

# SCHOOL OF LIFE SCIENCES

## Race Equity Action Plan

### Mission Statement

*The School of Life Sciences commits itself to working towards racial equity, and to create a culture of anti-racism that attracts and supports a diverse student body. We will embed anti-racism in all aspects of our workplace and learning environment, addressing inequality and discrimination, to allow all our staff and students to achieve their full potential.*

### Principles

Structural Racism is the normalisation and legitimisation of an array of dynamics – historical, cultural, institutional and interpersonal – that routinely advantages white people, while producing cumulative and chronic adverse outcomes for people of colour. Racism remains endemic in Britain, and is present in all sectors of society, including Higher Education.

We acknowledge that this system of inequity has negative effects on the culture of our School, and that we must directly address institutional and structural racism. This is in line with the University of Sussex's wider commitment to tackling racial inequality, as articulated in the 'Inclusive Sussex' Strategy.

The School commits to anti-racism and to challenging aspects of our institution that function to oppress, marginalise or limit our BAME students and staff. The School is committed to reassessing its processes and practices in all areas to ensure that there is no discrimination of any form, and that all students and staff members are treated equitably, without prejudice, assumption or stereotype.

We realise that the lack of diversity, representation and race-related knowledge in our teaching, research and professional services staff has a profound effect on students from BAME communities. We will reform how we advertise and recruit our staff and will continue to reflect on our practices and improve processes in our work towards racial equity.

We commit to highlighting historic and current biological racism as part of our teaching, to ensure that all students and staff from the School of Life Sciences are equipped with this knowledge so they do not perpetuate misconceptions that science provides justification for racism. The School senior management team acknowledges that in the past, processes and timeliness in dealing with racism and aspects of individual behaviour have fallen short of reasonable expectations. We must therefore strengthen our resolve and our commitment to equity and diversity and make this a reality through our actions. We will reassess processes in all areas to ensure that there is no space for discrimination, victimisation or harassment of any

form. We encourage School members to come forward if they have experienced, or witnessed, racist behaviour and will create and signpost the mechanisms needed for them to do so safely, and for reports and complaints to be handled and investigated with a sense of urgency, care and due diligence.

The purpose of this plan is to outline the steps we will take to work towards attaining these goals. The accompanying action log (TBA) specifies owners of sub-projects, timelines and individuals involved.

### **Aims of the Plan**

- To transform staff cultural competency, training and awareness of anti-racism and anti-discrimination – creating a culture of zero tolerance for racist behaviour; to embed equity issues in our Continuing Professional Development
- To eliminate the School's BAME awarding gap; to optimise the student experience for BAME students, including student mentoring and careers support
- To reform our curriculum to embed anti-racism and teaching on biological racism
- To promote positive BAME role models in our teaching and research, and to ensure equality of access of lab training for BAME students
- To ensure our recruitment practices are inclusive, increasing the diversity of our staff and students
- To design clear formal and informal complaints procedures and routes for individuals to report concerns of racism, sexism or any discriminatory behaviour; to ensure resolution of these concerns and clear consequences for such behaviour; to empower individuals to challenge racist behaviour wherever it occurs

### **Project Plan**

1. [Staff Training and awareness; Continuing Professional Development](#)
2. [The Student Experience](#)
3. [Curriculum Reform](#)
4. [Research and laboratory experience](#)
5. [Recruitment and retention practices](#)
6. [Concerns/complaints procedures](#)

## Key Actions

<b>1. Staff Training and awareness; Continuing Professional Development</b>
1.1 Require all Academic, Professional Services and Technical Services staff, PDRAS and PhD students to undertake at induction, and regularly thereafter, relevant training as identified by the School
1.2 Organise compulsory workshops on cultural competency, raising awareness and peer-to-peer learning on issues that affect BAME students
1.3 Training for staff to deal with situations and/or experiences of racism, including a clear workflow and set of options
1.4 Engagement and learning from best practice of other Universities
1.5 Messaging from the Head of School (HoS) and team to have anti-racism embedded in it, and in staff induction
1.6 Incorporate discussions on issues that affect BAME students and staff into Education 'away days'
1.7 Reverse mentoring for HoS team/management teams
<b>2. The Student Experience</b>
2.1 Reform academic advising, to create hospitable environments, with training for advisers on BAME student concerns
2.2 Embed anti-racism message into student induction programmes
2.3 Diverse representation in media including that used for recruitment, newsletters, posters, open days
2.4 Improve career mentoring to provide bespoke careers advice to ensure equity of provision for BAME students
2.5 Continuous engagement with BAME reps and students to update actions plan
2.6 Monitoring of EDI data on a yearly basis and including in management information
2.7 Yearly career showcase to be established with external and internal speakers
2.8 Ensure student social events are inclusive, to reduce feelings of isolation
2.9 Invite BAME alumni to contribute to student engagement
2.10 Review student recruitment processes and support
2.11 Promote extracurricular opportunities outside of Life Sciences
<b>3. Curriculum Reform</b>
3.1 Incorporate learning on Biological Racism in the Academic Skills Module, and equivalent modules to ensure all first year students receive the session
3.2 Develop a plan as to how to embed aspects of Biological Racism across all our courses
3.3 Involve BAME students as co-creators and hold discussions on relevant topics
3.4 Greater acknowledgement of the role of BAME scientists in teaching material
3.5 'Prepare for university' sessions during welcome week
3.6 Invite BAME guest lecturers in teaching
3.7 Update inclusive teaching methods that support all students

<b>4. Research and laboratory experience</b>
4.1 Seminar policies to include active recruitment of BAME seminar speakers
4.2 Top-up fund for JRAs for students from disadvantaged backgrounds
4.3 Actively encourage and support BAME students to develop aspirations and pursue research careers or medicine
4.4 Provide inclusive support for career development of ECRs including support for internal and external fellowship applicants as required
4.5 Ensure School events (social and work) are inclusive
4.6 Provide research experience opportunities for undergraduate students
<b>5. Recruitment and retention practices</b>
5.1 Work with HR on interventions to broaden our staff recruitment, drawing on our staff's experience
5.2 Work with the WP team on messaging to schools in more disadvantaged areas, and actively recruit BAME students to join the WP team
5.3 Encourage recruitment of BAME associate tutors
5.4 Increase PGR applications and successful offers to BAME students
5.5 Recognise race equity work in appraisals and promotion applications
5.6 Create a regular forum in which BAME staff members of the School are able to raise concerns and/or ideas
5.7 Arrange mentoring for BAME staff
<b>6. Concerns/complaints procedures</b>
6.1 Provide clear formal and informal complaints procedures, including mechanisms to feedback actions implemented.
6.2 Harness the School Support Network and trained mediators to provide support in difficult circumstances
6.3 Clearly signpost student champions or School Support Network who can be consulted confidentially
6.4 Handle and investigate reports of racism urgently with a clearly signposted set of options