THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Thematic Review 2018-19:
Black and Minority Ethnic Students

Final Report

Foreword from the Review Convenor

This thematic review has allowed us to talk to our black and minority ethnic students as well as staff about how ethnicity, colour, religious, cultural and linguistic issues matter within a university environment. While our black and minority ethnic students are proud to be at the University of Edinburgh, their stories and experiences are indicative of a significant lack of racial literacy among staff as well as from fellow students. Racial literacy means having the understanding and practice to recognise, respond and counter forms of every day racism or racial micro-aggressions at all levels, personal, cultural and institutional.

While some might dismiss these students' narratives and experiences as anecdotal and may regard reviews such as these as pandering to political correctness, the Review Panel wishes to commend the University for listening to the experiences of black and minority ethnic students, to acknowledge that there are barriers and to understand that there are huge benefits in taking diversity and equality seriously.

Our recommendations are bold and will take University leaders and service provision heads into potentially unfamiliar and uncomfortable territory.

We believe bold steps are necessary if we wish to be sector leading in the area of racial equality.

Professor Rowena Arshad OBE, FEIS

Chair in Multicultural and Anti-Racist Education
Head of Moray House School of Education and Sport
University of Edinburgh

Director of the Centre for Education for Racial Equality in Scotland (CERES)

Executive Summary

The following represents the key findings and recommendations of the review:

Racial Literacy and Awareness Gap

- **Key Finding:** A gap exists between the awareness and racial literacy of University staff and the lived experiences of both UK-domiciled and international black and minority ethnic (BME) students.

- **Key Recommendations:**

  - The Review Panel **recommends** that the Principal leads a conversation on 'race' in higher education and the implications for the University of Edinburgh.

  - The Review Panel **recommends** that University Leadership recognise the need to improve knowledge and upskill in the area of developing racial literacy.

  - The Review Panel **recommends** that the University provide each Head of College, School, and Professional Service area with a copy of '*Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*'.

Sense of Belonging

- **Key Finding:** The impact of attending an institution where BME people are in the minority can contribute to a sense of academic and social isolation.

- **Key Recommendations:**

  - The Review Panel **recommends** that the University commit to increase the percentage of BME staff, both academic and professional services, with immediate priority in the professional services areas.

  - The Review Panel **recommends** that the University recruit a new BME Outreach Officer to work with BME communities.

  - In relation to the two representation recommendations in this section, the Review Panel **encourages** the University to use positive action to diversify staffing.

Accessing Support Services

- **Key Finding:** BME students experience barriers accessing support services at the University.

- **Key Recommendations:**

  - The Review Panel **recommends** that the Service Excellence Programme ensure that a systematic staff training programme is an integral part of the final recommendations of the current Personal Tutor and Student Support Team Review.

  - The Review Panel **recommends** that the Student Counselling Service use positive action to diversify its staffing.

Curricula and Learning

- **Key Findings:** There is an attainment or awarding gap between white and BME students at the University. BME students experience barriers related to both representation and cultural diversity within the curriculum and learning environments they encounter. Staff with a remit to improve BME inclusion and attainment also experience institutional barriers to achieving better outcomes.

- **Key Recommendations:**

  - The Review Panel **recommends** that the University address the attainment/awarding gap that exists between BME and white students.

  - The Review Panel **recommends** that the proposed Curriculum Review enables BME students to be involved in diversifying content, including the co-design of curricula and assessments.

  - The Review Panel **recommends** that Senate Quality Assurance Committee implement systematic monitoring of retention, progression and degree outcome data for BME students and, if appropriate, recommend interventions where there are clear and consistent patterns of divergence between BME students and white students.

Report

1. Introduction

1.1 The University is committed to creating an equal, diverse and inclusive environment for all students and staff, and regularly carries out reviews into the needs and experiences of different groups.

As part of this ongoing commitment, Senate Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) agreed that the 2018-19 Thematic Review of Student Support would focus on black and minority ethnic students' experiences of support at the University.

The Review Panel acknowledges the limitations of the term black and minority ethnic (BME), particularly in its homogenising of domestic and international BME students. The Review Panel wishes to stress the need to understand that while BME students are often referred to as a group, this masks the varied and specific experiences of ethnic, nationality, colour, linguistic, cultural and religious/belief diversity.

1.2 The Equality Act (2010) states that it is illegal to discriminate against someone on the grounds of their race. The Act defines race as a protected characteristic that refers to an individual's race, colour, nationality and ethnic or national origins.

The University, as a public sector body, has a legal duty to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

1.3 The remit of the review was to identify areas of current good practice and ways in which the University could better support BME students.

The curriculum was not specifically within the remit of the review because a Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) task group had reported earlier in the year and made recommendations on institutional actions to assist in promoting inclusion, equality and diversity in the curriculum. However it was agreed that the curriculum would be referenced by the review as part of the over-all experience of BME students at the University.

1.4 The review was overseen by a panel convened by **Professor Rowena Arshad OBE**, Head of Moray House School of Education / Co-Director of the Centre for Education for Racial Equality in Scotland (CERES), with membership as follows: **Laura Cattell**, Head of Widening Participation/Deputy Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions (Professional Services representative); **Professor Vicky Gunn**, Head of Learning and Teaching, Glasgow School of Art (External); **Isabella Neergaard-Petersen**, Black and Minority Ethnic Officer, Edinburgh University Students' Association (Student Representative 2018-19); **Kai O'Doherty**, Vice President Welfare, Edinburgh University Students' Association (Student Representative 2018-19); **Oona Miller**, Vice President Welfare, Edinburgh University Students' Association (Student Representative 2019-20); **Dr Emily Sena**, Research Fellow, Centre for Clinical Brain Sciences (CCBS)/Co-convenor of the University of Edinburgh's Staff

BME Network (Academic Representative); **Brian Connolly**, Academic Services (Review Co-ordinator).

2. Methodology

2.1 Due to the heterogeneous nature of the student groups involved the methodological approach agreed by the Review Panel placed more emphasis on qualitative methods than would usually be the case with student consultations at the University. The Panel opted for a more agile and in-depth approach utilizing interviews and small focus groups to drill down under the general sector-wide issues to get a better understanding of the specific experiences of BME students at Edinburgh.

2.2 The Review Panel met for the first time on 23 January 2019 to agree on the terms of reference, data and evidence for the Review Panel wiki, and review timelines. The Panel also agreed on a general email communication which was circulated to student and staff stakeholders across the University announcing the review and consultation plans.

2.3 The student consultation was conducted between Wednesday 26 February and Thursday 14 March 2019.

Four student focus groups were held on the following dates:

- Tuesday 26 February 2019 at the Vet School in Easter Bush.
- Friday 1 March 2019 in the Main Library, George Square.
- Friday 8 March 2019 at Murchison House, King's Buildings.
- Thursday 14 March 2019 in the Main Library, George Square.

The second group in the Main Library replaced a scheduled date at Little France which was cancelled due to a lack of responses.

In total, 40 BME students participated in the consultation sessions which is in line with the number of students that University internal review panels would expect to meet during traditional formal review days (drawn from larger cohorts than those subject to this review).

The sessions were conducted by the following Students' Association team: **Isabella Neergaard-Petersen** (Black and Minority Ethnic Officer, Students' Association), **Kai O'Doherty** (Vice President Welfare, Students' Association), **Sarah Moffat** (Welfare and Equality Coordinator, Students' Association) and **Diva Mukherji** (Vice President Education, Students' Association).

Invitations were circulated to the BME Liberation Campaign, Students' Association reps and relevant societies, and the University Student Panel. The sessions were held over lunchtime with lunch provided by way of an additional incentive to attend. The invitation included the following guidance on BME terminology (devised by the Students' Association team):

> *This includes students of African, Asian, Arab and Afro-Caribbean descent, as well as those from other minority ethnic groups including Jewish and Romani students, and those who would describe themselves as being of mixed or multiple ethnicities. We are keen to hear from both UK-domiciled and international students, including those from countries such as China and India. We acknowledge that ethnic identities can be complex and so if you are unsure whether you would be included in this review, please contact* liberation@eusa.ed.ac.uk.

A question set was devised by the Students' Association team and used at each session (however the questions set was only used as a prompt for discussion and students were invited to comment freely on issues that were of particular interest to them at each session).

2.4 The Review Panel met on Friday 29 March 2019 to consider the findings of the student consultation and agree on further lines of enquiry to be taken forward with key stakeholders across the University as part of the next phase of the consultation process.

2.5 The initial findings of the consultation sessions were presented to the May 2019 meeting of QAC. It was agreed that the Review Panel would submit its final report, identifying areas of good practice and areas for enhancement, to QAC for approval and subsequent publication in September 2019.

2.6 Staff stakeholder meetings were held by the Review Panel on Friday 28 June 2019 to examine issues raised by students. These meetings were essentially formative, helping the Review Panel to understand the issues from a service delivery perspective and to seek staff suggestions on existing good practice and possible areas for enhancement.

2.7 The Convenor and Review Coordinator held a number of additional meetings with key stakeholders to follow-up on comments and issues identified during the staff consultation day. The outcomes of these meetings were reported to the final meeting of the review panel.

2.8 The Review Panel met for the final time on 4 September 2018 to agree on the key findings and recommendations of the review.

2.9 The final report and recommendations were discussed and approved at QAC at the meeting held on 18 September 2018.

3. Background and Context

3.1 Statistical Data

The Review Panel noted that the Equality Diversity Monitoring and Research Committee (EDMARC) produces an annual report analysing student and staff data by the key equality dimensions of gender, age, disability and ethnicity. The report supports the monitoring of equality and diversity within the University of Edinburgh.

The Review Panel noted the following from the 2018 Report:

3.2 Students

The overall proportion of UK domiciled BME undergraduate (UG) entrants is the highest level recorded by EDMARC. The most recent five years has seen a year-on-year increase from 7.8% to 10.2%. The proportion of UK domiciled postgraduate taught (PGT) entrants from an ethnic minority background has varied between 10.7% and 13.3% over the last five years. The proportion of UK domiciled postgraduate research (PGR) entrants from an ethnic minority background has risen year-on-year over the last five years from 9.7% to 11.5%.

The University of Edinburgh has a slightly higher proportion of UK domiciled BME entrants at all levels of study in comparison to other institutions in Scotland. However, for all levels of study the proportion of UK BME entrants is lower than the

Russel Group average. Compared to the Russell Group peers the University has approximately half as many BME entrants at both undergraduate and taught postgraduate level and approximately 75% at postgraduate research level.

The Review Panel acknowledges that this pattern is influenced by a complex mix of factors including the different ethnic mix of local populations and the different geographic range that individual institutions recruit from across the UK at UG, PGT and PGR levels of study.

For context, the 2011 UK Census reported that 12.9% of the UK population identified as black or minority ethnic and 4.1% in Scotland. When looking solely at under 25s (who make up 95% of UG entrants to the University) these figures rise to 20% in the UK and 6.2% in Scotland.

The Review Panel noted that for non-UK domiciled or international BME entrants, the proportion of UG and PGT students has increased during the last five years (rising from 44.4% to 49.9% and 56% to 60.4% respectively) whereas for non-UK PGR entrants it has remained steady (ranging from 42% to 45%).

3.3 Staff

The Review Panel noted that the proportion of UK nationality academic BME staff is 6.3% and for those staff from outside the UK it is 31.1%.

The proportion of non-UK BME staff shows a stronger upward trend over the last six years (increasing year-on-year from 23% to 31.1%) than UK BME staff (increased from 5.5% in 2012/13 to 6.3% in 2017/18).

The proportion of UK BME professional services staff is 2.9% and for non-UK staff is 22.4% with the trend showing no appreciable increase for the last few years for either category of staff.

The University of Edinburgh has a higher proportion of both UK nationality BME academic staff and BME professional services staff than the average for other institutions in Scotland but a lower proportion than that for Russell Group institutions.

There is a tendency for UK staff overall to be on higher grades than non-UK staff, and that within each of the non-UK and UK nationality groups, there tends to be a greater proportion of white ethnicity staff than BME staff on higher grades for both academic and professional services staff.

For academic staff, non-UK nationality BME staff are most likely to be employed on a fixed-term contract and white UK staff the least likely, this pattern has not changed significantly over the last six years. However, the proportion of UK BME academic staff on fixed-term contracts has fallen from 50% in 2012/13 to 34% in 2017/18, and is now a lower proportion than white non-UK academic staff (44% in 2017/18).

For professional services staff, non-UK BME staff overall are more likely to be on a fixed-term contract than their UK counterparts over the last six years, with BME staff being more likely to be on fixed-term contracts than their white counterparts for both UK and non-UK staff.

The Review Panel noted that the staff data was a snapshot of the staff database, as of 31 July 2018.

3.4 Degree Outcomes

The Review Panel noted a gap between the proportion of BME students and the proportion of white students achieving a First or Upper Second Class Honours degree at the University.

While there is little difference between the proportion of white and BME UG students that leave with an exit qualification, there is a divergence of achievement for UK-domiciled BME students. The proportion of UK domiciled BME students achieving a 1st or 2.1 honours degree has been lower than white students for each of the last five years (ranging from 2.9%-points lower to 9.3%-points lower). For non-UK BME UG students the diversion of achievement is more pronounced, with the proportion achieving a 1st or 2.1 honours degree being lower than white students in every one of the last five years (ranging from 6.7%-points lower to 13.6%-points lower). A lower proportion of BME students achieved a 1st or 2.1 honours degree in 18 out of 20 Schools across the University (ranging from -1.8%-points lower to -20.3%-points lower).

The difference in proportions of white and BME students achieving a 1st or 2.1 Honours degree is reported across the sector. In the Russell Group the difference ranges from 10 to 14 percentage points lower over the last five years. Sector-wide the overall difference stands at 15% points lower after modelling other factors and seen by a variable degree across all entry qualifications (from between 5% and 18%-points lower) and in each country in the UK.

For PGT students, a higher proportion of white UK domiciled entrants exit with a qualification than do BME entrants (ranging from 2.1%-points to 12.2%-points). However, for non UK domiciled entrants the proportion of BME students exiting with a qualification was similar to that of white students (range 2.1%-points to -0.8%-points).

In every year over the five years, UK domiciled PGR BME students were less likely to successfully complete their programme than white students (range 2.5%-points to 8.5%-points) whereas there is little difference in completion rates between non-UK domiciled BME and white students.

4. Key Themes

4.1 Racial Literacy and Awareness Gap

A gap exists between the awareness and racial literacy of University staff and the lived experiences of both UK domiciled and international BME students.

4.1.1 Student Experience

Micro-aggression is a term used for brief and commonplace daily verbal comments or behavioural actions, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative prejudicial slights and insults toward any group, particularly culturally marginalized groups.

The students who responded to the review consultation shared their experiences of racial micro-aggressions and racism at the University:

- **‘staff asking where students are from and then making jokes about countries or nationalities’**

- **'sometimes hard to tell if comments are intended to be humorous or come from ignorance – challenging behaviour is often framed as being rude or not being able to take a joke'**

- **'being surprised that students of colour, students from Africa, are knowledgeable and academically gifted – Black PhD students being questioned, or an assumption they're UG'**

- **'no recognition that some topics e.g. readings which refer to Black people as "animals" and "savages", or images of police brutality are traumatic for Black students'**

- **'assumption that BME students are only interested in race and will want to write their essays/thesis on it'**

The students felt that the University leaves the burden of challenging or reporting instances of racism or racial micro-aggressions to them and therefore instances often go unreported:

- **'worried about raising issues – don't want to be seen to be making a fuss'**

- **'challenging and reporting harassment experienced was additional emotional and practical labour that BME students are expected to take on'**

- **'raised issue with Student Support Officers but was just told not to go to lectures if it was a problem – all responsibility put back on student to resolve'**

- **'challenging relationship with academic staff: often they won't challenge anti-Semitic or racist comments from other students, or they'll make those comments themselves, leaving BME students to call it out'**

The students suggested that at an elite university, such as Edinburgh, the fear of not being seen to be coping may make it less likely that students will come forward to report harassment and therefore make it harder to detect issues.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University work with the student BME Liberation Campaign, BME Staff Network, and the Race Equality Working Group (see section 4.1.5) to identify mechanisms for reporting racial micro-aggressions and racism.

The Review Panel noted that the Residence Life team within Accommodation, Catering and Events (ACE) has enhanced reporting protocols to include the reporting of all significant interactions with students including instances of racial micro-aggressions and racism. The team has developed existing software to capture more data and centralise the reporting process. This will help the Residence Life team to better assess the wellbeing of students and provide earlier interventions as appropriate.

The Review Panel also noted that the ACE team has started the reconfiguration of the former security team, now called 'Community Support', to better reflect the role and softer skillset they currently provide students. The training and skill set of the Community Support team will be developed to better reflect and address the challenges of providing 24 hour support to students living in University accommodation.

The Review Panel **commends** Residence Life and Accommodation, Catering and Events (ACE) on the enhancements to reporting processes.

4.1.2 Staff Awareness

A key theme that became apparent during the review was the lack of staff awareness of the lived experiences of BME students.

For most of the staff that the Review Panel spoke to the absence of overt racism (or clear complaints of racism) is taken that all is well:

- **"no one has complained to me so we don't have a problem in our school"**

Connected to this, there was a consistent lack of reflection by staff on why under-reporting may be occurring given the well-publicised sector-wide student concerns about equality and diversity issues and the evidence of a BME attainment gap. The Review Panel was also concerned that some staff seemed to be of the opinion that, having undergone unconscious bias training, racism was no longer an issue for them.

The consequence of this is a sense in which racism is not and has not been an issue to deal with either locally or institutionally. How race might matter within the University is simply not on the radar for most staff. This ran through a range of conversations with both academic and professional staff alike.

On the staff consultation day, the Review Panel spoke to academic and professional services staff from Schools with a relatively high BME student cohort and a relatively high BME attainment gap. In preparation for these meetings, staff received details of the current EDMARC report (including their School's attainment gap) and they were informed that the review panel was interested in exploring their School's approach. Most were unaware that there was an attainment gap in their School and some were surprised by how large the gap was.

The Review Panel was concerned that this general lack of awareness of equality and diversity issues extended to staff involved in major institutional reviews. On the staff consultation day, when enquiring if BME issues were being considered, the Review Panel was told that 'it just hadn't come up' in the current Personal Tutor and Student Support Review.

The Review Panel noted a general underlying assumption that BME issues were being considered elsewhere in the University and that plans were in place. The Review Panel was also cognisant of the feeling of some staff that such discussions may not be taking place at an institutional level as formal recognition of a problem would entail significant costs – either financial or in terms of staff time.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University work with the student BME Liberation Campaign, BME Staff Network and the Race Equality Working Group (see section 4.1.5) to identify mechanisms that address BME staff-student experiences.

4.1.3 Racial Literacy

Racial literacy means having the understanding and practice to recognise, respond and counter forms of everyday racism or racial micro-aggressions at all levels, personal, cultural and institutional.

During the consultation, the Review Panel became aware of a basic lack of racial literacy amongst both academic and professional service staff. Some staff did not

seem to have the confidence or lexicon to articulate what they wanted to say and struggled to discuss the issues raised by BME students. Staff spoke of 'other staff' being unwilling to discuss BME issues either for reasons of 'political correctness' or for fear of 'saying the wrong thing', which essentially resulted in BME issues being overlooked or avoided altogether. BME staff raised concerns that the online unconscious bias training is largely ineffective and that there is a need for more face-to-face training and discussion.

The Review Panel was in agreement that staff at all levels require assistance to develop racial literacy.

The Review Panel **recommends** that University Leadership recognise the need to improve knowledge and upskill in the area of developing racial literacy.

4.1.4 Institutional Conversation

The Review Panel was in agreement that the University must cultivate a more open culture of discussion and engagement with BME issues. The University's current approach to BME issues is risk averse, with an emphasis on seeking private resolution of problems wherever they arise to maintain reputation.

A more open and honest culture must be cultivated both inside and outwith the classroom. This new approach should be more about developing spaces for discussion and raising awareness rather than legislation or training. The aim should be to engage staff and students with issues such as: What are racial micro-aggressions and how do they impact on staff-student and student-student conversations? What does a racially relevant pedagogy mean and why does decolonising the curriculum matter? This approach will help develop greater racial literacy and raise awareness of the needs of all students and staff. Simply put, it will help staff and students to be more considerate and respectful of each other.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Principal leads a conversation on 'race' in higher education and the implications for the University of Edinburgh.

The Review Panel was impressed by the work of Dr Krithika Srinivasan (Equality & Diversity Coordinator in the School of Geosciences) to mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) initiatives. A key activity in 2018-19 was the organisation of a workshop with the aim of collectively developing a fresh EDI strategy for the School. In this event, 6 external speakers offered brief provocations on EDI concerns in academia. Each speaker was matched with a School discussant who briefly responded to the speaker's talk and facilitated a wider discussion with the audience. The event saw active participation (more than 60 people) from across the School community (academic & professional services staff, PG and UG students, senior and junior members). Feedback from several School members in the days following the event indicated it had had immediate and direct impact in inspiring and generating reflection and action at the individual level as well as enthusiasm and ideas for building structural change at the School level. A new EDI action plan, along with a dedicated EDI budget, has been developed, approved, and is currently under implementation.

The Review Panel **commends** Dr Krithika Srinivasan and the School of Geosciences on initiatives to mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion.

During the review students and staff drew the Panel's attention to the Reni Eddo-Lodge book '*Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*' and how it had helped them understand the range of issues considered by the review. The Review Panel was in agreement that by disseminating this book to leaders across the institution the University could help initiate the institutional conversation. The book is

provocative and challenging and whilst staff may not agree with every aspect it does provoke debate and therefore growth. It would also send a signal to students and staff, both current and prospective, that the University is engaging in a new approach to BME issues.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University provide each Head of College, School, and Professional Service with a copy of 'Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race'.

4.1.5 Race Equality Charter

The Review Panel noted that the University is a signatory of the Race Equality Charter, established by Advance HE (formerly the Equality Challenge Unit) with the aims of improving the representation, progression and success of BME staff and students within higher education.

Advance HE awards the Race Equality Charter Mark (RECM) to institutions making cultural and systemic changes that will make a real difference to minority ethnic staff and students (in similar ways to which gender inequalities have been addressed under the Athena SWAN Charter). The Review Panel noted that the University was unsuccessful with a RECM application in 2016 because the judging panel felt that the action plan needed to be more ambitious.

The Review Panel was in agreement that a new application would help focus institutional actions to address BME issues (just as Athena SWAN has for gender issues). The University should re-establish the Race Equality Working Group (the Self-Assessment Team for the RECM) and work closely with Advance HE to reapply for the Race Equality Charter Mark (RECM). The new application should not just include staffing but also seek to address issues of student experience, attainment, learning and teaching, research and ethics.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University reapplies for the Race Equality Charter Mark (RECM).

4.1.6 Benchmarking

The Review Panel was in agreement that the University needs to learn from peers across the sector to determine what other universities (in the UK and across the globe) are doing to support BME students. The University of Edinburgh should aim above the benchmarked average or basic provision of support.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University conduct a benchmarking of approaches to supporting BME students across the UK. The findings of this exercise must be implemented at a level above the benchmarked basic provision of support for BME students.

4.1.7 Data

The Review Panel **commends** the University on the quality of the EDMARC data. The annual report provides the University with comprehensive statistical data on protected characteristics to support the monitoring of equality and diversity within the University.

However, the Review Panel noted that none of the staff who attended the consultation day were aware of the existence of the annual EDMARC Report. The Review Panel also noted that staff are not required to systematically engage with the EDMARC data once it has been published on the University's Equality and Diversity

website. Instead, the data is simply made available to Colleges and Schools for use if they wish to take it forward.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the EDMARC Report receives a high profile communication upon publication and that each College, School, and Professional Service is systematically required to provide a formal response to the report each year.

The Review Panel noted that once staff had been made aware of the EDMARC data there was an appetite to gain more detailed data to identify discipline and school-specific BME issues. Staff suggested that data needs to be more granular to identify scores on entry, progression year–on-year, and final outcomes. The data must also be collected in such a way that the differences in experiences between UK domicile and international BME students can be analysed. This will enable judgements to be made regarding how well each area of the University is supporting BME students and where more support is needed.

The Review Panel noted that the new PowerBI Data dashboards currently being rolled out by Student Systems will allow BME data to be easily assessed by all relevant staff, including Heads of School and Directors of Professional Services.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University review the collection of data for BME students to provide more granular data, accessible via the PowerBI Data dashboards.

The Review Panel was in agreement that staff must recognise the responsibilities integral to their role and be proactive in fulfilling these, including seeking and engaging with all relevant data. There must be clarity on who has access to data (as Schools with very few BME students will not be able to anonymise students) and each area must be required to systematically engage with the BME data as part of academic and professional service annual review processes.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University requires Colleges/Schools/Deaneries and Professional Services to respond to BME data as part of annual review processes.

4.2 Sense of Belonging

The impact of attending an institution where BME people are in the minority can contribute to a sense of academic and social isolation.

4.2.1 Feelings of Isolation

The students who responded to the review consultation shared their experiences of arriving and settling into the University:

- **'Checked city demographics so knew it would be predominantly white but hard to conceptualise what that would feel like before coming – felt aware of difference'**

Some students mentioned that they had expected the University to be more diverse, particularly given marketing statements regarding the percentage of 'international' students and staff. However, many students were disappointed by the lack of BME people and felt that the term 'international' can sometimes be used to imply racial diversity when in fact it refers to wealthy, white, middle-class students and staff from other European or North American countries:

- **'Even home students from Edinburgh were surprised by the lack of diversity at the University, in comparison to their schools'**

Students shared their experiences of being 'the only person of colour in the room', feelings of isolation and the impact that this can have on their sense of identity and wellbeing:

- **'spaces being primarily white isn't necessarily a barrier to participation, but it's something you clock – can make you self-conscious or hyper-aware of your behaviour'**

- **'feel a pressure to integrate quickly, to avoid feeling like the odd one out – often compounded by off-hand comments from students'**

Some students explained that this sense of isolation set-in during their time in University accommodation. It was noted that living away from home with other young people, some from diverse areas and backgrounds and some not, all together for the first time can be an uncomfortable experience if you are in the minority:

- **'in halls – people are getting to know each other, but sometimes results in "jokes" at BME students' expense'**

Another student felt the weight of expectation due to the lack of BME representation in the student body:

- **'being the only person of colour on your course often means being asked repeatedly to be the "face" of your department or School (prospectus, ambassador, open days, Welcome Week, E&D Committees) – "model minority", even where opportunities are rewarding it's a lot of pressure and expectation'**

The students explained that these experiences can make it difficult for BME students to feel that they belong at the University.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Sense of Belonging strand of the Student Experience Action Plan consider ways of specifically improving the experience of community and belonging for BME students.

The Review Panel noted a suggestion from students and staff that the University could do more to recognise and celebrate the contributions of BME staff and students to inspire other students and staff and make them feel they belong.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University recognise and celebrate the contributions of BME staff and students.

4.2.2 Representation

The Review Panel was in agreement that representation at all levels is critical for a positive student (and staff) experience.

The Review Panel noted that Widening Participation (WP) to higher education is a strategic priority for the University. The Review Panel also noted that at present the University's approach to student recruitment within the UK can be polarised between the Scottish Government's WP priorities and the intake from the rest of the UK, which is typically from independent schools. The Review Panel was in agreement that a broader approach to WP, beyond socio-economic factors, would enable the University to target student recruitment from specific groups. This could enable the University to develop holistic outreach programmes in local schools and communities which could be led by BME staff and targeted at BME learners.

The Review Panel noted that this would be the first of its kind in Scotland.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University recruit a new BME Outreach Officer to work with BME communities.

The Review Panel was impressed by the work of Gurpreet Grewal-Kang (Student Recruitment Manager, Veterinary Teaching Organisation) and the Veterinary admissions team to encourage WP applications and support candidates via a suite of outreach activities, regular review of entry requirements and individual guidance.

The Review Panel **commends** Gurpreet Grewal-Kang and the Veterinary admissions team on their efforts to diversify student recruitment.

The Review Panel noted the student suggestion that more staff with backgrounds and experiences similar to them would provide role models and inspirational leaders to challenge feelings of isolation, marginalisation, alienation and exclusion sometimes experienced by students from under-represented backgrounds. In particular, UK-domiciled BME people need to be better represented in the staff and student numbers. International staff and students provide a greater sense of diversity but might mask the low numbers of UK-domiciled BME staff and students. The Review Panel was in agreement that the University must be proactive with strategies to reach out to local communities to signal that Edinburgh should be the institution of choice for BME people, both for study and employment.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University commit to increase the percentage of BME staff, both academic and professional services, with immediate priority in the professional services areas.

The Review Panel notes that the Equality Act 2010 allows an employer, when faced with two or more candidates of equal merit, to select a candidate from a particular group (e.g. a particular racial group, age group or gender) that faces a disadvantage or is under-represented in its workforce over a candidate who is not from that group, to achieve diversity in its workforce.

In relation to the two representation recommendations in this section, the Review Panel **encourages** the University to use positive action to diversify staffing.

4.2.3 Pre-arrival Information

The Review Panel noted that some students felt that the University could have done more to help them prepare for their arrival at Edinburgh. More practical pre-arrival information relevant to the needs of BME students could have helped them manage

their expectations and reduce the experience of 'culture shock' for international students or those from more diverse areas of the UK.

For example, more pre-arrival information such as advice on Vitamin D supplements for international BME students from parts of the world that may struggle with the drop in Vitamin D during their initial settling-in period in the UK. Also, more awareness that the needs of UK-domiciled BME students may be different, particularly those from more diverse cities. For example, where to locate a specialist Chinese supermarket or Afro-Caribbean hair and beauty products in Edinburgh.

Recognising student diversity by including this type of information within core pre-arrival materials would serve our BME students and subtly convey to all our students a more realistic picture of what they can expect at the University and Edinburgh.

The Review Panel **recommends** that Student Recruitment and Admissions consult with the Students' Association and the student BME Liberation Campaign to explore how pre-arrival information can be enhanced to better meet the needs of BME students.

4.2.4 Induction

The Review Panel noted a number Student Recruitment and Admissions (SRA) initiatives to help students settle in to the University.

An SRA Events App developed enables new students to browse Welcome Week events to create their own personal Welcome Week programme, explore maps of the city, and read current students' recommendations about living and studying in Edinburgh. The Welcome Week programme includes a number of events organised for new students by intercultural and multicultural student societies.

The Review Panel noted that SRA also manages a Facebook group for new students (with over 7,000 members signed up for the 2019-20 group). The group provides an opportunity for students to get to know one another, share information about everything from where to buy good cheap food, form networks around common interests and backgrounds, and support one another. It also provides an avenue for the University and Students' Association to share information and promote events. It is a very successful, active group, with a diverse membership.

The SRA also manages a Student Stories microsite that gives prospective students insights into student life at Edinburgh directly from current students. Student bloggers are from diverse backgrounds, studying across a wide range of disciplines.

The Review Panel **commends** Student Recruitment and Admissions on its initiatives to help students settle in to the University.

4.2.5 Safe Spaces

Students also shared their experiences of groups, societies and networks at the University and how they provide a safe space and lifeline of support:

- **'felt isolated before finding the BME Liberation Campaign and making other POC (*Person of Colour*) friends at a party'**

- **'BME Liberation Campaign provides an opportunity to meet and build friendships with students outside your cohort'**

Students discussed the need for safe spaces such as these to share experiences, talk to others about being BME at University and to develop a sense of community and feeling of belonging.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Sense of Belonging strand of the Student Experience Action Plan consult with the Students' Association and the student BME Liberation Campaign to agree how best to target funding for BME groups, societies and networks.

4.3 Accessing Support Services

The students responding to the consultation shared their experiences of accessing support services at the University and the barriers they faced.

4.3.1 Barriers to Support

Concerns were expressed regarding a lack of staff awareness around issues of race, culture, faith leading to a perception that some staff are unable to understand or empathise with the needs of BME students:

- **'lack of cultural awareness from staff in services – making assumptions about childhood experiences which aren't universal and relying on cultural stereotypes e.g. assuming that stress is due to pressure from Asian family'**

Students shared their experiences of the inconsistent support they had received:

- **'PTs are constantly changing – hard to build a relationship, can make students reluctant to reach out for support'**

Students discussed the importance of well-trained and competent staff with the willingness and skills to support all of their students and allowing staff the time and space to build a rapport with their students.

The Review Panel was in agreement that all staff with a role directly supporting students (e.g. Personal Tutors or Student Support Officers) must feel able, and empowered, to develop effective relationships with all their students.

The Review Team **recommends** that the Service Excellence Programme ensure that a systematic staff training programme is an integral part of the final recommendations of the current Personal Tutor and Student Support Team Review.

4.3.2 Mental Health

The students discussed feeling weak or embarrassed asking for mental health support and suggested that there was a need for more conversations to normalise mental health/illness:

- **'perception before coming to university that mental health was "white people problem" as wasn't discussed in my home country'**

- **'feel weak or embarrassed asking for support – more need for conversations which normalise mental health/illness'**

Some students explained that they struggled to speak up about their mental health because of a lack of BME specific support:

- **'concepts and understanding of mental health are really culture-specific – University's language doesn't always resonate with students of colour, or address cultural barriers to accessing support'**

The Review Panel noted that the University's Student Counselling Service (SCS) has a small number of BME counsellors and students can see one of these counsellors on request. It was noted that the most common request made to the SCS by student users in regard to particular counsellors is to see a counsellor of a specific gender. In anticipation of this the SCS systematically asks students if they have a preference for a female or male counsellor. However, BME students queried why the option of seeing a BME counsellor is not also be offered systematically to students seeking help.

The Review Panel noted that all SCS counsellors are Registered with or Accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), the only university counselling service in Scotland to be accredited by the BACP. Furthermore, all University counsellors work to the Competency Framework required to deliver effective counselling in higher education, which includes the ability to work with difference (working in a "culturally competent" manner). The Review Panel also acknowledges the challenges that the SCS has faced when seeking to diversify its staffing in a profession which has traditionally attracted a white middle-class female workforce and a city which has a relatively small BME population. However, the Review Panel was in agreement that the service must continue to strive to meet the needs of the University's increasingly diverse student population.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Student Counselling Service use positive action to diversify its staffing.

The Review Panel noted that the SCS signposts students to local counselling organisations on occasions when a BME counsellor is unavailable, or more usually, when longer term counselling is needed than the service is able to provide to students.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Student Counselling Service should ensure that it has a Service Level Agreement is in place with any organisation that it uses to support University of Edinburgh students.

The Review Panel was in agreement that there is a need to strategically look at the provision of mental health support for BME students and, in particular, the presence of BME counsellors within the Student Counselling Service.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the Student Counselling Service conduct a benchmarking of approaches to supporting BME students across the UK. The findings of this exercise must be implemented at a level above the benchmarked basic level of provision.

4.3.3 The Review Panel also noted a particular example of services at the University working together to support BME students.

A multi-disciplinary team worked together last year to support Chinese students who had fallen victim to a financial scam - ensuring the students were safe and well, and that they understood what was happening from a legal perspective. Information was drawn together in order to enable students to understand the risks associated with finance, and a leaflet with information on the University's support services has been developed, translated into Mandarin and Traditional Chinese. The Review Panel noted that the University has worked in close partnership with the Chinese Student Society on this project.

The Review Panel **commends** the multi-disciplinary team of support services on the partnership project with the Chinese Student Society.

4.4 Curricula and Learning

BME students experience barriers related to both representation and cultural diversity within the curriculum and learning environments they encounter. Staff with a remit to improve BME inclusion and attainment also experience institutional barriers to achieving better outcomes.

4.4.1 The Curriculum

The students discussed their expectations that the curriculum, at a University with a global reputation, would reflect the diverse international intake of students. They had expected an inclusive curriculum that would stimulate them while they are here and prepare them for the rapidly changing and demographically diverse world into which they will move as graduates. However, the students spoke of their disappointment with the way the institution approached issues of equality, diversity and inclusion in the curriculum and how this had exacerbated their feelings of isolation and exclusion:

- **'academic spaces are welcoming but many conversations – especially about race and the global south – could be improved by a greater diversity of voices'**

- **'when international examples are brought up in lectures it's usually negative – Africa is always framed as less developed, inferior, backwards etc. – staff should try and counter this with positive examples'**

- **'language e.g. "established science" serves to dismiss the contributions of non-Western research'**

Some students explained that they felt uncomfortable contributing their perspective during lectures and tutorials, particularly when they were the only person of colour in the room:

- **'academic discussions about race often lack nuance and are dominated by white students and staff – people don't seem to value first-hand experiences'**

- **'you don't want to self-censor but aware that certain comments could make white students feel uncomfortable'**

Other students held off contributing for fear of becoming a default representative for all BME students:

- **'sense that when discussions are around race or Islam, everyone looks to the BME and Muslim students in the room to say something – difficult for students with anxiety who don't feel comfortable speaking'**

Students discussed how they felt unsupported when attempting to address issues of equality, diversity and inclusion in the curriculum. They shared their experiences of being challenged by academics to justify requests for the inclusion of more diverse topics or reading lists in the face of the historic weight and objectivity of the disciplinary 'canon':

- **'staff reluctant to engage in critical discussions around colonialism etc. – students who raise these issues are seen as disruptive'**

In this context, some students felt that they were expected to 'consume' the disciplinary status quo instead of being included as partners with staff in a collaborative approach to the curriculum. Students contrasted this with the responses of some staff to poor results in student surveys – often decrying the onset of student consumerism and insisting that a collaborative partnership between students and academics is fundamental to higher education.

Students cited the lack of inclusion and diversity in the course creation process as an element of the growth of student consumerism and fear of intellectually straying too far from the established path to a 'good degree'. The students discussed how their initial desire to seek reform can dissipate due to the barriers they face, only to be replaced by a tacit acceptance that to get a qualification the individual simply has to learn to 'play the game' within the confines of the existing curriculum.

The students discussed how courses and programmes could be rooted in their disciplinary history while also focused on what is happening now and where a discipline should aspire to be in the future. However, the students felt that if issues of diversity and inclusion are to be addressed then they have to make all the effort to challenge the academic status quo:

- **'some academics seem to feel it's enough just to point out that reading lists aren't diverse rather than taking steps to address this'**

The students felt that going against the prevailing approach can be a daunting undertaking particularly if the academic community is not a willing collaborator. The students felt that if an individual student chooses to pursue a subject of inquiry not on the prescribed curriculum or reading list then they risk spending time and effort on a task that may not directly contribute towards their course marks. The students agreed that this places the burden of risk wholly on the individual student:

- **'lack of support for students who want to pursue work that explores race e.g. student told that there was no-one in the School who could supervise their thesis and no real alternatives offered – a friend whose topic was also niche but didn't involve race was offered much more support'**

The students regarded the lack of diversity across the University as a barrier to innovation and new radical approaches to research and teaching. Some students felt

that a more *diverse* academic staff population, with *diverse* research interests, driving the design of a *diverse* range of courses and programmes was the only way to ensure diversity in the curriculum.

Students suggested multiple forms of assessment so that students could select the form of assessment that best allowed them to demonstrate their skills and capabilities:

- **'sense that sometimes marking schemes are biased against students who haven't been educated in the UK or US, but there's no real guidance on this'**

The students noted that when employability is addressed in the curriculum the approach taken is very local to Edinburgh or the UK. Students wanted a more international approach which reflected more global perspectives:

The Review Panel **recommends** that the proposed Curriculum Review enables BME students to be involved in diversifying content, including the co-design of curricula and assessments. Academic staff must collaborate with BME students to understand their experiences in the design, implementation and evaluation of their access, progression, and employability activities.

4.4.2 Progression and Attainment

As noted in section 3.4, the recently published EDMARC Report draws attention to the attainment or awarding gap which exists between white and BME students at the University.

The Review Panel acknowledges the limitations of attainment, in contrast to progression, as a measure of success. Furthermore, reasons for the awarding gap are complex, and will encompass a wide range of factors such as qualifications on entry and intersecting factors such as gender and class. However, students feeling socially or academically isolated or excluded may be less likely to feel they have sufficient support to fall back on when studies become challenging. This, in turn, may have a detrimental impact on progression and attainment.

Staff attending the review consultation day were invited to comment upon their School's BME attainment data. The Review Panel noted a low level of awareness across the institution, at all levels, of the BME attainment data. Staff were not aware of the annual EDMARC Report and explained that the University does not require them to regularly monitor or discuss progression or attainment data specifically for BME students.

The Review Panel **recommends** that the University address the attainment/awarding gap. The action plan should include targets to reduce the attainment gap.

The Review Panel was in agreement that the University needs to systematically monitor retention, progression and attainment data for BME students. It was noted that it would be important to understand this data in terms of the 'distance travelled' by different BME groups (for example, UK-domiciled and international BME students). This type of analysis would also provide a greater understanding of the 'value-added' by the University and the extent to which student needs have been supported by the University. The data should be monitored at an institutional level and by subject areas, weighted by qualifications on entry, to determine if the differential is actually evidence of systematic disadvantage or whether pre-existing disadvantage is exacerbated or mitigated whilst at Edinburgh. It would also be important to monitor

the reasons why BME students decide to withdraw. This will enable the University to better understand and evaluate the individual context and challenges of each subject area and School.

The Review Panel **recommends** that Senate Quality Assurance Committee implement systematic monitoring of retention, progression and degree outcome data for BME students and, if appropriate, recommend interventions where there are clear and consistent patterns of divergence between BME students and white students.

5. Conclusion

With increasing diversities will come increasing complexities. There are variations between different groups and terms like black and minority ethnic do not fully capture the diversities on our campus. However, what cannot be denied is that our statistics show that there are issues we need to address such as closing the attainment gap between black and minority ethnic students and white students, improving the diversity of staff particularly within professional services, and continuously working to ensure the ethos and culture of the University genuinely engages with diversity.

This means being pro-active to ensure that we grapple with ideas of belonging, of identity and do not shy away from the need to educate and act against all forms of racism. We also need to debunk any misconceptions we might have that we are in a post-racial era where we have addressed issues like racism through undertaking unconscious bias training.

We should take forward action based on evidence. Statistics provide one source of evidence. However tackling racism and acting for racial equality is not just about numbers. If that was the case, then minoritized groups will never have sufficient critical mass to effect change. The stories and lived experiences of black and minority ethnic students and staff provides further evidence that works alongside statistics to provide texture and nuance when addressing complex and potentially sensitive issues.

The recommendations place primary responsibility on the institution and its leaders to lead the change. It is not about how well black and minority ethnic students integrate, it is about steps the University can take to put in place opportunities and mechanisms to assist service heads to have the data they need and require to identify what should be addressed. It is about providing strong leadership to open up safe and brave spaces to have meaningful conversations about race as well as changing institutional cultures. It is about recording and monitoring progress but most importantly it is about developing ways in which a staffing and leadership group that is largely from the majority group listens and acts on the experiences of a minority group, in this instance, black and minority ethnic students (home and international).

Thematic Review Panel
September 2019

Lists of Commendations and Recommendations

Paragraph Reference	Commendations
Foreword	The Review Panel **commends** the University for listening to the experiences of black and minority ethnic students, to acknowledge that there are barriers and to understand that there are huge benefits in taking diversity and equality seriously.
4.1.1	The Review Panel **commends** Residence Life and Accommodation, Catering and Events (ACE) on the enhancements to reporting process.
4.1.4	The Review Panel **commends** Dr Krithika Srinivasan and the School of Geosciences on initiatives to mainstream equality, diversity and inclusion.
4.1.7	The Review Panel **commends** the University on the quality of the EDMARC data.
4.2.2	The Review Panel **commends** Gurpreet Grewal-Kang and the Veterinary admissions team on their efforts to diversify student recruitment.
4.2.4	The Review Panel **commends** Student Recruitment and Admissions on its initiatives to help students settle in to the University.
4.3.3	The Review Panel **commends** the multi-disciplinary team of support services on the partnership project with the Chinese Student Society.

Paragraph Reference	Recommendation	Responsibility
4.1.1	The Review Panel **recommends** that the University work with the student BME Liberation Campaign, BME Staff Network, and the Race Equality Working Group (see section 4.1.5) to identify mechanisms for reporting racial micro-aggressions and racism.	University
4.1.2	The Review Panel **recommends** that the University work with the student BME Liberation Campaign, BME Staff Network and the Race Equality Working Group (see section 4.1.5) to identify mechanisms that address BME staff-student experiences.	University
4.1.3	The Review Panel **recommends** that University Leadership recognise the need to improve knowledge and upskill in the area of developing racial literacy.	University Leadership
4.1.4	The Review Panel **recommends** that the Principal leads a conversation on ‘race’ in higher education and the implications for the University of Edinburgh.	The Principal
4.1.4	The Review Panel **recommends** that the University provide each Head of College, School, and Professional Service area with a copy of ‘Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race’.	University

4.1.5	The Review Panel **recommends** that the University reapplies for the Race Equality Charter Mark (RECM).	University
4.1.6	The Review Panel **recommends** that the University conduct a benchmarking of approaches to supporting BME students across the UK. The findings of this exercise must be implemented at a level above the benchmarked basic level of provision.	University
4.1.7	The Review Panel **recommends** that the EDMARC Report receives a high profile communication upon publication and that each College, School, and Professional Service is systematically required to provide a formal response each year.	EDMARC
4.1.7	The Review Panel **recommends** that the University review the collection of data for BME students to provide more granular data, accessible via the PowerBI Data dashboards.	University
4.1.7	The Review Panel **recommends** that the University requires Colleges, Schools, Deaneries, and Professional Services to respond to BME data as part of annual review processes.	University
4.2.1	The Review Panel **recommends** that the Sense of Belonging strand of the Student Experience Action Plan consider ways of specifically improving the experience of community and belonging for BME students.	Sense of Belonging strand of the Student Experience Action Plan
4.2.1	The Review Panel **recommends** that the University recognise and celebrate the contributions of BME staff and students.	University
4.2.2	The Review Panel **recommends** that the University recruit a new BME Outreach Officer to work with BME communities. The Review Panel encourages the University to use positive action to diversify staffing.	University
4.2.2	The Review Panel **recommends** that the University commit to increase the percentage of BME staff, both academic and professional services, with immediate priority in the professional services areas. The Review Panel encourages the University to use positive action to diversify staffing.	University
4.2.3	The Review Panel **recommends** that Student Recruitment and Admissions consult with the Students' Association and the student BME Liberation Campaign to explore how the pre-arrival information can be enhanced to better meet the needs of BME students.	Student Recruitment and Admissions

4.2.4	The Review Panel **recommends** that the Sense of Belonging strand of the Student Experience Action Plan consult with the Students' Association and the student BME Liberation Campaign to agree how best to target funding for BME groups, societies and networks.	Sense of Belonging strand of the Student Experience Action Plan
4.3.1	The Review Team **recommends** that the Service Excellence Programme ensure that a systematic staff training programme is an integral part of the final recommendations of the current Personal Tutor and Student Support Team Review.	Service Excellence Programme
4.3.2	The Review Panel **recommends** that the Student Counselling Service use positive action to diversify its staffing.	Student Counselling Service
4.3.2	The Review Panel **recommends** that the Student Counselling Service should ensure that it has a Service Level Agreement is in place with any organisation that it uses to support University of Edinburgh students.	Student Counselling Service
4.3.2	The Review Panel **recommends** that the Student Counselling Service conduct a benchmarking of approaches to supporting BME students across the UK. The findings of this exercise must be implemented at a level above the benchmarked basic level of provision.	Student Counselling Service
4.4.1	The Review Panel **recommends** that the proposed Curriculum Review enables BME students to be involved in diversifying content, including the co-design of curricula and assessments. Academic staff must collaborate with BME students to understand their experiences in the design, implementation and evaluation of their access, progression, and employability activities.	Vice Principal Students
4.4.2	The Review Panel **recommends** that the University address the attainment/awarding gap. The action plan should include targets to reduce the attainment gap.	University
4.4.2	The Review Panel **recommends** that Senate Quality Assurance Committee implement systematic monitoring of retention, progression and degree outcome data for BME students and, if appropriate, recommend interventions where there are clear and consistent patterns of divergence between BME students and white students.	Senate Quality Assurance Committee