Institutional anti-racism action plan: our immediate priorities 2023 - 2026

Introduction

Established in 2023 as a thematic sub-group reporting to the EDI Strategy, Monitoring and Implementation Group, the Anti-Racism Working Group (ARWG) is charged with supporting the implementation of the University's strategic objective to:

> *'work with colleagues and students to dismantle systemic, cultural and individual forms of racism wherever they exist, thereby affirming that the University is an anti-racist institution'.*

> *University of Bristol Vision and Strategy 2030, Sub-strategy: Fostering equality, diversity and inclusion*

The ARWG is mandated to ensure the implementation of this strategic objective and has identified immediate evidence-based institutional priorities that will be supported by a more detailed and evolving institutional anti-racism action plan. The aim of the action plan is to advance race equity, with the aim of improving the representation, experiences, progression and success of staff and students from racially minoritised ethnic groups. It will also support the University in fulfilling the intersectional nature of the priorities and interventions committed to under the Athena Swan Charter, with particular reference to the commitment to:

> *'addressing structural inequalities and social injustices that manifest as differential experiences and outcomes for staff and students'.*

> **Vice-Chancellor letter of commitment to the Athena Swan Charter principles**

This is a living document that will be refined as appropriate over the coming years. The priorities identified are the result of several years of listening to and learning from the experiences of our staff and students, resulting in the co-creation of a framework for action that will lead to long-term and sustainable change. It also responds to the Equality and Human Rights Commission 2019 inquiry: Tackling racial harassment: universities challenged, and the subsequent recommendations made by Universities UK on Tackling racial harassment in higher education. The ARWG will ensure that the evolving action plan reflects emerging sector best practice on free speech and protected beliefs from Advance HE, the Office for Students and other sources to create an environment where intellectual engagement with sensitive or controversial issues is enabled but discriminatory behaviour and harassment is not tolerated.

Being anti-racist: our immediate priorities and actions 2023 - 2026

1.   Build awareness and accountability

We will improve learning and understanding about racism, its impact and our role in being actively anti-racist.

- Educational resources and development opportunities will be available to help people better understand racism, its impact and how we can all be anti-racist.
- Targeted interventions will be developed to equip managers and leaders to actively use their power and position to drive change and influence psychological safety across our organisation.
- Relevant induction and development activities for line managers will include an awareness of our institutional anti-racism commitments, an understanding of racism, and specific guidance on responding to complaints of racism.
- Leaders will be challenged to set objectives that introduce accountability and specific responsibility for being actively anti-racist.

Outcomes
- Effective cultural change, where those in positions of leadership lead by example.
- Improved awareness and understanding of racism.
- A sustainable approach to anti-racism is developed with accountability assigned to managers and leaders rather than being dependent on individual commitment.

2.   Build trust and confidence that the University will respond fairly, timely and effectively to racist incidents

We will build trust, confidence and psychological safety in reporting mechanisms for raising issues around racism, providing increased transparency about how we respond and demonstrating a willingness to listen and act.

- A range of measures will be developed to ensure that staff and students feel supported to speak up when they experience or witness racism.
- Policy, procedures and resources related to acceptable behaviours will be reviewed through an anti-racist lens to ensure they are fit for purpose.
- Leaders and managers will be empowered to integrate psychological safety into their practices and to lead with empathy.
- Channels for reporting incidents of racial harassment will be clearly defined, routinely communicated and evaluated.

Outcomes
- Students and staff will feel safe to speak up when they experience or witness racism.

- People will trust that they will be supported and have confidence in the process.
- Everybody understands that racism will not be tolerated, and that action will be taken.
- An increase in reporting of racist incidents.

3.   Improve staff representation and opportunities for career development

We will develop ways to improve representation, particularly in leadership roles, removing barriers and bias from all stages of the employee lifecycle and embedding racial equity in all people management practices, including hiring, development, promotion, pay, progression, and retention.

- Recruitment, progression and promotion policies and practices will be reviewed through an anti-racist lens to remove bias and barriers.
- Positive action measures will be developed centrally and at executive, Faculty and Divisional levels to improve representation of Black staff at all stages of the career pipeline.
- Access to development opportunities for future leaders will be monitored to ensure it is equitable and inclusive.

Outcomes
- Improved representation and distribution of Black staff across all levels of the University, particularly in leadership roles.
- Reduction in the University's ethnicity pay gaps, particularly for Black staff.

4.   Enhance student representation, experience and outcomes

We will develop ways to improve representation at all levels of study, improve sense of belonging, and address inequalities in outcomes, including eliminating the awarding gap.

- Agree new APP targets for the recruitment of Black undergraduate students and to eliminate the awarding gap, underpinned by intervention strategies with clear evaluation plans.
- Support the development of action plans to embed inclusion across student-facing services, with anti-racism as a key theme
- Work with the Race Inclusion Advocates (undergraduate students) to co-create improvements within services and schools to improve students' sense of belonging at the University and evaluate the impact of this work.
- Support the Be More Empowered for Success Advocates (postgraduate research students) to influence positive change in the areas of access, belonging and empowerment.
- Expand provision of educational resources and guidance about decolonisation including case studies from schools on their approach.

Outcomes
- Services are deliberately anti-racist and designed to achieve racial equity in their service provision.

- Positive impact on belonging, success and experience for students of colour.

5.   Review and improve services, policies and processes

We will invite colleagues to meetings of the Anti-Racism Working Group to engage in changemaking conversations where we will co-create impactful solutions to address existing bias and barriers that limit racial equity: nothing about us without us.

The Anti-Racism Working Group will do things differently, holding 'changemaking conversations' intended to inspire new ways of thinking and doing with the 'changemakers' (process/function owners).   The Anti-Racism Working Group will not 'do the work' for the organisation, but will call in colleagues, holding them to account for embedding anti-racism across the processes and/or functions that they own. Our anti-racism action plan will therefore evolve, as actions are co-created with the changemakers, on the basis that they have the power to effect sustainable and impactful change within their spheres of influence.

Outcomes
- Services, functions and processes that are designed to achieve racial equity.
- Positive impact on belonging, success and experience.
- Equitable outcomes for students and staff.

Metrics

Data will enable us to measure progress, identify gaps, and will inform changemaking conversations. Where functionality allows, an intersectional lens will be applied to these data. These data sets will include but not be limited to the following areas:

- Representation of students and staff
- Board/Governance representation by ethnicity
- Ethnicity Pay Gaps
- Staff and Student Survey results, disaggregated by ethnicity
- Staff and student recruitment data
- Promotion, progression
- Talent Management, access to people development opportunities and how this is advancing representation
- Staff Turnover
- Grievances/ Complaints related to racism
- Student outcomes data (including but not limited to awarding gaps)
- Student support and access to student services

- Staff/Student Discipline
- Supplier diversity

Definitions

Racism at an individual level can range from overt hate crimes to less visible microaggressions – everyday interactions that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative insults. The same action can have different outcomes depending on the context and who is involved, and seemingly well-intentioned actions can unwittingly produce racial inequity. At a structural level, racism involves one group having the power to carry out systematic discrimination through institutional policies and practices, and by shaping the cultural beliefs and values that support those racist policies and practices. Only outcomes, not intent, demonstrate whether actions and policies are racist.[1]

Anti-racism is the active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organisational structures, policies and practices and attitudes, so that power is redistributed and shared equitably. Anti-racism acknowledges there is no 'neutral' position on racism[2].

Racist incidents are racist or religious incidents/crimes and to monitor the decisions and outcomes:
"*Any incident/crime which is perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's race or perceived race[3]*"

Freedom of speech/expression may protect the expression of views that may shock, disturb, or offend the deeply held beliefs of others. However, the right to freedom of speech/expression can be limited and does not protect speech which amounts to discrimination or harassment under the Equality Act 2010, or which amounts to bullying, harassment, or the incitement of violence or hatred (but which might not be linked to a protected characteristic), and/or which constitutes a criminal offence. The University of Bristol believes that freedom of expression and academic freedom are at the heart of its mission and must be fully reflected in both its policies and practices – including our anti-racism agenda - as set out in the Freedom of Speech Policy.

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[1] Wellcomes-Anti-racist-principles-and-toolkit-2021.pdf

[2] tackling-racial-harassment-higher-education-annexes.pdf (universitiesuk.ac.uk)
[3] Racist and Religious Hate Crime - Prosecution Guidance | The Crown Prosecution Service (cps.gov.uk)