



University of Aberdeen **Antiracism Strategy** **2022-2025**

BOLD, HONEST, ACCOUNTABLE, EMPATHETIC





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INTRODUCTION

The University has, through its strategic plan Aberdeen 2040, committed to creating an antiracist culture and ethos as a strategic priority. This Antiracism Strategy aims to support the achievement of Aberdeen 2040's Commitments as follows:

C1: We will care for the wellbeing, health and safety of our diverse community, supporting and developing our people to achieve their full potential.

C2: We will encourage widening access to study, by having fair and flexible entry routes, offering diverse qualifications, and providing a range of modes of delivery; our students will be able to succeed whatever their personal and social background.

C4: We will secure the highest standards of equality, diversity and inclusion, achieving accreditation across multiple strands and characteristics.

C15: We will develop our campuses and processes to create a caring

environment that is alert to cultural differences.

This Antiracism Strategy, which applies to staff and students as well as visitors to the University and others who associate with it, sets out how the University will implement transformational change in the period 2022-2025. Collective institutional action and individual responsibility across our University community will realise the changes we want to see. We understand that we must build strength, awareness and learning from within the University to create an antiracist environment.

Racism exists in society, on our campus, and across the Higher Education sector and we are committed to addressing and eradicating it. Our actions will be informed by and sensitive to the historical injustices faced by racialised groups, and the social context of race relations. Intersectionality across other characteristics will also be embedded in our approach.



WHERE WE ARE

The University has been accelerating its work, underpinned by Aberdeen 2040, on race equality – talking, listening, action-planning, and collaborating.

This Strategy provides a framework for action and enables the University to build on progress and actions taken. It is designed to galvanise, empower and drive change.

Our ongoing listening activities have been critical to the development of this Strategy. Our University community tells us that we need to:

- Foster a sense of belonging amongst our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff and students
- Enable safe, trustworthy and effective reporting mechanisms
- Address racist behaviour, which can include overt racism, microaggressions or institutional racism, and empower staff and students to recognise and challenge these behaviours
- Create a curriculum which is antiracist in its content, delivery and ethos and which adds to the culturally diverse and inclusive University context

- Increase the racial diversity profile of our Court and Senior Management Team to reflect our diverse University community better and bring important perspectives to decision-making bodies at the highest levels
- Partner with external agencies and organisations to share good practice and learn from others' experiences
- Communicate and consult with our University community regularly on race equality
- Be open, as individuals and as an organisation to challenge on our approach to antiracism by listening, consulting and learning from mistakes promptly and modifying behaviours, policies and procedures when required
- Engage with our diverse community to collectively understand, and implement antiracist approaches

We will keep listening and learning, concurrently taking the bold action required to create an antiracist university.

“ RACISM EXISTS ON OUR CAMPUSES AND IN OUR SOCIETY. CALL IT WHAT IT IS AND REJECT IT IN ALL ITS FORMS. WE STAND UNITED AGAINST RACISM. ”

ADVANCE HE DECLARATION

AdvanceHE

Member 21-22

BACK

AIM

Our aim, in line with Aberdeen 2040, is to:

- Create an antiracist environment recognising that this is an ongoing journey for the University
 - Eradicate race discrimination in all its forms on campus and proactively play our part in eradicating it in the Higher Education sector
 - Ensure that all staff and students are safe on campus and feel that that they belong in the University
- Embed a culture of accountability and transparency in our antiracist work – individual and organisational action to promote antiracism will be celebrated. Where behaviours fall short of expectations, these will be addressed promptly and effectively



BACK

APPROACH

We will achieve our aim through:

- Adopting a whole-university, partnership approach where staff and students understand and implement their responsibilities under this Strategy
- Embedding processes that lead to structural, behavioural and cultural shifts to address racism urgently across the University, including creating an environment where staff and students are accountable for their actions
- Building awareness and capability to empower staff and students to challenge racism
- Dedicating resources to creating an antiracist university
- Supporting effectively and on an ongoing basis our Race Equality Champions, Race Equality Strategy Group, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Mental Health Champions and other colleagues at the core of this work as well as consulting and involving a wide range of stakeholders
- Listening to the views of and engaging proactively with our Race Equality Network and the AUSA Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students Forum and other internal and external groups and networks as appropriate
- Proactively engaging in sectoral discussions on racism through building an expertise within the University, and role-modelling anti-racist structures and behaviours
- Assessing the effectiveness of this Strategy by gauging understanding in the University and acting where appropriate



PRINCIPLES

This Strategy is based on the following principles:

- The **health and wellbeing** of our staff and students must be at the heart of everything we do, as set out in Aberdeen 2040. Racism is a threat to health and wellbeing
- Antiracist actions, and proactive and bold approaches, lead to **inclusion**
- **White privilege** refers to the benefits White people experience by virtue of being White. This can include advantages in society that people from other backgrounds may not have, such as the reduced likelihood of encountering racism based on skin colour. White privilege can unintentionally influence decision making. This can be addressed by highlighting its existence and how it can be mitigated, and by ensuring that a range of perspectives are considered
- **Transparency and accountability** across the University must be central to the University's commitment to tackling racism
- Recognition that structural/**systematic disadvantage** and barriers exist in Higher Education
- We cannot dismantle what we do not understand. **Educating ourselves** as individuals is integral to embedding an antiracist strategy
- The University is part of the local community and it has a strong sense of place in the North East of Scotland. Tackling racism is a community-wide endeavour, which requires building trust, local partnerships and regional engagement, and commitment from the University to support a shared vision of antiracism
- Fostering and engaging in ongoing listening, dialogue and feedback is critical to creating antiracist environments
- Tackling racism is a higher-education **sector-wide** vision and the University will engage with the sector to learn from and share experiences to drive and influence sectoral change.
- The University upholds academic freedom, and our community must be one in which all are enabled to question, express new ideas and explore controversial or unpopular topics and opinions respectfully within the law

ANTIRACISM

The concept of antiracism will be central to the implementation of this Strategy.

The University is working towards creating an antiracist university – to root out racism and address it proactively to enable a cultural shift in ethos, where oppression and prejudice cannot thrive. This means taking, at an organisational level, bold, deliberate and conscious action against racial hatred, bias, systemic racism and

the unfair treatment of marginalised groups. It also means supporting, encouraging and empowering staff and students to individually recognise racism in all its forms and to actively reject and challenge it. An inclusive approach, where staff and students feel as though they belong in the University, where all can thrive and where the contributions of the whole community are celebrated, will be an indicator of an emerging antiracist university.



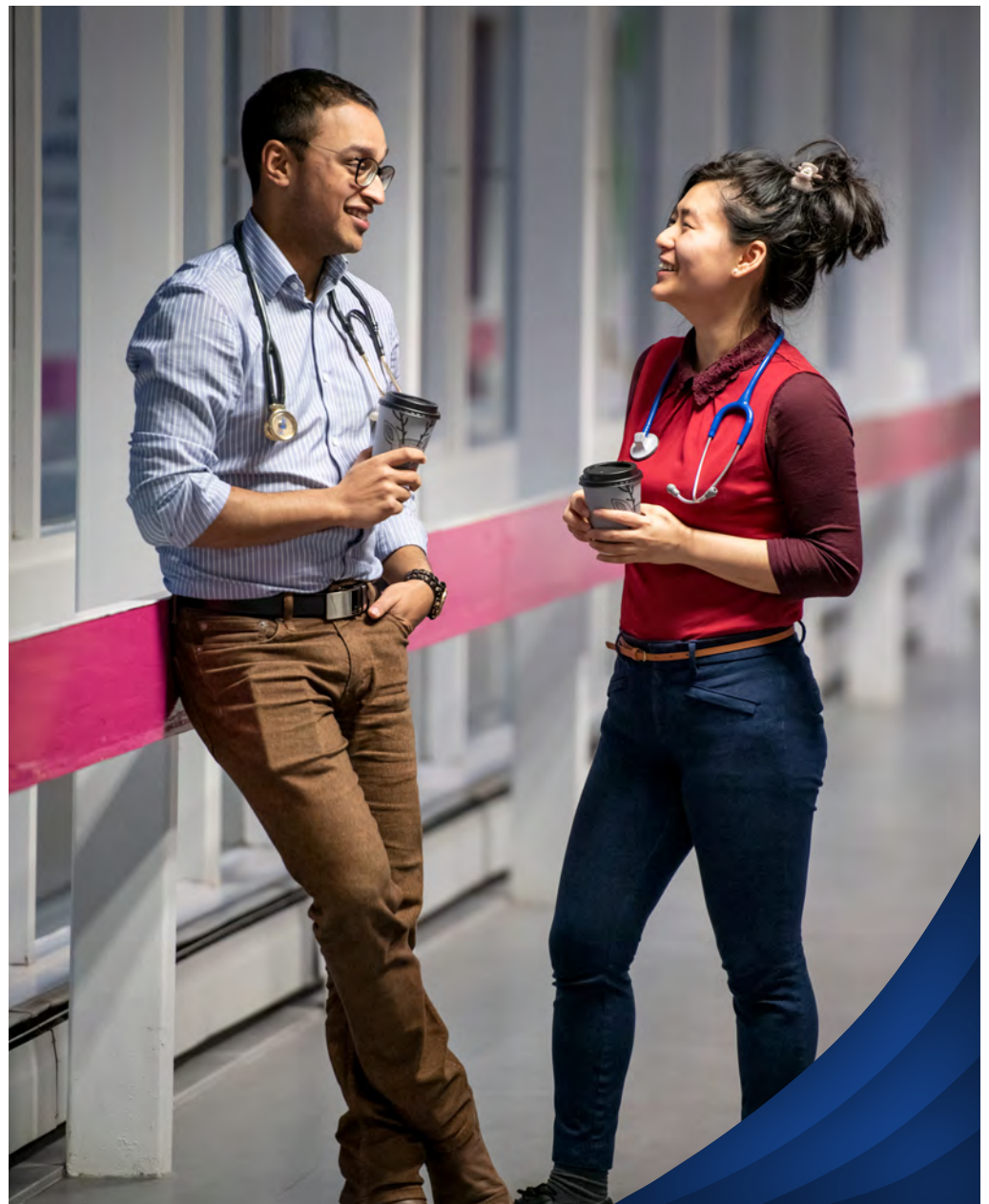
LEADERSHIP, ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE: UNIVERSITY COURT

The University Court has overall responsibility for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Governors are required to be informed on race equality so that they can actively monitor and contribute to the implementation of this Strategy.

We will:

- Transform the diversity profile of Court to reflect the diverse staff and student communities

- Appoint a Court member with a specific race equality remit
- Engage Court in training on race and racism
- Provide Court with statistics and data on racism to inform their learning and decision-making



LEADERSHIP, ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE: SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

The role of the Senior Management Team (SMT) is to:

- Drive the ambitions of the Strategy across the University and galvanise staff and students to engage with its mission
- Act as role models in living an antiracist ethos and empower others to do so
- Communicate with staff and students on race equality progress, challenges and engagement;
- Be accountable for the implementation of the Strategy through individual and organisational performance targets

We will:

- Transform the diversity profile of SMT to reflect the diverse staff and student communities
- Train, coach and support senior leaders so that honest, open and bold conversations on race can be undertaken sensitively, fostering trust and safety
- Ensure senior level visibility in relation to the implementation of this Strategy
- Promote senior level visibility on actions to tackle racism
- Address the under-representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff at senior levels
- Connect with staff and students to share progress, challenges and engagement



**LEADERSHIP,
ACCOUNTABILITY
AND GOVERNANCE:
STAFF AND STUDENTS**

Creating an antiracist university is a collective responsibility and each member of the University community will need to contribute to the mission of this Strategy. Staff and students will have a responsibility to be aware of and engage with this Strategy.

We will:

- Provide guidance, training and support to our staff and students to raise awareness of antiracism

and the role individuals play in creating positive, inclusive environments

- Engage our staff and student communities in the development and review of this Strategy and associated action plans
- Provide appropriate spaces to encourage open discussions about race



BACK

LEADERSHIP, ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE: GOVERNANCE

Accountability is manifested through clear governance structures which require to be representative and invested in making decisions which take account of racial diversity, power distributions, white privilege and systematic barriers. We know that it is essential that work to implement this Strategy is informed by, has the trust of and is accountable to our community.

We will:

- Embed representative governance structures and cascade work on race equality through those structures

- Enable and prioritise, through a systematic process, the review of University policies and procedures to ensure they are all racially literate, and that consultation and approval mechanisms include staff and students from diverse backgrounds
- Promote the work of the Race Equality Strategy Group and the Staff Race Equality Network to elevate progress and engagement.



BACK

VOICES OF BLACK, ASIAN AND MINORITY ETHNIC STAFF AND STUDENTS AT THE HEART OF THIS STRATEGY

It is critical to be guided by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff and students in the implementation of this Strategy. We need to build trust, become active allies, collaborate and engage in conversations where staff and students can be honest about their experiences and ideas. If we are to understand and eliminate microaggressions and racism we must fully understand how these manifest in the University; their impact, and how those affected wish them to be addressed.

We will:

- Empower, by creating protected environments, staff and students to engage with collective and individual opportunities to share experiences and ideas
- Reaffirm to our community how staff and students can report racism and seek support

- Co-create, through involvement and consultation, an Antiracism Strategy Action Plan to capture the commitments made in this strategy and to ensure that trends identified through dialogue are translated into practical actions
- Identify and address trends emerging from listening activities and reporting mechanisms to inform action-planning and decision-making
- Ensure that we do not burden Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff and students with the responsibilities associated with becoming an antiracist university, particularly in relation to the sharing of experiences. All staff and students wishing to support the work will be treated with dignity and respectfully



EMBEDDING ANTIRACISM ACROSS THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

Fostering a community of active antiracism is an ambitious but urgent task. All staff and students must feel empowered to act and be part of the creation of an antiracist university, whether that is the Senior Management Team understanding and addressing structural inequalities, or an individual staff member or student taking a proactive role in identifying and reporting a racist incident. There is a spectrum of involvement, but all staff and students must be aware of the impact of inaction and have the knowledge and skills to support each other and this Strategy.

We will:

- Implement the Aberdeen 2040 Inclusive Commitments through the Antiracism Strategy, using Aberdeen 2040 as a guide for action and progress
- Adopt a holistic, evidence-based approach to learning and development interventions so that antiracism is embedded throughout our staff and student CPD opportunities
- Provide a range of learning opportunities for staff and students including reading suggestions, webinars, videos, podcasts and focussed awareness-raising sessions
- Work with our internal Race Equality Networks and external organisations to share learning and exchange ideas



ATTRACTING, APPOINTING AND NURTURING TALENT

We acknowledge that specific ethnic groups have been disadvantaged or marginalised in the UK higher education sector because of systemic racism. There is clearly much more to be done to improve staff racial diversity across the University, but particularly at senior management level.

We will:

- Address the under-representation of racialised groups in our staff complement, taking the local, national and international contexts into account
- Assess racial literacy and evidence of commitment to tackling racism as a core competency for employment by embedding these in the recruitment and selection process
- Review, and implement changes where required, the recruitment and selection journey – development of documentation, advertisement, establishment of the panel, shortlisting, interview and other tests, – and involve panel members from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds
- Embed impactful positive action measures to address under-representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff at all levels
- Ensure that development opportunities are open to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff, are informed by their experiences and designed to support their progression.
- Consider the evidence-base for and consult carefully on positive action development programmes for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff including, but not limited to, forms of mentorship, sponsorship, coaching and leadership development. The focus will be on tackling the consequences of historic and current structural inequalities
- Profile and showcase Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic talent including research and professional services initiatives
- Enhance line management capability to increase parity in experience for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff
- Ensure that external recruitment partners such as recruitment agencies are aware of this Strategy and be explicit regarding recruitment policies which seek to address under-representation of specific groups in the staff profile

DIVERSIFYING THE CURRICULUM AND CLOSING THE AWARDING GAP

We acknowledge that national data on degree awards and classifications tells us that specific groups are less likely to achieve higher levels of degree awards than others. The University commits to removing all barriers to student engagement and success and to closing the awarding gap, recognising the intersectional issues associated with this.

Our curriculum must provide students with wider perspectives to enhance their learning opportunities and to foster a deep sense of belonging in the University. We recognise that we need to build on existing good practice in our University, by taking forward actions that aim to create forums and discussions that enable us to understand, the ways in which wider cultures and knowledge systems can be embedded in our curriculum across our disciplines. By reforming our curriculum on antiracist principles, we will broaden horizons, not just for students but for the wider

community, enrich thinking across the University and raise awareness of the stories, contributions and impact of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people.

We will:

- Interrogate University and national data on student awards and analyse, investigate, and address the reasons for barriers existing for students from racialised groups
- Communicate with our community about the awarding gap and the causes of it to raise awareness and offer solutions to galvanise concerted efforts across the University to address it
- In partnership with schools and colleges, offer a comprehensive and supportive transition to University
- Embed a bold, progressive and sustained programme of antiracist curricular reform



RESEARCH

Our research is world-leading and at the core of our contribution to society. We acknowledge the research culture must be supportive of all researchers, their research must be appropriately attributed to them and support must be embedded for career progression.

Our research has a legacy and provides opportunities to reflect on, raise awareness of and repair the impact of colonisation, and racial injustices.

We will

- Embed a research culture which fosters antiracism and inclusion by identifying action to be taken at each stage of the research process which can address barriers and proactively ensure that inclusive approaches are implemented within the system which supports research
- Cultivate and offer research to society which contributes to the dismantling of racist structures and racism
- Engage with PGT and PGR students to understand their specific perspectives and the actions that would support them in their studies and life at University



BACK

REPORTING RACISM AND SUPPORT STRUCTURES

We acknowledge the significant personal pain and trauma associated with ongoing racism and racial incidents. We do not want any member of staff or student to be unclear as to their options for seeking support or to be alone in dealing with racism. We know that most racist incidents are not reported.

Staff and students have told us that the routes open to them for reporting racism are unclear. We know from national evidence that even when reporting mechanisms are known and available, a lack of trust in the system can prevent staff or students reporting racism.

We will:

- Enable, through discussion with stakeholders, fully accessible and antiracist support mechanisms for staff and students who seek advice and guidance, recognising the need for specialist training for advisers
- Publicise reporting and support mechanisms to our community, clearly identifying the options and guiding staff and students through them and providing immediate crisis support where required
- Build trust and confidence by responding to staff and students on matters of race in a timely and empathetic manner
- Partner with and signpost to external agencies to bolster internal support mechanisms to meet needs where appropriate



IMPLEMENTATION

Our University Court and Senior Management Team are accountable for the implementation and success of this Strategy. We have established a Race Equality Strategy Group (RESG), which reports to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) and is empowered by the University Court and the Senior Management Team, to drive forward the implementation and review of this Strategy. This structure does not detract from the whole-university approach which is to be adopted for implementation and the premise that the burden of work should not fall on a small number of individual staff and students.

This Strategy is a live document – it will be updated periodically, through consultation and approval through the University's governance structures throughout its lifespan to reflect the University's continuing journey to create an antiracist culture.

A robust partnership with the Race Equality Network, the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Forum, AUSA and other networks will be critical in implementing this Strategy. The University will foster strong links with the networks, listen to their views on the implementation of the Strategy and forge a shared sense of urgency and collaboration.

Using data and qualitative evidence appropriately is critical to understanding the enablers and barriers which exist for people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. We signed up to the Race Equality Charter in 2019 and will harness that framework to gather qualitative and quantitative data to inform decision-making and to identify priority actions for the implementation of this Strategy.

The progress of the Antiracism Strategy Action Plan will be reviewed at each meeting of the RESG and at other committees and groups where appropriate with actions tracked and monitored.



MEASURING CHANGE/PROGRESS

We want to see, at pace, a significant shift in our data and lived experiences of staff and students through a process of monitoring and evaluation. Our ambitions are bold, but we know this is essential to inspire and propel the change required to create an antiracist university. Evidence and data is critical to informing our actions, measuring progress and understanding impact.

The Antiracism Strategy Action Plan will provide a framework for measuring progress. In measuring progress, we will take a range of data, both qualitative and quantitative, into account and ensure we benchmark effectively. Sources of evidence of progress include:

- Senior leader accountabilities and performance objectives
- Staff and student race equality surveys
- Biennial staff experience survey
- Feedback provided during listening activities
- Staff and student Ethnicity profile data
- Feedback from the Race Equality Network and the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Forum
- Training uptake and feedback, both online and face-to-face
- Staff recruitment, promotion and reward data
- Student awarding gaps data
- Student progress data



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