, hosted a live panel debate, and presented updates on the review and invited questions at all-staff talks in October and December.

We also used the discussions from the focus groups to feed into the stakeholder meetings based on each of the four themes explored in this review. Key issues arising from the active listening phase are summarised below.

2.1 Conversations in Schools and Functions

From the outset of the review, all members of the University community were encouraged to initiate conversations about race and racism as part of the journey towards normalising discourse about race. Heads of School and Function were particularly asked to initiate conversations within their teams – some did so with a genuine commitment to establish sustained action, while others found it difficult to know where to start and were not initially persuaded that a focus on race equality, rather than diversity and inclusion in general, was required.

Many expressed a sense of insecurity and lack of self-confidence in participating in conversations. However, for some colleagues, it provided an opportunity to acknowledge and voice their own experiences and for others, it kick-started open, engaged and robust conversations, which led to teams proactively committing to sustained positive impact.

In January 2021, the review team followed up with the Schools and Functions, some of which had significantly improved their cultural competency and confidence in addressing race equality issues and were seeking ways in which to become more involved in University events and initiatives, such as [becoming allies of the BAME Network](#). A few Heads of School and Function had directed colleagues to videos, podcasts and written pieces, encouraging them to reflect on their learning and to consider what they would do as a result. The feedback overall indicated good engagement and a strong commitment to fostering an inclusive culture.

However, some teams were not confident about discussing race specifically and chose to take a broader view of diversity and inclusion; some were concerned that there would be an expectation for people to police each other and some were unclear about what was expected from the conversations and wanted guidance or a framework to help them. One of the most frequent comments was that specific training and resources would be essential in maintaining the momentum from these conversations and in turning discussion into action. Training is discussed in detail in sections 3.2 and 3.4.

2.2 Focus groups

A series of focus groups aligned with each of the themes of the review were held in September 2020, led by members of the BAME network and attended by staff and students across a broad spectrum of roles. A summary of key points is presented below.



Representation

Lack of BAME role models within the University, including in senior leadership, seminar programmes and at recruitment and careers fairs. Reinforces a sense of isolation and lack of belonging (although positive comments were noted about representation on research banners around campus).

Application of immigration-associated processes is anxiety-invoking and reinforces a feeling that individuals are not welcome or valued in the UK.



Student Experience and attainment

Western-centric courses reflecting a lack of diversity and no scope to introduce cultural lenses.

Personal tutors ill-equipped to understand or relate to BAME-related issues and who become defensive or hostile when faced with them.

Divide in student societies, with the majority being run by white peers and those run by BAME students being marginalised and labelled as 'race'-led.

Perception that BAME males are subject to closer behaviour monitoring at social events.

University communications often implicitly written for home students.



Staff experience and progression

Lack of open meritocracy for opportunities, (e.g. allocation of demonstrating and teaching to PGR students).

Perception that ideas and contribution were not valued to the same degree as white peers, resulting in BAME staff having to work harder to achieve the same recognition, the same evaluation of their teaching by students, and the same progression opportunities.

Experience of subtle exclusion from networking, contributing to discussion and social interaction, which results in 'clusters' of individuals who are privileged with information, decision-making and gate-keeping. Perceived implicit cultural knowledge by those 'in the know' on progression and promotion; while high-level detail was perceived to be transparent, navigating the process locally was not.

The burden of anti-racist work disproportionately falls to people of colour, reducing their opportunity to progress in their main roles.



Culture

Experience of routine microaggressions and negative patterns of behaviour, such as being talked over, having rules more stringently applied than for white peers, repeated questioning about status and right to be in a particular space, repeatedly drawing attention to accents, picking apart identity; overall, a 'sophisticated' pattern of racial bias under the cover of subtly nuanced comments and behaviours.

Discomfort and mental stress from constant retrospective contemplation about subtly condescending and discriminatory treatment and often acceptance that it will not change.

Lack of specific wellbeing support for the trauma and distress associated with global race issues and a general lack of literacy of wellbeing support for black and ethnic minorities.

A lack of availability of ethnically diverse food on campus, apart from the international food market.

Positive feedback on the #NeverOK campaign, but race and ethnicity are carefully ignored and rarely discussed outside the diversity and inclusion agenda; there is a strong desire to have deeper and ongoing discussion about race and racism.

Diminution of complaints about racist language and behaviour, lack of representation of people of colour dealing with complaints involving racism, and perception of penalties for racist behaviour either being too lenient or not transparent.

Perception that past reports on race have been hidden from view.

Scepticism about the outcome of the review and the likelihood of it making a structural difference or extending beyond the review period.

Several participants shared their experience of microaggressions, which were often reported with a degree of uncertainty, self-doubt and retrospective re-analysis. Students in particular tended to dismiss racist language as 'banter' and did not tend to challenge it. However, this contributes to deep-rooted structural bias, which embeds itself into our culture.

2.3 Padlet (electronic comments board)

Padlet enables comments and reflections to be posted anonymously on an electronic 'wall', which can be viewed and added to by anyone with access to the link.

A Padlet board based on our four review themes ran for a period of six weeks and the link was shared with all staff and students. The board also featured comments collated during our focus group discussions, with the permission of the participants.

2.3.1 Representation

Comments from staff criticised a 'tick-box approach' to D&I issues and indicated that the burden of race equality work is invariably offered to BAME colleagues, leaving them feeling needed rather than included. The lack of senior role models contributed to concern about the likelihood of progression.

2.3.2 Student experience and attainment

Inclusion and sense of belonging were perceived to be critical to student experience, with RUSU, student societies and events highlighted as not being inclusive enough. There was a sense that intersectionality was not recognised at the University and that protected characteristics were always discussed separately, without a joined-up approach. The lack of cultural

diversity in courses and omission of non-white contributions to western knowledge was a common theme and there was evidence of an appetite for programmes to be viewed through other cultural lenses.

BAME students reported a lack of role models, subtle discriminatory treatment by staff as well as some overt racist incidents on campus, difficulty identifying and accessing support and advice networks, and a lack of transparency and accountability in the way that reports of harassment are handled and resolved. International BAME students reported a feeling that the University was only interested in them for financial reasons and that they were not welcome in the UK once their studies were completed.

2.3.3 Staff experience and progression

While some Heads of School and Function were perceived to have created an enabling environment, which demonstrated an understanding of the challenges faced by BAME staff and of the value they brought to their team, others were silent on issues of race equality, leaving BAME staff feeling vulnerable and unsupported.

Comments expressed a perception that information about progression was shared through inner circles, where individuals with more influence within social

hierarchies can shape key decisions about issues such as mentoring allocation, often by the time official guidance becomes public. BAME staff reported feeling excluded from decision-making circles and therefore at a disadvantage in terms of allocation of workload and citizenship roles, both of which can ultimately have an impact on progression.

Lack of equal opportunity for progression was a common theme in the comments; this included perceptions of unequal access to training, time for networking and 'stretch' assignments to demonstrate ability (although it was not clear whether this could be evidenced). BAME staff also reported being more likely to be singled out for not complying with specific rules, even if other members of their team were making the same mistake.

2.3.4 Culture

There were comments about a lack of race literacy, a disinterest in other cultures, a lack of understanding of colonial history and a feeling that there is a reluctance to speak about race-related issues. Where specific issues relating to racist encounters are raised, BAME individuals are expected to carry a disproportionate burden of proof and facts relevant to their case, which are then easily dismissed if they do not meet the high expectations, and often met with white fragility.

It was noted that BAME staff feel that they are entirely responsible for sharing information about race-related or cultural events with their teams and feel resentful that their colleagues do not demonstrate any interest in doing so. As in the focus groups, there were a number of comments about BAME staff being profiled and questioned about their right to be in particular spaces.

2.4 The Race Equality Survey

Current University staff and students were invited to take part in a survey about race equality in September 2020. Survey questions were based on those required for a Race Equality Charter Mark application and differed slightly for staff and students. Responses were evaluated both as a whole and separated for those considering themselves to be from a minority ethnic group, and they were also compared with data from a similar internal 2017 survey. The survey provided textual as well as numerical data.

Respondents to the 2020 Race Equality Staff and Student Survey



444 members of staff
(11% of staff)



210 students
(1.5% of students)

The majority of staff responding were white British

75% white British

4.4% British Asian

1.7% Black British

15% other



Students were represented by:

40% white

12% Chinese

10% British Asian

7% Black British

7% mixed heritage

23% other

There were some striking disparities in perceptions of race equality between white and BAME staff and students. White staff had greater confidence in the fairness of recruitment, reward and progression processes and of equal treatment regardless of ethnic background than staff identifying as BAME. White staff were less aware of racial tensions, less likely to have witnessed racial harassment and had a significantly greater level of confidence that appropriate action would be taken than those from an ethnic minority background. A greater proportion of white staff reported that they were comfortable about talking about race than non-white staff, and textual comments suggested that they were keen to learn about the challenges faced by BAME colleagues. **It is imperative that this does not require BAME colleagues to re-live traumatic experiences simply for the education of others and that education includes improving the understanding of problematic behaviours relating to racism.**

There was a markedly higher proportion of BAME staff and students reporting that ethnic/racial diversity impacted on their sense of belonging, although the experiences of international students (including students who identify as BAME or white) was often different from those who identified as 'home' students/British.

Students identifying as BAME were less likely to believe that they were treated equally by fellow students than their white counterparts and some reported feeling less welcome at student union events and societies. There was a lower level of confidence and contribution and a lower perception of celebration of culture amongst BAME students and they demonstrated a greater awareness and experience of racial tension than white students. BAME students and staff expressed less confidence in the University responding appropriately to a race-related incident than did white students or colleagues, and BAME students also displayed a lack of confidence in the University dealing effectively and transparently with offensive behaviour and in the ability of teaching staff to facilitate discussions about race. BAME students demonstrated a strong desire for better

education on what constitutes racism. The concepts of sense of belonging, culture of equality, celebration of diversity and racial harassment will be revisited in Section 3.4.

The proportion of students who completed the survey was disappointingly low and represents a slight decline from the 2017 survey, which was completed by 249 students, although this may reflect the limited time during which the survey was open. For the staff survey, there was an increase in response rate (from 382 in 2017), although the overall response was still disappointingly low.

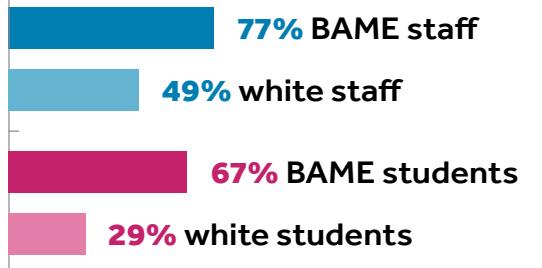
There were, however, indications of a modest increase in appreciation of the benefits of diversity in the institution. For example, in the 2020 survey, 75% of staff agreed that the University recognises and celebrates the diversity of ethnicities and culture on campus, an increase from 66% in 2017. There was, however, a marked difference in response between staff identifying as BAME compared with white staff, as detailed in the graphic above. Experience of witnessing or being the victim of racial discrimination on campus increased from 9% to 16%.

In summary, there is a mismatch in experiences and perceptions relating to race equality issues at the University between white and BAME students and staff, which have largely remained the same since 2017. **There is a common theme running through both the staff and student survey to suggest that white staff and students underestimate or are unaware of the challenges faced by BAME staff and students.** The low level of engagement with the student survey means that the views represented came from a very small proportion of the student body. Efforts were therefore made to engage students by other means, such as a joint webinar event with RUSU to create a space for open discussion about the student experience.

Comparisons between survey responses from white/BAME staff/students

Survey respondents answering 'yes' to question:

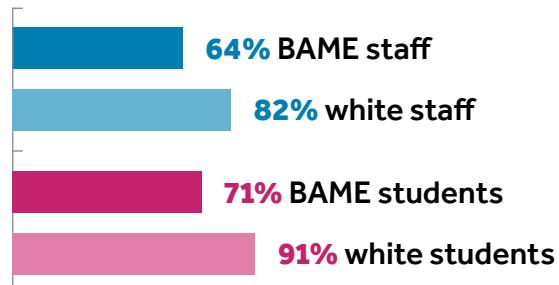
“ The ethnic/racial diversity of the University of Reading impacts on my sense of belonging. ”



Source: Question 3 of staff and student Race Equality Survey 2020.

Survey respondents answering 'yes' to question:

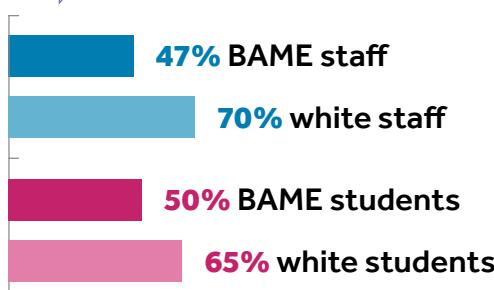
“ I believe I am treated equally by my fellow colleagues/students, irrespective of my ethnicity or race. ”



Source: Question 5 of staff Race Equality Survey 2020; Question 7 of student Race Equality Survey 2020.

Survey respondents answering 'yes' to question:

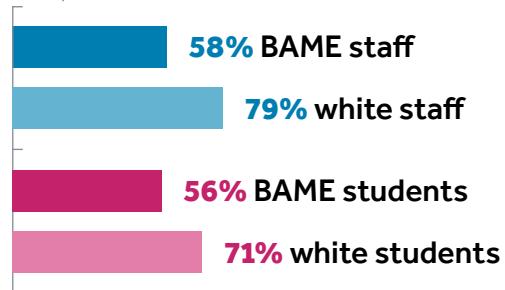
“ If I reported a race-related incident to my institution, appropriate action would be taken. ”



Source: Question 19 of staff and student Race Equality Survey 2020.

Survey respondents answering 'yes' to question:

“ The University of Reading recognises and celebrates the diversity of ethnicities and culture on campus. ”



Source: Question 10 of student Race Equality Survey 2020; Question 11 of staff Race Equality Survey 2020.

Survey respondents answering 'yes' to question:

“I feel comfortable talking about race with colleagues.”

28% BAME staff

12% white staff

Source: Question 12 of staff Race Equality Survey 2020

Survey respondents answering 'yes' to question:

“I am comfortable contributing to group discussions.”

60% BAME students

84% white students

Source: Question 39 of student Race Equality Survey 2020

Survey respondents answering 'yes' to question:

“The ethnic/racial diversity of the University of Reading impacts on my desire to stay.”

58% BAME students

33% white students

Source: Question 4 of student Race Equality Survey 2020

Survey respondents answering 'yes' to question:

“When relevant, my course tutors and lecturers are confident and competent in facilitating discussions around ethnicity and race.”

52% survey respondents agreed

Source: Question 35 of student Race Equality Survey 2020

Survey respondents answering 'yes' to question:

“I feel comfortable talking about race with other students and staff.”

49% BAME students

67% white students

Source: Question 11 of student Race Equality Survey 2020

2.5 All-staff briefings

The Vice-Chancellor's all-staff briefings have become a regular bi-monthly opportunity to update colleagues on key issues affecting them. Taking the form of a live Teams event, they provide an opportunity to answer questions on the topics discussed. During the 2020 autumn term, two of these briefings were devoted to the Race Equality Review – the first, held on 20 October 2020, covered the purpose, aims and structure of the review, with the second briefing on 17 December 2020 focusing on the outcomes of the active listening phase.

Discussions arising from audience engagement in both sessions included the following:

- Some participants expressed an appreciation for explanations of the background to the review and definitions of white privilege.
- The importance of a robust complaints process, which requires appropriate training for staff dealing with complaints as well as practical and welfare support for the complainant was emphasised. The Dean for Diversity and Inclusion has already begun work with RUSU and Students Services in this area.
- The role of mandatory training was discussed; it was acknowledged that this is subject to a mixed evidence base and that there should be clear communication about why such training is required, what the benefits might be and the importance of using a variety of approaches as well as educating ourselves. In the second briefing, there were several comments about

the perceived need for training of mid- to senior-level managers.

- There was an explanation of what is meant by decolonising the curriculum, including reviewing materials and considering the origins of viewpoints, reading lists and perspectives, as well as considering student-staff partnerships to understand what representation means to students. There was also discussion about potential tension between anti-racism and freedom of speech.
- In both the first and second briefing, colleagues indicated a desire to become involved in race equality work, but were not always sure where to start. There were also questions about how to engage staff and students who did not acknowledge racial inequalities, the importance of discussing available data, of discussing this review and of demonstrating visible allyship and leadership on matters of race equality.
- There were comments that while the review was welcome, financial constraints resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic might mean that it would not be possible to deliver ambitious outcomes. The Vice-Chancellor responded by saying that financial challenges do not mean that we can walk away, but also that actions do not always require resource and that culture change and collective ownership of the responsibility for race equality are key.

2.6 Live event: If Not Now, Then When?

On 28 October 2020, the University hosted a live panel debate, "If Not Now, Then When?" chaired by Rob Neil OBE, a prominent leader of diversity and inclusion work in the public sector, and consisting of four members of the University's staff and student body. The event opened with a brief introduction on the University's race equality journey by the Dean for Diversity and Inclusion, followed by a lively and impassioned speech by Rob, who spoke about institutional racism being the collective failure of an organisation to provide appropriate professional service to people of colour because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. He talked about thoughtlessness, ignorance and racist stereotyping, which disadvantaged minority ethnic people and noted that evil sometimes comes from good people doing nothing.

The debate began by considering what the University does well and what it could improve with respect to race equality. Panellists spoke positively of senior leadership and governance of diversity and inclusion, but wanted to see better representation in decision-making spaces, greater engagement from the bottom-up, frank discussion about white privilege and allyship, a clearer process for responding to racism and greater community engagement, particularly with poorer and more diverse areas in Reading. The session finished with each panel member being asked to suggest one thing that they felt was critical to include in the action plan resulting from this review. Their suggestions were:

- Anonymised recruitment
- Grasp the benefits of a community hub
- Assessment of the impact of existing initiatives
- Robust system of support for formal grievances

Part 3: Moving forward on race equality at the University of Reading

In this section, we set out how the findings of the review will help shape future action taken within the University of Reading.

3.1 Representation at all levels in the organisation

3.1.1 Students

The traditional model for fair access to higher education is based on equality of opportunity, which holds that university places should be offered to the most highly qualified candidates, regardless of social background. An alternative 'equity of opportunity' model holds that candidates' qualifications should be judged in light of the socioeconomic circumstances in which they were obtained in pursuit of proportionate allocation of university places. Examination of Access and Participation Plans (APPs) from a number of higher education institutions suggests that there has been a shift in institutional thinking, which has resulted in a move away from an equality of opportunity model to one which is aligned more with equity of opportunity ([Fair admissions to universities in England: improving policy and practice](#)).

The difference between equality and equity is that although both promote fairness, equality achieves this through treating everyone the same, regardless of need, whereas equity achieves this through treating people differently depending on need.

Section 1.1.1 described student demographics at the University of Reading over the last five years, reflecting a steady increase in the recruitment of BAME students and a higher intake of BAME students in several ethnic categories than is proportionate for the general population. The current University of Reading APP emphasises intersectionality of ethnicity and socioeconomic status. The broad aims of this plan are to increase awareness of Reading as a destination for socioeconomically disadvantaged students and to provide appropriate support to overcome barriers for them. Engagement programmes, such as Year 10 and Year 12 Scholars, the Brilliant Club, and the Study Higher National Collaborative Outreach Programme, use of contextual offers and targeting of further education colleges and different geographical regions will be key to this and there are also plans to offer additional guidance for teachers.

There is additional support for the pre-application process, which includes opportunities for offer holders to speak to a peer from their subject or an academic tutor, to benefit from attainment-raising activity and resources, and to access an online course, [LiveSmart](#), which prepares applicants for the transition to living independently. Crucially, it also enables applicants to engage with each other and normalise their apprehensions, creating a sense of belonging and community prior to enrolment.

An online course for parents, which guides them through the application process and inspires confidence for supporting their children/dependents, as well as engaging with other parents, was also launched in January 2020. These initiatives are currently being evaluated with respect to effectiveness and engagement.

We are currently looking to improve diversity amongst student ambassadors involved in recruitment, who are largely white and female, for example, by altering the language in advertisements for these roles via [Campus Jobs](#). It is also planned to include a diversity and inclusion element in the training for new student ambassadors and to consider whether in-country activity of the University's international teams could provide a similar form of pre-enrolment support for international students as for domestic students.

Contextual offer-making plays an important role in accounting for the fact that some applicants do not arrive on an equal footing. The process was introduced late in the 2019 admissions cycle, so it may take some time before the impact can be assessed, although we expect to start seeing early indicators in the 2021 intake. It will be important to specifically examine the impact it has on recruitment of BAME applicants.

It is notable from the [2019–20 annual D&I report](#) that offers to BAME PGR applicants as a percentage of applications represent about half those of white applicants, with Black applicants being the lowest. Progression of PGR students is discussed in Section 3.2.3.

3.1.2 Staff

As described in Section 1.1.2, the University set targets to achieve a minimum of 12% BAME staff in non-academic grades 6–9 by 2020 and 16% by 2026; this currently stands at 8.4%, indicating that further action needs to be taken. For academic staff in grades 7 and above, a minimum target of 14% was set against a baseline of 11% in 2016; this target was met in 2019–20, when the proportion of academic BAME staff reached 14.3%, an increase from 13.8% the previous year. Recruitment and representation targets will be reviewed as part of a wider exercise in the summer of 2021.

It appears that the objectives outlined by the Employer Identity Project (described in Section 1.1.2) have only been met to a limited degree. Anonymised shortlisting for grades 1–5 posts in Marketing, Communications and Engagement could not be introduced due to system limitations and quarterly interrogation of the Applicant Tracking System for ethnicity bias was also hampered by problems with data reporting, which is being actively investigated by HR Systems; interrogation of online exit interviews has not revealed any examples of perceived race-related reasons for leaving.

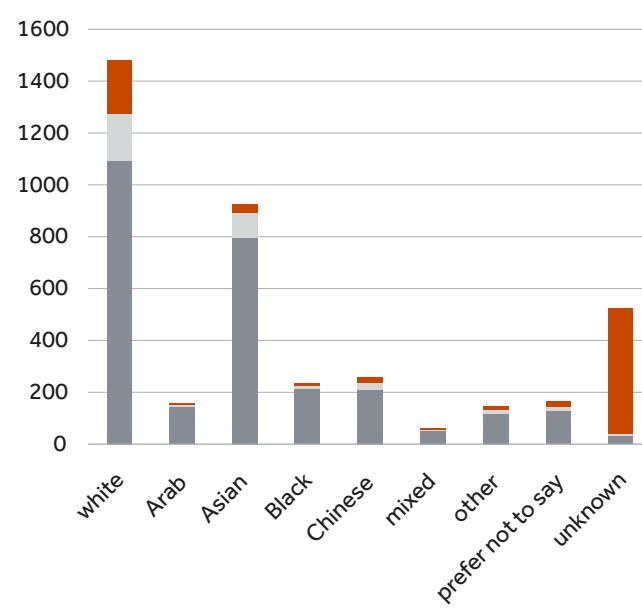
Success rates for all categories of BAME applicants have been significantly lower than for white applicants for the last five years. The most recent data for 2019–20

shows a success rate of 7.8% for white applicants compared with 4.1% for BAME applicants for all posts (academic and professional). Disaggregated data, where available, appear to suggest some marked differences in success rates for specific categories of staff. Evaluation of staff recruitment data was limited by the fact that the majority of successful applicants did not declare their ethnic background; nevertheless, the data available suggest that BAME candidates for both academic and professional posts are less likely to be invited for interview and less likely to be successful (see Figures below).

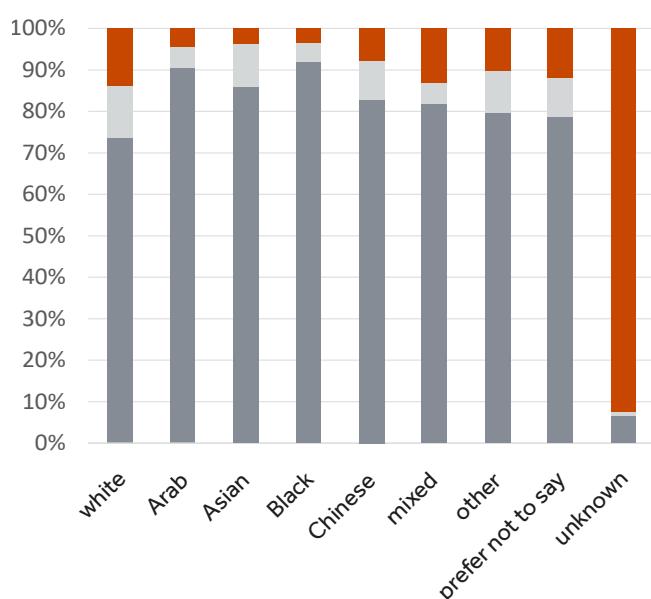
For example, the proportion of BAME applicants for academic posts who were not shortlisted for interview in 2019–20 was higher than that of white applicants; approximately 74% of white applicants were not shortlisted, but the proportion of Asian and Black applicants not shortlisted was 86%. A review of the recruitment process is currently underway, focussing on more inclusive language in job advertisements, training of recruitment panels, improvement in data monitoring and strong messaging around the importance of diversity on panels. Applicant-focussed web pages are being developed to support this work (the actions also link to recommendation 19 of this review, which focusses on embedding values-based criteria into the recruitment process. See section 3.4.3).

Applicant data for academic and research staff 2019–20

Absolute numbers



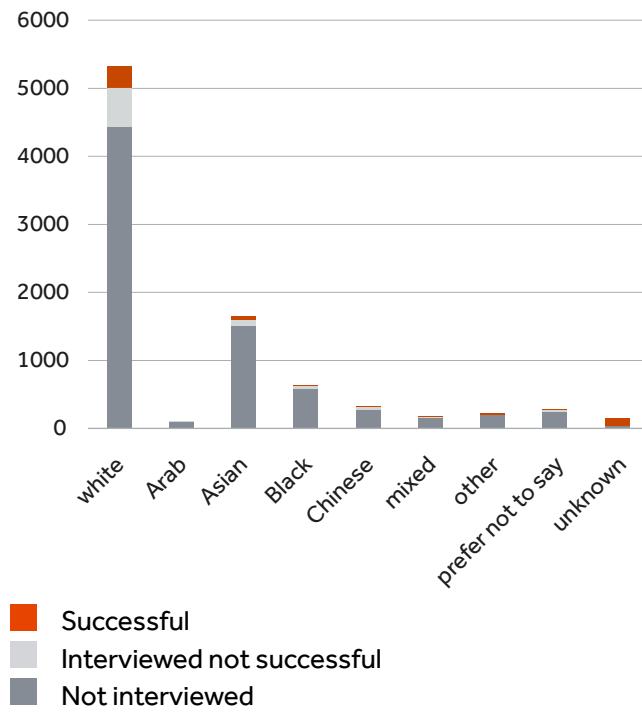
Percentages



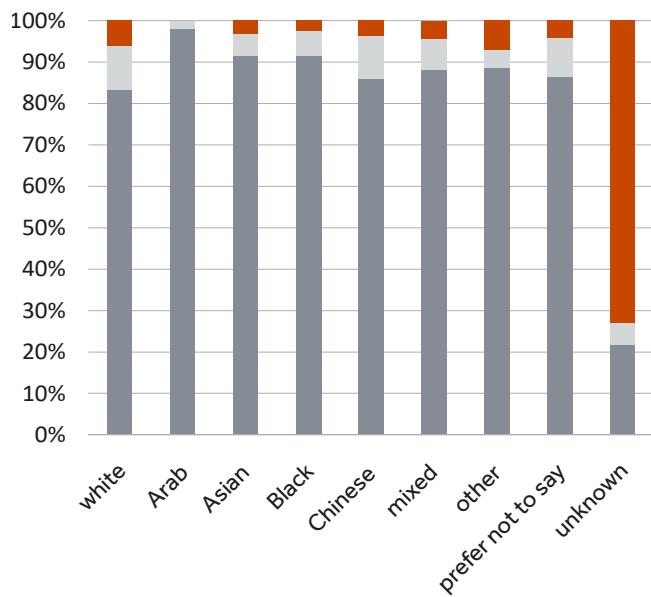
- Successful
- Interviewed not successful
- Not interviewed

Applicant data for professional services staff 2019–20

Absolute numbers



Percentages



- Successful
- Interviewed not successful
- Not interviewed

Representation on senior committees has remained **disproportionately low for the last five years**, with BAME staff accounting for only 5.3% of Senate members. However, there have been notable improvements in some areas. The University Council comprised 11.7% BAME membership in 2018–19, an increase from only 3% in 2016–17. It is, in fact, incumbent upon the Council to routinely reflect on its own composition and consider taking steps to ensure that it reflects societal norms and values according to the [CUC Code of Governance](#). This was addressed in 2020 by a successful effort to improve diversity during the recruitment of three new lay members of Council. Altering the language and tone of recruitment material, expressing a clear desire to improve diversity and broadening recruitment channels resulted in a more diverse applicant pool and as a result, **Council has now met its original target of 14% BAME membership**. It would not be difficult to replicate this elsewhere, and indeed adopt the approach widely across the University by ensuring inclusive language in all job descriptions and person specifications and expressing authentic commitment to improving diversity in the University in job advertisements. The University Executive Board increased its BAME membership to 12.5% by the addition of one individual in 2018 and the Strategy

and Finance Committee did likewise in 2020. Although this is an improvement, it does not yet represent sustained progress.

It was considered important by the review team to also examine data on other University-level committees, such as the University Board for Research and Innovation (UBRI) and the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (UBTLSE), since these committees potentially form a pipeline of individuals for membership of the most senior roles and committees within the University. UBRI currently comprises 13% BAME membership and UBTLSE has no BAME members.

It is worth noting that as part of a restructure of research governance in 2019, the membership of most research-related committees included two places which were allocated on the basis of expressions of interest from academic staff. This is seen to be an inclusive approach, which could be extended to other committees where possible.

One of the barriers to extending the approach to all calendared meetings is that for most committees to operate effectively, individuals with specific roles and responsibilities are required and the administrative burden associated with placing additional interested

individuals on committees would be excessive. Nevertheless, Chairs of calendared committees will be asked to consider whether it would be possible for their committee to take responsibility for this and, if so, to set out a clear process for doing so. Schools and Functions already operate an expression of interest model for internal roles, but the importance of this approach will be emphasised.

A stakeholder meeting exploring staff representation on senior committees endorsed the idea of events which 'demystify' Council (which are being planned for later in the year), but questioned whether the election process for membership of Senate might be subject to bias and internal influence. Personal testimonies included some negative experiences of senior committees being intimidating, unwelcoming and dominated by a few voices, but there were also some positive examples of committees which felt inclusive and enabled members to feel confident about participating. The role of the Chair was seen to be important in instilling a sense of belonging and encouraging contribution from all members, regardless of their experience; efforts to induct a new member and to explain a committee's terms of reference, remit, expectations and responsibilities are seldom made, but would do much to alleviate imposter syndrome, which is based on an individual feeling marginalised and not included.

A Good Practice Guide for secretaries of meetings and a guide for Chairs is available on the [governance zone](#) of the website. It would be timely to review this from a diversity and inclusion perspective and for committees to consider the guide along with membership and Terms of Reference on an annual basis. Schools and Functions should be made aware of the guide and encouraged to use it in all internal meetings. Training for chairing meetings exists via [UoRLearn](#); this will be reviewed for content and new chairs will be encouraged to engage with it.

Recommendation 1: Student recruitment

Build on pre-entry student recruitment activities to instil a sense of community and belonging amongst student peers prior to arrival. Diversify the student ambassador teams to include more BAME and more male student ambassadors and include a diversity and inclusion element in ambassador training.

Recommendation 2: Improve declaration rates

Improve declaration rates of applicants for all roles to enable better understanding and action relating to race equality in recruitment.

Recommendation 3: Staff recruitment

Embed inclusive language in all job descriptions and person specifications, review training of recruitment panels, improve data monitoring relating to recruitment and communicate the importance of diversity on panels. Embed monitoring of recruitment data into the Race Equality Action Plan.

Recommendation 4: Staff representation on committees

Reinforce the importance of a transparent approach for internal roles associated with committee membership based on expressions of interest and consider this approach for calendared meetings where possible. Committees to review guidance for effective and inclusive meetings at the start of each academic year, along with membership and Terms of Reference. Encourage uptake of training on skills in chairing meetings.

3.2 Student experience and attainment

This section describes key data, ongoing work, and recommendations relating to RUSU student societies and extracurricular activities, the Awarding Gap and decolonising the curriculum.

3.2.1 Student Experience

The student experience extends well beyond the classroom, and the data from the listening exercises supports this notion. Of note, racial harassment will be considered in relation to student and staff experience, with reference to the recommendations outlined in the 2020 UUK report on [Tackling Racial Harassment in Higher Education](#).

Conversations with stakeholders suggested that **a disproportionate number of BAME students are subject to disciplinary procedures and there is a perception that many do not seem to have the same level of understanding of and preparation for the process as their white peers**. It is also not clear whether penalties are consistently applied as data relating to student disciplinary action has not been systematically interrogated from an ethnicity perspective. It would be important to do this.

3.2.2 Societies and extracurricular

The Reading University Students' Union (RUSU) provides support and advocacy on academic and welfare issues – representing students both individually and collectively. It supports student interests and services (such as bars and shops) and organises or supports student-led social activities. At the beginning of each academic year, those enrolling to UK universities are advised to make the most of their university experience by signing up to a student-led club or society.

Every year, five individuals are elected from amongst the student body to serve as Full-Time Officers, taking on the roles of President, Education Officer, Welfare Officer, Diversity Officer and Activities Officer. Analysis of data from the last five years suggests that there is a strong bias towards BAME students standing for the post of Diversity Officer, with very few standing for most of the other roles. It is possible that the precedence of BAME students primarily holding the Diversity Officer role sets a pattern that is difficult to shift ("you can't be what you can't see").

This year, RUSU will be conducting a review of the elections process to examine the underlying reasons for this bias, the perceptions around accessibility of the roles, the communications around elections, who makes up the electorate, what strategies are adopted by candidates, and what makes a successful campaign. Targeted interventions will be introduced based on the evidence. RUSU, as an employer, has recently launched an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) action plan, which is overseen by a People and Culture Board – responsible for monitoring and acting on the findings and the impact will also be monitored over the longer term by REACT.

RUSU hosts a wide variety of sports clubs and student societies, but two focus groups involving BAME students, hosted in July 2020, indicated that some students felt reluctant to join some societies due to concerns about being tokenised as the only BAME member. There was also a perception that clubs and societies primarily for BAME students received lower levels of funding than other societies, but this is not in fact currently the case. However, there were concerns raised in the focus groups that a music venue catering predominantly for BAME students was subjected to additional scrutiny and stereotyping. Sense of inclusion in social spaces and participation in nightlife, particularly around drinking alcohol, drew a variety of comments from students in the focus groups, although this was heavily influenced by personal lifestyle choices and/or differences in culture. These cultural issues have been addressed by updating the [Knights Accreditation Scheme](#) and [Society Laurels](#) so that sports clubs and societies are incentivised with funding and other benefits to offer more inclusive events.

Survey respondents answering 'yes' to question:

“In my experience, students from all racial and ethnic backgrounds are included equally at all students' union events and societies.”

41% BAME students

60% white students

Source: Question 47 of student Race Equality Survey 2020

In 2019–20, the RUSU Activities Officer encouraged a number of societies to include a BAME representative on their committees, which was positively received and is being used as an example of good practice for all student societies. Student societies for specific ethnic groups are encouraged to be as inclusive as possible and to avoid excessive gatekeeping, while creating safe spaces for minority ethnic students. Linking part-time officers up with the networks, which were launched two years ago, would be key to achieving this; these connections have suffered from being limited to online activity during the pandemic, but will be resumed as soon as possible. In future, RUSU will require societies to sign a constitution at the beginning of the year and there is ongoing discussion about mandatory welfare training for those who run societies. There has also been a degree of success with RUSU adopting specific cultural events during the year and working together with the relevant culture/faith society to amplify its inclusivity and elevate the visibility of cultural celebrations. Opportunities to expand on this should be explored, perhaps even linking with staff networks.

Recommendation 5: Review student disciplinary data from an ethnicity perspective

Examine data relating to number and type of offence, degree of escalation within the disciplinary process, outcome and penalty applied, outcome at appeal and composition of disciplinary panels. Recommend actions based on findings, for example mandatory training on online safety, behaviour and the disciplinary process.

Recommendation 6: Diversity amongst RUSU Officers

Support RUSU to undertake targeted, evidence-based intervention to improve diversity amongst elected officers. Impact to be monitored by the RUSU People and Culture Board, with support from the REACT.

Recommendation 7: Inclusive student societies providing safe spaces

RUSU to encourage all societies to be inclusive, make welfare training mandatory for those running societies, and ensure that they provide appropriate safe spaces by linking part-time officers with networks. Exploit opportunities to encourage societies to host joint activities and amplify specific cultural events through adoption by RUSU and connection with staff networks.

3.2.3 Awarding Gap

The Degree Awarding Gap, also known as the Degree Attainment Gap, refers to the difference in the proportion of one group receiving a first or a 2:1 compared with another group. Using the phrase awarding gap, as opposed to attainment gap, recognises the multiplicity of factors that contribute to student success including the responsibility of the institution. This is not just semantics; the vocabulary used in this area is important both in terms of project scope and accountability. **Reducing these gaps is a key university priority.**

The current OfS regulatory framework, which regulates Access and Participation plans (APP) from HE institutions aims to:

“eliminate the unexplained gap in degree outcomes (1sts or 2:1s) between white students and black students by 2024–25, and to eliminate the absolute gap (the gap caused by both structural and unexplained factors) by 2030–31’ (OfS, 2018, p. 4)”

It is important to stress that according to Advance HE and the [UUK/NSS Closing the Gap report on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment at UK universities \(2019\)](#) these unexplained gaps exist even when student's prior attainment (e.g. A-level grades or UCAS entry points) is considered.

The University of Reading is committed both within its overall strategy and within its Access and Participation Plan to both understand the reasons for this “gap” and to taking positive action to reduce and eliminate differential outcome gaps. The current UG awarding gap between BAME students and white students is 8.4%, with an awarding gap of 16.2% between Black students and white students. However, it is well known that attainment fluctuates from year to year. When measuring success in reducing these gaps, it is important to consider trends and not individual yearly results in isolation. It is also important to note that awarding gaps vary significantly across Schools, so the work required here will involve reflection and ownership at School level (see Recommendation 7).

UoR UG progression rates, 2017–2020

	2017–18		2018–19		2019–20	
	BAME	white	BAME	white	BAME	white
Passed at 1st	73.6%	89.4%	73.1%	86.8%	86.6%	92.5%
Passed at 2nd	13.1%	5.4%	12.3%	6.5%	5.6%	2.8%
Failed at 2nd	5.4%	2.4%	4.8%	2.4%	2.6%	1.6%
Other	8.0%	2.8%	9.7%	4.3%	5.2%	3.1%

Source: [2019–20 Diversity & Inclusion Report](#)

Attainment comparison between BAME and white UG/PGT students (2019–20)

	BAME	white	Gap	Baseline target for 2020 (set in 2016)
UoR UG Attainment (First and 2:1) for 2019–20	83.6%	92.0%	8.4%	12.%
UoR PGT Attainment (Distinction/A or B and Merit/C) for 2019–20	78.9%	88.7%	9.8%	NA

Source: [2019–20 Diversity & Inclusion Report](#)

An awarding gap also exists for PGR students: data suggests that between 2015–16 and 2019–20, white students were significantly more likely to pass at first attempt with no or minor thesis corrections than BAME students, and this translates to an awarding

gap of 10.6%. Evaluation of progression data for PGR students from an ethnicity perspective has not been conducted routinely. However, ongoing monitoring and targeted intervention, if required, is recommended.

There is limited research into the causes of awarding gaps at the University of Reading specifically, although nationally research has identified four potential causes ([Mountford-Zimbars, Sabri, Moore, Sanders, Jones & Higham, 2015](#)):

- **Curricula and learning, including teaching and assessment practices**

Different student groups indicate varying degrees of satisfaction with the HE curricula, and with the user-friendliness of learning, teaching and assessment practices.

- **Relationships between staff and students and among students**

A sense of 'belonging' emerged as a key determinant of student outcomes. The extent to which students build networks beyond their immediate peer group has also been found to have an impact.

- **Psychosocial and identity factors**

The extent to which students feel supported and encouraged in their daily interactions within their institutions and with staff members was found to be a key variable. Such interactions can both facilitate and limit students' learning and attainment.

- **Social, cultural and economic capital**

There are recurring differences in how students experience higher education, how they network and how they draw on external support. Students' financial situation also impacts the student experience and engagement with learning.

The stakeholder meeting on student attainment provided a clear steer to review the resource invested in reducing the awarding gap and to include students as partners in this work. As a result, an Awarding Gap Steering Group, representative of academic and professional services staff has been established to guide the University's work on awarding gaps for both UG and PGT students. The Steering Group will oversee all aspects of the awarding gap work, including development of a facilitated workshop to examine data/issues and support the development of solutions to address the awarding gap. The Steering Group will report into the Access and Participation Committee (APC), which is responsible for tracking and evaluating progress towards the awarding gap targets detailed in the University of Reading Access and Participation Plan, which in turn is regulated by the Office for Students.

Additional resource has now been dedicated to enable the recruitment of a Student Outcomes (Awarding Gap) Manager within the Student Success and Engagement team to coordinate this work, alongside a student intern. Including students in this work is key to ensuring that it is based on student experience and insight rather than assumptions, and that students feel informed and empowered.

Recommendation 8: Establish structure to eliminate the awarding gap

Schools to take responsibility for reviewing and reflecting on the awarding gap data at School level. Where significant gaps are identified, Schools should plan how they can use the Curriculum Framework and alter their Teaching and Learning practices to reduce these gaps, with support from CQSD.

Awarding Gap Steering Group to engage with (paid) UG and PGT students as partners in creating solutions for eliminating the awarding gap by providing insight and feedback and holding the University to account on progress made.

Recommendation 9: Action plan to address the gap in PGR progression

Graduate School to embed evaluation of progression of PGR students from an ethnicity perspective into routine monitoring and to take targeted action to address any issues.

3.2.4 Decolonising the curriculum

Decolonising the curriculum runs deeper than simply broadening reading lists and case studies as it requires consideration of the impact of institutional structures, pedagogy, assessment approach, how the subject itself came to be taught in the way it is now and why it was structured in this way. Central to these points is the question of '*what/who was left out?*' and therefore, how to encourage counter-storytelling (defined as a method of telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told)?

Dr Eileen Hyder, Manager of FLAIR CPD scheme, has created the following three questions to guide individuals when considering their own teaching practices and how decolonisation of their own curriculum could be achieved:

- Who has drawn on/draws on the knowledge created by [insert discipline]?
- How has the knowledge created by [insert discipline] been used? Has it been used to disadvantage or oppress others?
- As we create new knowledge in this discipline, what responsibility do we have for how it is used and for ensuring it does not lead to disadvantage or oppression?

The appendix to this report contains two case studies exploring approaches to decolonising and diversifying the curriculum.

Representatives from across the University participated in a stakeholder meeting on decolonising the curriculum, where they reflected on the [Curriculum Framework](#), including the overarching ambition that the curriculum '*is designed to meet the needs and be representative of the world we live in, recognising the contributions made by different genders, cultures, races and the perspectives of/impact on different groups. It is representative of the discipline/s subject matter and the contributions and perspectives of different groups on that subject matter*'. This perspective focuses on diversifying the curriculum, rather than specifically focusing on decolonising the curriculum.

In the stakeholder meeting, it was acknowledged that the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences subjects might lend themselves more easily to decolonising and diversifying content than STEM subjects, but that colleagues in most disciplines are likely to need guidance to support diversification and decolonisation, as well as appropriate resource.

Within the Race Equality Review, we are specifically concerned with actions to decolonise the curriculum, what it means for us as a University, and how to support colleagues to decolonise their own curriculum. From reviewing current specific work for decolonisation, there has been work in many Schools and Departments, including Agriculture, Policy and Development, Classics, English Literature, Film, Theatre and Television, History, Institute of Education, and Law. However, the progress made in these areas appears to be largely attributable to individual motivation and local initiative, and not a shared ethos across the University. As detailed in the recommendation below, we suggest that decolonising the curriculum features within all School Teaching & Learning Enhancement Action Plans, so that meaningful progress can be made, as well as capturing data on the approach used, the measurable outcomes and associated impact. Current training has so far been based on inclusive practice, rather than race equality specifically, so **it is imperative that sustained effort and ongoing commitment to specific training and support is maintained**. RUSU potentially plays a key role in this and has led discussions and published statements supporting decolonisation of the curriculum.

Student survey responses on race in academic discussions

Survey respondents answering 'yes' to question:

“When relevant, issues of ethnicity and race are included in academic discussions.”

43% BAME students

68% white students

Source: Question 34 of student Race Equality Survey 2020

It is important in the context of discussion around the Curriculum Framework that we are clear about whether we are considering decolonisation or diversification of the curriculum and what we mean by each of these terms. As detailed in the case studies within the appendix, decolonisation focuses on race equality specifically, whereas diversifying the curriculum focuses on inclusive curricula across the diversity and inclusion sphere. In both cases, best practice approaches involve student-staff partnerships, a good example of which is the student-staff partnership exploring BAME equality issues within the School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences. This student-staff partnership has led to recommendations for how the School can further embed racial equality within Teaching & Learning, how to make sure BAME staff and students are represented on the School's website and social media channels, and to raise awareness and celebrate cultural and religious holidays. These partnerships enable us to explore what decolonising the curriculum means to our students and how we can meaningfully achieve representation of BAME individuals within the curriculum. Best practice should be shared beyond this and progress in decolonising the curriculum should be subject to evaluation by the Teaching and Learning Deans.

Recommendation 10: Development of a programme to decolonise the curriculum

Establish a 'task and finish' group, which includes students, staff and RUSU Officers and leads on creating an institutional definition of 'decolonising the curriculum,' as well as preparing guidance on how to achieve it. This work will be aligned with the Portfolio Review and supported by the Dean for Diversity and Inclusion.

The recommendation in this section is based on the key elements raised above, namely, creating an institutional definition about what we mean by decolonising the curriculum, support and guidance on how to decolonise the curriculum including student-staff partnerships, and evaluating progress for decolonising the curriculum and maintaining inclusive curricula.

School and department level progress on decolonising the curriculum and creating/maintaining inclusive curricula should feature within each School's Teaching Enhancement Action Plan, which is discussed at each Board of Studies and Student Experience meeting. Progress should be reviewed and reported by School Management Boards and by the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (UBTLSE).

3.3 Staff experience and progression

This section examines staff experience and progression from the perspective of training, personal development and allyship for all staff, as well as for BAME staff specifically. It also discusses staff progression, reward and recognition and the ethnicity pay gap, but it does not cover reporting and responding to racial harassment and discrimination, which is discussed in Section 3.4. Postgraduate Research students were considered in this section where their roles involved teaching, but progression and attainment of this group is considered in Section 3.2.

3.3.1 Training, personal development and allyship

Internal D&I training within the University is open to all staff, with some specifically designed for a particular audience, for example line managers or members of recruitment panels. There is one module of mandatory D&I training, which has to be completed

in order to pass probation. Feedback from Schools and Functions (Section 2.1) and from the all-staff briefings (Section 2.5) suggests that specific training on issues relating to race equality is perceived to be important and there is seen to be a need for it, some colleagues even suggesting that there should be more mandatory training. There is certainly a strong case for revising the current mandatory D&I module to include a race equality element and to continue to make this a probationary requirement for new staff, but also to require existing staff to complete the updated module. Completion rates should be followed up directly with the Head of School/Function by People Development.

The role of allyship in understanding the emotional impact of experiences of BAME colleagues, without them having to re-visit distressing situations in order to educate, has been highlighted by the BAME Network in recent months. Black History Month

in 2020 emphasised the need for white colleagues to take ownership of their own education and consider how best to support their BAME colleagues. Resources to support this are described in Section 3.4.

Participation in allyship activities has so far been modest and requires support from senior leaders across the University. Heads of School and Function should undertake allyship training specifically tailored to race equality, set ambitious targets for allyship training within their teams/areas (beginning with Heads of Department and colleagues with leadership roles), and visibly support their allies' activities. Allyship training should also be undertaken by members of Council, the University's governing body, and the impact of such training across the University should be evaluated by REACT.

The University offers sponsored places on externally delivered programmes aimed at developing BAME leaders. These include StellarHE, Diversifying Leadership and Mandala. While these programmes are seen to be of benefit overall, there have been concerns that they are based on a deficit model. This has been addressed to some degree by the external providers, but it is also apparent that colleagues attending the programmes experience limited opportunity to embed or strategically employ their learning in their School or Function. There is a missed opportunity for the University to benefit from the learning gained and/or projects undertaken through these programmes, which should be addressed, for example, by supporting the line managers of those attending the programmes to identify objectives prior to the programme and to revisit them and embed learning by taking up new opportunities on completion. BAME colleagues completing the programme could be encouraged to share their experience and be allocated time to mentor future participants.

3.3.2 Staff progression, reward and recognition

Significant changes have been made to the Personal Titles (academic promotion) and probation processes to improve transparency, and citizenship criteria are now an essential component of progression requirements. However, some BAME colleagues report that relatively small groups of individuals are seen to be privileged with key information relating to progression and act as gatekeepers, sharing information with clusters and networks of individuals similar to themselves. General information relating to the process around academic promotion is disseminated at University level

in a transparent way and there are open Q&A sessions for all potential applicants. However, it is likely that there is inconsistent practice with respect to mentoring and application support, although central data suggests that there is generally low uptake of mentoring specifically for the purpose of a promotion application. A good case is dependent on the ability to demonstrate leadership roles and responsibilities, but these may be allocated without consideration of equal opportunity.

While numbers of academic promotion cases from BAME colleagues over the last few years are too small to conduct meaningful statistical analysis in order to understand any potential bias, it would be important to undertake an independent, evidence-based approach to identify patterns by examining examples of promotion cases from BAME colleagues from the last five years. This should be supported by interviews with Schools to understand how information relating to promotion is shared and discussed and to evaluate whether potential candidates are given equal opportunity.

For professional services colleagues, there is a lack of data on individuals who progress by moving to a higher grade post and it would be important to collect this data disaggregated for ethnicity. There is a need to understand what action is required to support the opportunity, skills and confidence for BAME staff to apply for different roles in order to progress.

It is important to recognise that equality-related work often carries a heavy burden that is not recognised. Individuals who identify with a protected characteristic are much more likely to carry responsibility for equality work related to that characteristic; the relative lack of BAME staff at the University means that a disproportionate burden of work is inevitable. A greater burden of equality work will itself hinder progression in other areas, putting BAME colleagues at a disadvantage compared with their white peers, who may feel no obligation to contribute to EDI. This issue is not limited to formal EDI roles; the lack of BAME role models often means that BAME students gravitate towards staff with whom they most identify for pastoral support, increasing the burden of work for those individuals. Potential solutions for this are explored in Section 3.4.3 on collective responsibility for equality work.

3.3.3 Ethnicity pay gap

The ethnicity pay gap is the percentage difference between the average pay of BAME and white staff across the whole workforce, encompassing all jobs and all staff. It is important to note that the pay gap does not have the same meaning as equal pay; equal pay is about ensuring that individuals are paid equally for carrying out the same work, similar work, or work of equal value.

The pay gap is a high-level snapshot at a single point in time and it is highly likely that it is influenced by the greater proportion of BAME staff in lower grade roles. The tables below show ethnicity pay gap data for 2019 for both pay and bonus pay, with gender included for comparison.

2019 Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gaps

Gender/ Ethnicity	Mean	Median
Gender	18.33%	18.48%
Ethnicity	19.8%	25.4%

2019 Gender and Ethnicity Bonus Pay Gaps

Gender/ Ethnicity	Mean	Median
Gender	24.59%	20.23%
Ethnicity	14.16%	20%

To date, there has been no monitoring or analysis of the ethnicity pay gap, but it is planned to do this on an ongoing basis.

The November 2018 UCEA report 'Caught at the Crossroads: An intersectional approach to gender and ethnicity pay gaps in HE' makes a number of recommendations relating to the ethnicity pay gap. It suggests:

- disaggregating the data by broad ethnic groups where data sample size allows
- considering the impact of nationality on the ethnicity pay gap
- considering intersectionality between gender and ethnicity
- improving the ethnic diversity of recruitment pools and addressing barriers to progression more likely to affect ethnic minorities and
- not attributing the ethnicity pay gap solely to discrimination or racism.

Recommendation 11: Mandatory D&I training

Revise the current mandatory D&I training to include a specific race equality element and re-launch for completion by all staff. Follow up with Head of School/Function on completion rates.

Recommendation 12: Allyship training

Leadership Group and University Council to undertake allyship training and Head of School / Function to set ambitious targets for allyship training for their teams/areas. Regular evaluation of the impact of such training by REACT.

Recommendation 13: BAME Leadership Programmes

People Development to engage with managers of BAME leadership programme delegates to identify objectives, capture learning and allocate time to explore development and mentoring opportunities.

Recommendation 14: Promotion and progression

Take an independent, evidence-based approach to identify patterns and underlying causes of lack of success of promotion cases from BAME colleagues from the last five years, supported by interviews with Schools to understand whether potential candidates are given equal opportunity. For Professional Services colleagues, collect data on progression to higher grade roles disaggregated for ethnic group and consider whether action is required to support the opportunity, skills and confidence for BAME staff to apply for different roles in order to progress.

3.4 Culture

An inclusive culture is one in which respect, equity and positive recognition of differences are cultivated. It underpins every aspect of an organisation's activities and allows staff and students from all backgrounds to achieve their full potential. Effective cultural change requires those in senior positions to lead by example in embedding a culture where racial harassment is not tolerated, and race equality is embedded in the institution's mission.

The first step is to address the fact that race and ethnicity are carefully ignored outside the diversity and inclusion agenda at the University of Reading, and to respond to the desire of staff and students to have meaningful discussion about racism in a safe environment. The active listening phase initiated some of this discussion, but it must be continued beyond this review and must engage the entire University community, including its governing body.

Staff and students from BAME backgrounds must be at the forefront, but it should be clear that efforts to bring about cultural change are a collective responsibility and should not fall to a minority of colleagues.

3.4.1 Racial harassment

Staff experience of racial discrimination on campus

Survey respondents answering 'yes' to question:

“ I have witnessed or been the victim of racial discrimination on campus. ”

28% BAME students

12% white students

Source: Question 17 of staff Race Equality Survey 2020

Student perception of action taken against offensive behaviour on campus.

Survey respondents answering 'yes' to question:

“ It is made clear that racially offensive behaviour is not tolerated in University of Reading student accommodation/by those living in student accommodation. ”

59% of survey respondents agreed

Source: Question 17 of student Race Equality Survey 2020

Student perception on tolerance of racially offensive behaviour

Survey respondents answering 'yes' to question:

“ Racially offensive or inappropriate behaviours are not tolerated at events and activities organised by the students' union and RUSU-affiliated student societies. ”

54% BAME students

66% white students

Source: Question 48 of student Race Equality Survey 2020

The #NeverOK campaign was designed to provide a simple and transparent way for students to report any form of harassment and to easily access the support and services they may require. Since its launch, it has focussed on specific types of bullying, harassment and discrimination and there is work planned to address racial microaggressions in March 2021. The #NeverOK committee has extended its membership to include representation from the welfare team and is exploring the possibility of developing an anonymous reporting structure, in line with the recommendations from the [2020 UUK report](#), which could inform a similar approach for staff.

The active listening phase conducted as part of this review confirmed that negative behaviours towards BAME staff and students are evident at the University of Reading. Although only a small proportion of students responded to the survey conducted as part of this review, there was evidence of experience of racial harassment and 50% of BAME students expressed a lack of confidence in the University dealing effectively and transparently with offensive behaviour and the ability of teaching staff to facilitate discussions about race (Section 2.4). Participants contributing to focus groups described the discomfort and mental stress from retrospective analysis of discriminatory treatment and microaggressions, and the diminution of complaints about racist language and behaviour, which were dismissed or met with white fragility (Section 2.2). A frequent comment from many BAME participants in the active listening phase, including PGR students, post-doctoral researchers and a range of professional services staff, was that rules and procedures appeared to be applied more stringently and with greater penalties than for white colleagues, and sometimes involved a degree of public humiliation.

The University has a [policy dealing with harassment in the workplace](#), which specifically mentions race and sets out a procedure for staff: it was last reviewed in 2018 and is due to be reviewed again at the end of 2021. Complaints about racial harassment are initially addressed informally in a process supported by Harassment Advisers, whose role is to signpost rather than intervene, but they can be escalated to a formal grievance procedure if they cannot be resolved in this way. This may be problematic because it leads to the complaint being perceived as personal and against an individual, rather than against a behaviour or pattern of behaviours.

There is a need to examine whether an informal supportive procedure specifically tailored to resolve microaggressions and discriminatory behaviours might

be required. Policies dealing with racial harassment should contain links to resources which contain examples of discriminatory behaviours (anti-Blackness, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia etc) to support understanding of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours. There is currently no system for anonymous reporting of racial harassment, which was raised as an issue in the focus groups and stakeholder meetings. However, it is difficult to see how racial harassment could be addressed if there is no opportunity to hear all sides of a case.

The [EHRC inquiry](#) and the [UUK report](#) recommend routine evaluation of data and reporting mechanisms and review of communication of sanctions and outcomes, including to external audiences. The current lack of communication about sanctions and outcomes at UoR was a matter for concern for both staff and students; this could be aided by a UUK data-sharing guidance framework due to be published soon. The UoR process does, however, ensure that both parties in grievance or disciplinary cases have an HR contact who can assist with welfare support and mediation as required. Given that this review recommends establishment of anti-racist training, it could be considered as a sanction if appropriate.

Specific training on racial harassment is not currently provided by the University, although it is referenced in D&I and unconscious bias training. The issue of training was raised frequently during all aspects of the active listening phase of the review and is touched on in Section 3.3.

The [EHRC report](#) emphasises the importance of racial harassment training and bystander training for senior staff, managers, staff in non-management roles and staff investigating complaints. Training in white privilege, white fragility, microaggressions and allyship is critical and it was evident from the feedback from Schools and Functions (Section 2.1) and the all-staff briefings held in October and December 2020 (Section 2.5) that there is a demand for it. **It is important, however, that training does not become a box-ticking exercise and that it emphasises collective responsibility.**

It also became evident during the preparation of the review that there would be significant benefit in exploring opportunities for training of staff from third parties, such as RUSU and UPP, who interact with UoR students and who have an important role to play in both supporting a positive culture and in dealing with racial harassment.

3.4.2 Acknowledging our history, celebrating diversity and community engagement

Many organisations are examining their historical links to colonialism and slavery and in some cases, taking action to publicly acknowledge and address them. Likely links to colonialism and slavery at the University of Reading was raised as an issue during the focus groups and stakeholder meetings. It would be timely to consult with staff and students on whether to explore and investigate such links. It is important that such a search is not undertaken in a spirit of shaming and is sensitive to living descendants who may be unaware of the connection. The foregrounding should instead make visible and honour the labour of those who created the wealth, what it cost them, how it links with the University and how the University has benefitted from it. It should be acknowledged that it may not be possible to resolve the moral complexities of links with colonialism and slavery that might emerge.

The focus groups highlighted some tensions for BAME staff around immigration procedures and the visa process, which were perceived to be implemented in a hostile and unsupportive manner. Of course, immigration and visa procedures do not only apply to BAME colleagues, but an unsupportive process can undermine sense of belonging and the tone of discourse on immigration compliance is currently being reviewed.

Celebrations around key festivals provide an important opportunity to enhance sense of belonging and cultural connectedness for both staff and students, as well as encouraging potential links to the local community. There may be benefits in RUSU adopting a selected number of cultural celebrations and co-hosting them with the relevant society in order to widen participation. A small number of high-profile events, jointly hosted and funded by RUSU and the University (together with any relevant staff or student society) would be a positive step.

One of the stakeholder meetings explored whether the University was interacting in a meaningful way with local BAME groups and concluded that although there was active engagement with a small number of community groups, this was usually based on connections made by individual staff members, often as part of their academic research. Much of the work is voluntary, perceived as a 'nice to have' and not recognised, valued or resourced by the University.

It was felt that the University, as a major employer in the area and with the potential to play a key role in community cohesion, had not taken any significant steps towards embracing the diversity of Reading. It was perceived to be difficult for community members to penetrate University structures to ask for help or support or indeed to offer engagement. The D&I fund is currently supporting a post to connect the University's race equality work with the community.

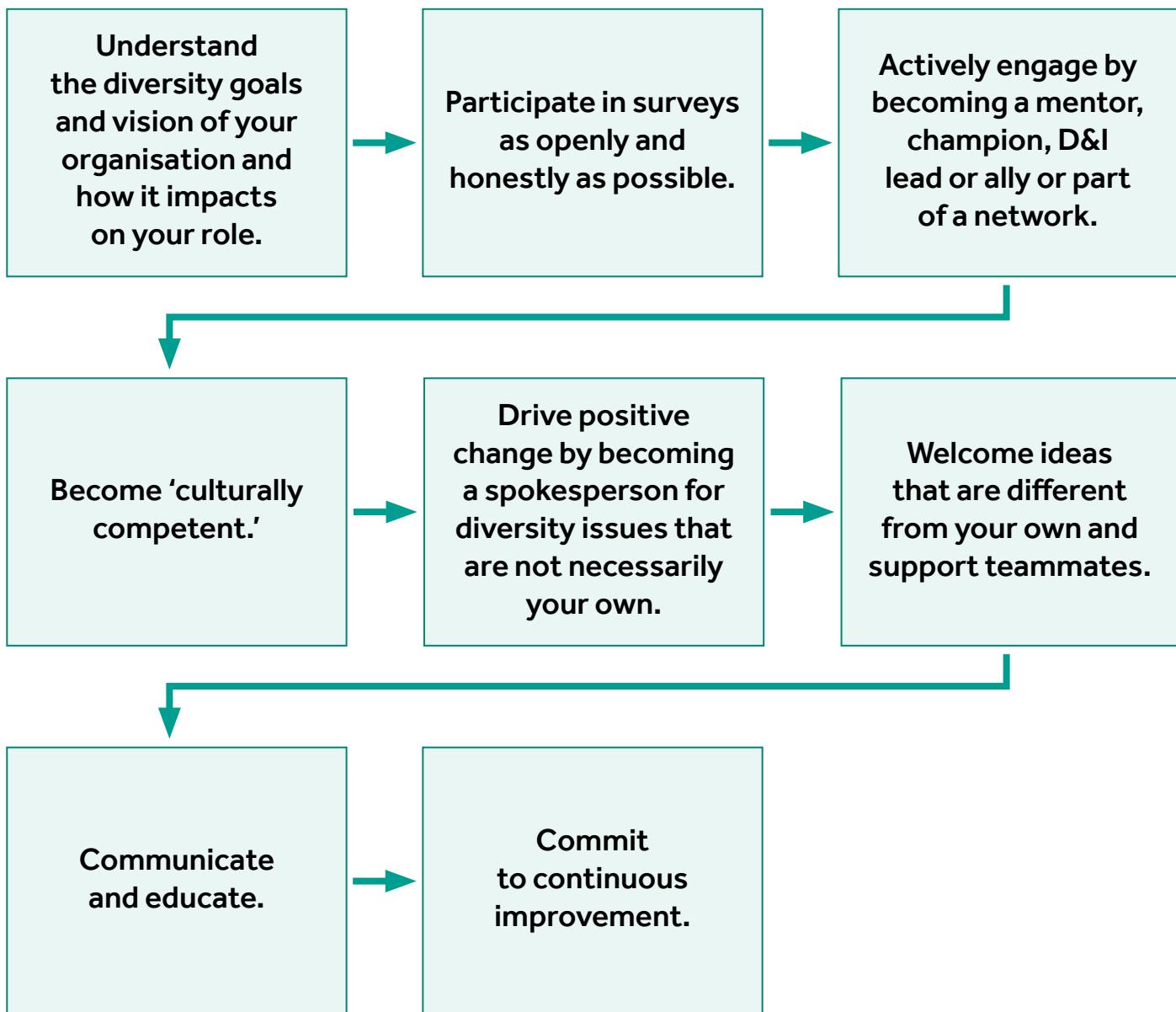
The **Community Action Partnership**, which was recently funded, will also be an important step towards establishing a gateway between the University and the local community, although it was recognised in stakeholder discussions that building community relationships can take significant time and effort.

Incorporation of values-based activities, such as EDI work, community engagement and contribution to sustainability in the citizenship criteria of the academic probation, promotion and professorial review processes could lead to a step-change in the way the University recognises and rewards this work. It is therefore recommended that the citizenship criteria are restructured to create a values-based criterion, which requires candidates to describe their contribution to EDI, community engagement and sustainability with specific reference to School or University level action plans. For Professional Services colleagues, the reward and recognition process and progression into higher grade roles should also incorporate these criteria.

3.4.3 Collective responsibility for equality work

We must address the lack of race literacy and understanding of other cultures; leaders at all levels should be encouraged to enhance their knowledge and understanding of race and racial literacy and should be prepared to understand the lived experiences of BAME staff and students in their community by creating safe spaces for these experiences to be heard. Lack of confidence in discussing race can lead to anxiety, but a shared understanding and a willingness of individuals to take responsibility for self-education can play a vital role in shifting culture. It is notable that unlike many private organisations, **the University does not routinely employ values-based assessments in the recruitment of staff**. It could be argued that if we do not regard an individual's commitment to equality as important when we employ them, how can we expect such a commitment to materialise at organisational level?

Roadmap: collective role in equality, diversity and inclusion



Values-based criteria should be incorporated into all aspects of the recruitment process, supported by template examples for wording in job advertisements, job descriptions, person specifications, shortlisting criteria, interview questions and assessment criteria.

Feedback from Schools and Functions (Section 2.1) and from the all-staff briefings (Section 2.5) indicated that many colleagues have a desire to become involved in race equality work, but are not always sure where to start. The newly-launched [Racial Equality Resources & Opportunities](#) pages provide an ideal starting point and the [Race Equality Action Plan](#) provides details of actions across a broad range of areas. Our [BAME Network](#) also offer excellent resources for those who wish to learn more about racism and how to combat it,

covering allyship and ally commitments, white privilege and white fragility, anti-Blackness, microaggressions and much more. Schools and Functions should be encouraged to use these resources and to consider the recommendations arising from this review as a framework for their activities going forward.

The RISE programme, outlined in Section 1.4, will play a small role in developing a more inclusive culture by identifying actions that can be taken at a personal and organisational level, including role-modelling behaviours, contributing positively to D&I initiatives within a School or Function, calling out negative behaviours, reflective self-development, fostering effective networking and allyship training for both staff and students.

The journey towards cultural competence and inclusivity is an individual responsibility, illustrated by the roadmap, (see previous page) which was developed as part of this review. This roadmap is not specific to race equality and can be underpinned by the action plans (School or University level) for all protected characteristics that are part of our Charter Mark commitments or part of our equality, diversity and inclusion goals more broadly.

For these action plans to be collectively owned, they need to be easily accessed, understood and embedded into the activities of all staff regardless of role or level. As indicated in Section 3.4.2 above, they should be embedded into the citizenship criteria for probation, promotion and professorial review for academic staff and into the reward and progression process for all staff such that passing probation or being promoted or receiving a salary increment would be dependent on contributing to a meaningful activity that was part of a School/Function or University EDI/community/sustainability action plan.

Recommendation 15: Anti-racist training, including white privilege and white fragility

Increase staff and students' understanding of racism, racial harassment, microaggressions and white privilege through training that is developed from an anti-racist perspective, employs professional external expertise and is delivered in partnership between staff and students where possible. Set targets for completion and evaluate to ensure that it is having an impact. Explore opportunities for sharing training with third parties, such as RUSU and UPP.

Recommendation 17: Dealing with racial harassment and discriminatory behaviour

Examine whether an informal supportive procedure specifically tailored to resolve microaggressions and discriminatory behaviours is required. Establish training for individuals involved in investigating cases of racial harassment. Incorporate training into sanctions for perpetrators in cases where racial harassment allegations are upheld and promote the use of mediation where possible.

Systematically collect data on incidents for evaluation by the REACT and report to senior staff, governing bodies and unions.

Recommendation 16: Policies relating to discrimination and racial harassment

Include links to specific examples of discriminatory behaviours in policies and training relating to race equality and racial harassment, which will support a shared understanding of racism and specific forms of discrimination and harassment, including anti-Blackness, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia etc.

Recommendation 18: Understanding the University's links to colonialism and slavery

Establish a working group to consult with staff and students on whether and how to approach an exploration of the University's links with colonialism and slavery, and to report findings and recommendations from such an exploration to UEB.

**Recommendation 19:
Values-based criteria
for recruitment**

Introduce values-based criteria and evidence of candidate's contribution to EDI into the staff recruitment process, providing template examples for wording in job advertisements, job descriptions, person specifications, shortlisting criteria, interview questions and assessment criteria.

**Recommendation 20:
Values-based criteria
for progression**

Establish group to consider restructure of the citizenship criteria within the academic probation and promotion processes to create a values-based criterion, which requires candidates to describe their contribution to EDI, community engagement and sustainability with specific reference to School or University level action plans. For Professional Services colleagues, the reward and recognition process and progression into higher grade roles should also incorporate these criteria.



Part 4: Concluding remarks and summary of recommendations

Racial inequality in society is not just reflected in the higher education sector, it is magnified. A conspicuous lack of representation of people of colour, particularly at senior level, differential experience between white students and their BAME peers, a curriculum which largely reflects white histories and cultures, and a culture which does little to challenge implicit racial prejudice are evident in the sector and evident here at the University of Reading. We must address this if we want to study and work in an environment which embraces a diversity of voices, experiences and talent.

This review set out to reflect on the University's race equality journey to date, to understand the lived experiences and challenges of our community by opening up conversations in a multi-faceted active listening exercise, and to evaluate how we can address the lack of representation, improve staff and student experience and progression and inspire a culture of collective responsibility for dismantling racial inequalities.

It is essential that we address our lack of race literacy and understanding of other cultures through training and allyship at every level of our organisation. We must instil greater confidence in our racial harassment reporting procedures, make it absolutely clear that the University has a zero-tolerance approach to racial harassment, adopt a transparent approach to sharing outcomes of investigations and provide appropriate support for both the victim and the perpetrator.

It is imperative that we collectively own our Race Equality Action Plan, and indeed the action plans aligned with all protected characteristics, by valuing activities relating to equality, diversity and inclusion and embedding them into our reward and recognition processes.

The twenty recommendations set out in Section 3 of this review and summarised in the table below relate to all aspects of the University's activities, and include clear lines of accountability. The implementation of the recommendations and the formulation of a detailed timeline will be overseen by REACT and will ultimately be incorporated into the [Race Equality Action Plan](#) and a future Race Equality Charter Mark application.

Members of the review team are extremely grateful to those who shared their views and experiences in the active listening exercise, those who engaged with the events and conversations connected with this review, those who contributed to a series of stakeholder meetings and those who contributed advice and expertise for specific aspects of the review.

The motivation and commitment amongst University colleagues to engage with self-education and anti-racist work is deeply encouraging, but it must be nurtured and grown to engage the entire University community, including its governing body.



Recommendations of the Race Equality Review

Recommendation	Responsible
Representation	
1 Student recruitment: Build on pre-entry student recruitment activities to instil a sense of community and belonging amongst student peers prior to arrival. Diversify the student ambassador teams to include more BAME and more male student ambassadors and include a diversity and inclusion element in ambassador training.	Admissions team; monitoring by REACT.
2 Improve declaration rates of applicants for all roles to enable better understanding and action relating to race equality in recruitment.	Dean for Diversity and Inclusion and HR, monitoring by REACT
3 Staff recruitment: Embed inclusive language in all job descriptions and person specifications, review training of recruitment panels, improve data monitoring relating to recruitment and communicate the importance of diversity on panels.	Assistant Director HR, monitoring and embedding into Race Equality Charter Mark work by REACT.
4 Staff representation on committees: Reinforce the importance of a transparent approach for internal roles associated with committee membership based on expressions of interest and consider this approach for calendared meetings where possible. Committees to review the guidance for effective and inclusive meetings at the start of each academic year, along with membership and Terms of Reference. Encourage uptake of training on skills in chairing meetings.	Schools and Functions, Chairs of calendared meetings, People Development for training, monitoring and evaluation by REACT.
Student experience and attainment	
5 Review student disciplinary data from an ethnicity perspective. Examine data relating to number and type of offence, degree of escalation within the disciplinary process, outcome and penalty applied, outcome at appeal and composition of disciplinary panels. Recommend actions based on findings for example mandatory training on online safety, behaviour and the disciplinary process.	Student disciplinary team, Governance, Student Services.
6 Diversity amongst RUSU Officers: Support RUSU to undertake targeted, evidence-based intervention to improve diversity amongst elected officers.	Impact to be monitored by the RUSU People and Culture Board, with support from the REACT as required.
7 Inclusive student societies providing safe spaces: RUSU to encourage all societies to be inclusive, make welfare training mandatory for those running societies, and ensure that they provide appropriate safe spaces by linking part-time officers with networks. Exploit opportunities to encourage societies to host joint activities and amplify specific cultural events through adoption by RUSU and connection with staff networks.	RUSU, monitoring by REACT.

Recommendation	Responsible
<p>8 Establish structure to eliminate the awarding gap. Schools to take responsibility for reviewing and reflecting on the awarding gap data at School level. Where significant gaps are identified, Schools should plan how they can use the Curriculum Framework and alter their Teaching and Learning practices to reduce these gaps, with support from CQSD.</p>	<p>Awarding Gap Steering Group to engage with (paid) UG and PGT students as partners in creating solutions for eliminating the awarding gap by providing insight and feedback and holding the University to account on progress made.</p>
<p>9 Action plan to address the gap in PGR progression: Graduate School to embed evaluation of progression of PGR students from an ethnicity perspective into routine monitoring and to take targeted action to address any issues.</p>	<p>Graduate School, Planning & Strategy Office, monitoring by REACT.</p>
<p>10 Development of a programme to decolonise the curriculum: Establish a 'task and finish' group, which includes students, staff and RUSU Officers and leads on creating an institutional definition of 'decolonising the curriculum', as well as preparing guidance on how to achieve it. This work will be aligned with the Portfolio Review and supported by the Dean for Diversity and Inclusion.</p>	<p>CQSD, School Management Boards and UBTLSE</p>

Staff experience and progression

<p>11 Mandatory D&I training: Revise the current mandatory D&I training to include a specific race equality element and re-launch for completion by all staff. Follow up with Head of School/Function on completion rates.</p>	<p>People Development, D&I Advisors, MCE to support communication.</p>
<p>12 Allyship training: Leadership Group and University Council to undertake allyship training and HoS and HoF to set ambitious targets for allyship training for their teams/areas. Regular evaluation of the impact of such training by the REACT.</p>	<p>D&I Advisors to scope, People Development to leverage resource, evaluation of impact by REACT</p>
<p>13 BAME Leadership Programmes: People Development to engage with managers of BAME leadership programme delegates to identify objectives, capture learning and allocate time to explore development and mentoring opportunities.</p>	<p>Line managers with support from People Development</p>
<p>14 Promotion and progression: Take an independent, evidence-based approach to identify patterns and underlying causes of lack of success of promotion cases from BAME colleagues from the last five years, supported by interviews with Schools to understand whether potential candidates are given equal opportunity. For Professional Services colleagues, collect data on progression to higher grade roles disaggregated for ethnic group and consider whether action is required to support the opportunity, skills and confidence for BAME staff to apply for different roles in order to progress.</p>	<p>Sub-group of the Personal Titles Committee for academic staff, appointed by Governance. HR for Professional Services staff.</p>

Recommendation	Responsible	
Culture		
15	<p>Recommendation 15: Anti-racist training, including white privilege and white fragility: Increase staff and students' understanding of racism, racial harassment, microaggressions and white privilege through training that is developed from an anti-racist perspective, employs professional external expertise and is delivered in partnership between staff and students where possible. Set targets for completion and evaluate to ensure that it is having an impact. Explore opportunities for sharing training with third parties, such as RUSU and UPP.</p>	People Development, D&I Advisors, support from MCE.
16	<p>Policies relating to discrimination and racial harassment: Include links to specific examples of discriminatory behaviours in policies and training relating to race equality and racial harassment, which will support a shared understanding of racism and specific forms of discrimination and harassment, including anti-Blackness, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia etc.</p>	Governance, MCE
17	<p>Dealing with racial harassment and discriminatory behaviour: Examine whether an informal supportive procedure specifically tailored to resolve microaggressions and discriminatory behaviours is required. Establish training for individuals involved in investigating cases of racial harassment. Incorporate training into sanctions for perpetrators in cases where racial harassment allegations are upheld and promote the use of mediation where possible.</p> <p>Systematically collect data on incidents for evaluation by the REACT and reporting to senior staff, governing bodies and unions.</p>	Governance, HR, monitoring of systematic data by REACT.
18	<p>Understanding the University's links to colonialism and slavery: Establish a working group to consult with staff and students on whether and how to approach an exploration of the University's links with colonialism and slavery, and to report findings and recommendations from such an exploration to UEB.</p>	Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Dean for Diversity & Inclusion
19	<p>Values-based criteria for recruitment: Introduce values-based criteria and evidence of candidate's contribution to EDI into the staff recruitment process, providing template examples for wording in job advertisements, job descriptions, person specifications, shortlisting criteria, interview questions and assessment criteria.</p>	HR
20	<p>Values-based criteria for progression: Establish group to consider restructure of the citizenship criteria within the academic probation and promotion processes to create a values-based criterion, which requires candidates to describe their contribution to EDI, community engagement and sustainability with specific reference to School or University level action plans. For Professional Services colleagues, the reward and recognition process and progression into higher grade roles should also incorporate these criteria.</p>	Working group with representation from the Personal Titles Committee, HR and Professional Services.

Appendix

Section 1.3 – Staff experience and progression

Table 9: Personal Titles Summary – Successful Applications for Associate Professor and Professor (by Ethnicity)*

	Successful applicants as a % of the number of applicants in that category. Actual number in brackets.					Successful BAME or white applicants as % of total successful applicants. Actual number in brackets.				
	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
white	74% (29/39)	75% (45/60)	76% (59/78)	72% (65/90)	64% (48/75)	74% (29/39)	85% (45/53)	87% (59/68)	76% (65/85)	86% (48/56)
BAME	78% (7/9)	50% (4/8)	60% (9/15)	79% (15/19)	55% (6/11)	18% (7/39)	8% (4/53)	13% (9/68)	17% (15/85)	11% (6/56)
Unknown	100% (3/3)	100% (4/4)	0% (0/1)	83% (5/6)	40% (2/5)	8% (3/39)	8% (4/53)	0% (0/68)	6% (5/85)	4% (2/56)

*Please note that only candidates who made it to the University stage are included in the above data.

Applicants who weren't successful at the faculty/ school stage have been omitted.

Table 12: Reward Processes (by Ethnicity)

	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
Additional Increment	27% BAME	11% BAME	3 BAME – 6.67%	5 BAME – 17.24%	6 BAME – 13.04%
	69% white	87% white	41 white – 91.11%	21 white – 72.41%	40 white – 86.96%
	4% unknown	2% unknown	1 unknown – 2.22%	3 unknown – 10.35%	0 unknown
Contribution Points	8% BAME	5% BAME	4 BAME – 7.55 %	6 BAME – 15%	3 BAME – 8.33%
	84% white	93% white	49 white – 92.45%	34 white – 85%	32 white – 88.89%
	8% Unknown	2% unknown	0 unknown – 0%	0 unknown – 0%	1 unknown – 2.78%
Merit Based Promotion	0% BAME	0% BAME	1 BAME – 16.67%	2 BAME – 33.33%	2 BAME – 18.18%
	100% white	100% white	5 white – 83.33%	4 white – 66.66%	9 white – 81.82%
	0% unknown	0% unknown	0 unknown – 0%	0 unknown – 0%	0 unknown

Table 14: Celebrating Success (by Ethnicity)

	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20
BAME	57 (9%)	82 (12%)	59 (10.75%)	81 (9%)*	119 (12.98%)*
white	570 (91%)	612 (88%)	469 (85.43%)	700 (81%)*	773 (84.30%)*

*This does not add up to 100% as a number of awards were given to staff who have not declared their ethnicity

Source: [2019–20 Diversity & Inclusion Report](#)

Section 3.2.4 – Decolonising the curriculum

Case studies

Moving from knowledge hierarchies towards a Knowledge Exchange Partnership in development and Development Studies

Dr Jo Davies, Programme Director for BSc International Development

What we teach in 'Global North' institutions can create the basis for authoritative knowledge in development. We might 'decolonise our curriculum' by adding a diversity of writers to our reading lists, but they are still *our* reading lists. Academics inhabit a closed space of power when designing what we teach but are not the only stakeholders in their design. This has provoked me, as the Programme Director of UoR's BSc International Development, to ask: *Do Development Studies programmes challenge current structural inequalities or reinforce them?*

Development Studies has faced increasing calls to '... move beyond its complicity with Western knowledge and power' (Kothari, 2005:85). The intellectual and organisational space in which the Development Studies curriculum is designed should not be limited to academics. A comprehensive list must centre people who are most disenfranchised by current power imbalances. It should also include students, civil society and development practitioners. In Summer 2020, I held initial scoping research dialogues with civil society representatives in Somalia and Sierra Leone, Heads of Research and Advocacy in multilateral development organisations, and leading development studies academics and publishers. This research identified three key findings (currently under review for publication). Firstly, it highlighted how our Development Studies curricula inform the thinking of the next generation of development academics and practitioners from both the Global North and Global South. One respondent explained how western education is privileged in a 'local' context, and worried that this is reinforced in students from the Global South when learning in the US or the UK. Secondly, respondents highlighted the urgent need for this project to review who can access spaces of knowledge validation in academia, and feed into the learning of the next generation. Comments about this proposed research included: 'I'm so glad that you are raising these questions...it is not so common, still, to find people with this awareness'; 'It is an excellent departure point'; 'This is the beginning of the transformation

journey that is needed all around'; 'Keep going! ... you're doing something that ... fundamentally does matter'. Thirdly, the scoping project successfully demonstrated the efficacy and suitability of research dialogues as a method for exploring these questions.

This next generation of Development Studies students will either challenge or replicate the same institutional and epistemic power imbalances that contribute to poverty and inequality today. By 'epistemic power' I mean how '... those in positions of power are responsible for the assumptions that underlie the selection and organisation of knowledge in society' (Goodson and Dowbiggin, 1990: 105). We need to consider how we access a broader set of development narratives that challenge, confirm or illuminate mainstream perspectives.

I have now been awarded a British Academy/Leverhulme Small Grant to advance this project further. This stage of the research programme has four objectives:

Objective 1: to determine the extent to which the voices of alternative ('local') stakeholders feed into current Development Studies programmes, and how this has developed over time.

Objective 2: to explore the barriers faced by stakeholders when accessing the academic space where the 'basis for authoritative knowledge' can be created. The initial step will be a case study in partnership with Civil Society Organisation Purposeful (Sierra Leone).

Objective 3: to create space to develop the institutional framework of a 'Knowledge Exchange Partnership' for comparative development. This is planned through a workshop and a collaboration with the Development Studies Association. It is fundamental to this work that the institutional design is produced via a dialogic approach, including previously excluded stakeholders, from its earliest stages.

Objective 4: A co-created 20-credit 'Power and Development' module will provide a concrete expression of this learning and will provide an empirical space to explore co-creation of knowledge with stakeholders. As the Programme Director of BSc International Development, I am in a strong position to implement the findings of this research directly into a current programme, and – hopefully – into University-level strategy.

Diversifying the Curriculum – A Report on *Barber Shop Chronicles*

Dr Matthew McFrederick, Lecturer in Theatre

In 2018, *Barber Shop Chronicles* by Inua Ellams was studied for the first time on Introduction to Theatre (now Analysing Theatre and Performance), a core Year 1 module in the Department of Film, Theatre & Television. The addition of this joyful, energetic, and emotional play about the overlooked tradition of African and Caribbean barbershops was motivated by its recent National Theatre premiere, an experience (as a then Sessional Lecturer) of teaching a monocultural term of the module, and greater sector wide awareness about diversifying and decolonising the curriculum, as many students began asking, "Why is my curriculum so white?"

Since its introduction to the curriculum, four undergraduate cohorts have read, watched, discussed, debated, presented, and written on *Barber Shop Chronicles*. Including and, subsequently, embedding the play on the curriculum has cultivated a learning environment and experience, where staff and students have become more confident and engaged with Black theatre. Moreover, the module has innovatively sought to support the teaching and learning methods and opportunities connected with the play. For example, early in 2019, Ellams visited the Department of Film, Theatre & Television to share insights about the play, its genesis, and its realisation in production, as well as poetry from his oeuvre. This well-attended event – funded by Diversity and Inclusion at Reading – accentuated the impact diversifying the curriculum had on students, as they highlighted the talk was 'an inspirational experience', it made the curriculum 'more real', and it 'enhanced [their] experience of different cultures'. Meanwhile, later in 2019, students were able to see a live performance at the Oxford Playhouse, which fostered their appreciation for the play and underlined the importance of studying plays by writers of colour from this first-hand experience.

In my recent PGCAP project on 'Embedding *Barber Shop Chronicles* in a Theatre Studies Curriculum', four key recommendations arose from the study evaluating staff feedback on the module's approaches to diversifying the curriculum.

These were:

- To include a play or performance over multiple iterations of the module.
- To organise direct involvement from the playwright or theatre practitioner whose work is being studied.
- To develop innovative teaching resources to aid the teaching and learning for the play or performance, particularly for new plays.
- To consider choosing plays by writers of colour that are scheduled for live performance.

Although these are specific to the discipline of Theatre, they suggest applicable measures that may align with diversifying teaching and learning in other disciplines in terms of repetition, experiences, resources, and environments. The inclusion of *Barber Shop Chronicles* on Introduction to Theatre began as a small intervention to diversifying the curriculum, but it has stimulated a broader confidence, value, and momentum in proactively promoting equality and championing diverse and inclusive curricula across the Department of Film, Theatre & Television.

RACIAL EQUALITY REVIEW

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