



University
of Glasgow

Understanding Racism, Transforming University Cultures

Executive Summary

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In 2018 the University of Glasgow launched a historical report into the organisation's links to the transatlantic slave trade, entitled *Slavery, Abolition, and the University of Glasgow*¹. This report, the first of its kind from a University in the UK acknowledged that during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the University received gifts and bequests from persons who may have benefitted from the proceeds of slavery. Income from such gifts and bequests has been used in supporting academic activity undertaken by the students and staff of the University. The researchers estimated that the value of these gifts and bequests today would be worth between £16-200 million. In acknowledging these historical benefits, the University chose to enact a programme of reparatory justice which entailed enhancing the ties between the University and West Indies through the signing of a memorandum of understanding, establishing a research centre into slavery, providing scholarships to UK students of African and Caribbean heritage and placing a plaque in the University cloisters acknowledging that the site of Gilmorehill was previously owned by a slave owner.

This significant body of research and programme of reparatory justice has provided a foundation for the University to refocus and address current staff and student experiences of racism, and racial inequality. The EHRC's report in 2019 *Tackling Racial Harassment: Universities Challenged*² provides the UK context of campus experiences of racism. This report was considered by the University's Equality and Diversity Strategy Committee, chaired by the Principal, who commissioned this investigation into student and staff experience at the University of Glasgow³.

As an organisation, we want to support our organisation to have the confidence and courage to hold challenging conversations about racism and racial equality.

Furthermore, we recognise the experience of racism by anyone in our community will be detrimental to their wellbeing, productivity and ultimately their success as a student or

¹ <https://www.gla.ac.uk/research/az/slavery/report2018/#d.en.606332>

² <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/publication-download/tackling-racial-harassment-universities-challenged>

³ We would like to thank all the students and staff who contributed to this report, either via the survey or an interview.

staff member. We want all our community to thrive, and therefore we need to understand when and where our processes are not working, and how we can change these.

This report makes for difficult reading and outlines challenging experiences. However, to take the organisation forward we need to build trust and being transparent about the research findings is key to this.

A summary of the findings is below.

Students and racial harassment

The survey of 500 students found:

- One in two ethnic minority students had been racially harassed highlighting a significant variance with the handful of student racial harassment cases captured by our University processes;
- Half of all ethnic minority students reported being harassed between two and five times since beginning their studies at the University of Glasgow while one in 20 students reported more than 20 separate incidents of harassment;
- A reluctance to report such harassment because of a lack of confidence that such incidents would be treated seriously combined with a fear of reprisals from fellow students and staff;
- More than a quarter of ethnic minority students say the University of Glasgow has a serious problem with racism.

Staff and racial harassment

The qualitative interviews with 20 ethnic minority staff⁴ across the four Colleges and University Services found:

- Coded forms of racism were more prevalent than overt racism;
- Such coded but persistent racial harassment has a corrosive and scarring effect on the physical and mental health of ethnic minority staff;
- Ethnic minority staff are reluctant to report the problem to University processes because of a lack of confidence that they will be treated seriously and, a fear of reprisals from managers and colleagues.

Patterns of ethnic minority employment

Our analysis found that:

- Overall, there has been an increase in ethnic minority employment from 6.8% in 2015 to 8.7% in 2019 but this remains out of alignment with the City of Glasgow's ethnic minority population of 11.6%.
- Proportionately, the College of Science and Engineering (CoSE) and the College of Social Sciences (CoSS) employ between two and three times more ethnic minority staff than the College of Arts (CoA) and University Services (US).
- Two-thirds of ethnic minority staff are from overseas and a third from the UK. The former are heavily represented in Grades 6 and 7 particularly in the areas of

⁴ Racism is a form of stigmatisation that, over time, dehumanizes ethnic minorities such that parts of the wider population become indifferent to the indignities and inequalities to which they are subjected (Virdee 2019, Tyler 2020). This qualitative element of the project was designed with the specific intention of creating a space for ethnic minority staff to articulate, in their own words, their lived experience of racism and harassment at the University of Glasgow and how it impacts on their well-being, career and the wider contributions they might otherwise make to the University. While this qualitative component of the research does not claim to be statistically representative, it does make an important contribution in re-humanizing ethnic minority staff and draws attention to how the University of Glasgow could do more to challenge racism and its effects if it is to benefit fully from *all* the human resources at its disposal.

Research and Teaching/ Clinical while the latter are more likely to be clustered in Grades 1-4 in the areas of Clinical/ Operational and Technical services.

- Ethnic minority staff are between two and three times more likely to be on different types of fixed term contract than permanent ones which likely reflects their disproportionate representation in post-doctoral research posts and junior lectureships.
- There is no ethnic minority representation on the Senior Management Group, Senate or Court – the three major decision-making bodies of the University of Glasgow.
- There is a substantial variance between ethnic minority applications and appointments. It is greatest in the Clinical job family (33%) and smallest in Research and Teaching (10%).
- There is no evidence of an ethnic pay gap other than at Grade 5 (4%).

Patterns from degree award data

The University has developed a Student Protected Characteristic Analysis Tool, which reviews student recruitment, progression, award and destinations to understand if there are any disparities for minority groups. While this tool is still in its final stages of development it found:

- In each of the past five years there has been an ethnicity degree awarding gap in favour of White students;
- In 2018/19 there was a degree awarding gap between Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students of over 10% in comparison to their White peers, a statistically significant figure.

Summary

This report demands action to address the experiences outlined. To do this we have identified four principles which require leadership and advocacy by the University:

- The University of Glasgow takes an anti-racist approach to race equality work and accept our processes will contain structural inequalities.
- Racial harassment in any form is unacceptable on our campus.
- Our curriculum and learning community will thrive when it is reflective of global perspectives and when race equality is embedded.
- We want all our staff and students, particularly those from ethnic minorities to achieve their potential through our excellent learning and career development opportunities.

In developing this report, we have devised a wide-ranging action plan. It is acknowledged in conducting this research it was not possible to conduct in-depth analysis of all cohorts of students or staff experience, and therefore we would encourage leaders and decision makers to conduct their own research and/or analysis and devise actions in consultation with the Race Equality Group. In addition, it was not possible to conduct all this research in a fully intersectional way, and we recognise this limitation, however we commit to taking this forward through the action plan.