

3 March 2023

To the Chair of the Race Equality Charter Self-Assessment Team

The School of Media Arts and Humanities is committed to race equity within the school and to the achievement of the Race Equity Charter mark for the University as a whole. The awarding gap in MAH has been decreasing for UK BAME students. For example, the awarding for UK Black students dropped from 8.5% to 1.2% between 2018/19 and 2020/21 and dropped from 10.3% to 4.6% for UK Asian students in the same period (although it rose to 13.2% in the interim year). The numbers of Black and Asian students, however, remain very low and more needs to be done to widen access. The awarding gap for non-UK BAME students is on the right trajectory, dropping from 53.3% to 43.4% during this same period, but there is clearly a lot of work to be done.

Since January 2020 a dedicated team has been established in the School, comprising a Director of Race Equity and two Deputy Directors prioritising staff and student concerns, respectively. All have undergone Advance HE training and they are focused on coordinating the work of race equity in the School. An Associate Dean for People Inclusion and Culture, appointed in August 2022, oversees this work as part of a wider EDI remit. The range of work undertaken has evolved in response to consultation with staff and students across the School; an action plan is being developed using the principles of community organising to prioritise what is most important to BAME staff and students and will be launched in May 2023. The work can be divided into three main sections reflecting the priorities of the Race Equity Charter work.

Culture

- Since 2018, the School has hosted the **Stuart Hall Fellowship** scheme in partnership with the Stuart Hall Foundation to provide an opportunity for a talented, creative individual to develop their practice within an academic context. Stuart Hall Fellows at the University of Sussex include the renowned photographer and Turner prize nominee Ingrid Pollard, journalist Rebecca Omonira-Oyekanmi, and multi-media artist and curator Susuana Amoah. Erin James was appointed in January 2023;
- Staff in MAH (Media, Arts & Humanities) play a key role in the support of the **Black @Sussex** project which highlights the work of Black Sussex alumni such as Paul Gilroy, Bernard Coard, Gilian Tawadros, Candice Carty-Williams and Topher Campbell. This 5-year programme, with institutional funding of £270,000, formally launched in October 2022. Events have included: *Celebrating Len Garrison* at the Attenborough Centre for the Creative Arts; *Photography, Archiving and Power* at the Black Cultural Archives; *Journeys in Music* at Mandela Hall, University of Sussex Students' Union;

- MAH's **Race Equity Awareness Canvas site** publicises relevant events and holds race equity resources such as media output and academic articles as well as details of complaints channels and useful organisations. All staff and students in MAH are automatically signed up at the start of the academic year to receive notifications;
- **Diversifying the environment:** A project is underway to update the artwork of MAH buildings. This includes promoting visual art from current students as well as archival art from the library, which celebrates the diverse history of Sussex;
- The School agreed a policy on the **teaching of material containing offensive language** to address racism in the classroom, in consultation with students in September 2020; there is ongoing pedagogical work to address this issue across the School;
- A variety of **events** e.g. hybrid book talk *Race to the Bottom* on 22 November 2022 that brought together students, staff, and Sussex Alumni to discuss the historical context of structural racism in the UK;
- On 17 October 2022, a **'Rise Up and Be Heard'** staff/ student listening event was held to identify priorities for BAME staff and students drawing on the principles of community organising to feed into the Race Equity Action plan;
- The Race Equity team and members of the School Management Team have had Advance HE and Santandar training (*Leading Race Equality in Higher Education, Union Black: Britain's Black cultures & steps to anti-racism*), attended various Advance HE **conferences/ workshops** (for example *Closing the Ethnicity Gap* conference May 2021 and April 2022; and *Data and Storytelling: Informing Action Around Structural Racism in HE* in January 2021); Advance HE EDI Conference 16-17 March 2022; University of the Arts Ethnic Representation Index, 31st January 2023). They have also undergone 'community organising training' in October 2022 (training with Monique Forbes-Broom from the University of Sussex SU).

Staff

- A key issue has been the issue of **recruitment and retention**. To ensure our recruitment practices are inclusive, we have been working to support positive action within the limits of existing UK law;
- Workshops on **micro-aggressions**, run by Strawberry Worlds, were held in April 2021 and May 2022 to empower individuals to understand and challenge racist behaviour. The workshops were offered to all academic and professional services staff and around 50 people attended;
- A **MAH BAME staff networking group** has been established (which includes professional services and academic staff as well as doctoral tutors) and meets termly to discuss staff concerns;
- In response to feedback from BAME colleagues, a **BAME staff specific training** event for dealing with racism and developing coping strategies has been organised with Advance HE for March 2023. According to Advance HE facilitators this is one of the first workshops at a UK University (that they are aware of) which is designed specifically for BAME staff;
- The Race Equity team members have provided input on the University of Sussex's **'Report and Support'** tools to ensure safe and meaningful ways for staff to report race-related incidents/complaints;
- The **EDI staff forum** on 2 November 2022 focused on race/disability/intersectional issues. Based on the work done, we created a set of guidelines (Making Students Welcome) which address creating a more inclusive learning environment for all students.

Students

- The School has supported the appointment of **Race Equity Advocates** (REAs) since 2020 and Student Connectors have been appointed since 2021 to focus specifically on engaging BAME students and addressing race equity issues. This includes: fortnightly drop-ins for BAME students, the maintenance of a student Instagram account; TikTok interviews with MAH BAME staff; and regular broadcasting on the student radio station;
- Work at the school has addressed the concerns of **international students** as well as BAME students from the UK. Since January 2021, a number of workshops, led by the Race Equity Team, have focused on the International Student Experience, drawing on the pedagogic best practice of expert teachers of multilingual classrooms, English Language Teaching professionals, and international students themselves to help staff development;
- **Decolonising the Curriculum** events at the School. For example, *What does it mean to 'decolonise'?: Embedding criticality and anti-racism in MAH* event with Decolonise Sussex took place in April 2021. In June 2021, there was a *Decolonising Education at Sussex and Inclusive Pedagogies* workshop series. A further event is scheduled for April 2023, where staff and students will be involved in identifying actions to further decolonise the university not only in terms of module content and reading lists but also marking, assessment and classroom dynamics;
- The School offers **MA Studentships** as part of the Stuart Hall Foundation partnership and has led on the recent expansion of the partnership to additionally create **PhD Studentships** for BAME students (with some specifically ringfenced for Black applicants). These studentships will offer invaluable material support for BAME students wanting to go on to postgraduate research, whilst also working towards better recruiting, supporting and representing of staff of colour in HE.

Yours sincerely

Professor Kate O'Riordan
Dean of the School of Media Arts and Humanities