

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN  
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMITTEE

## RESULTS OF THE RACE EQUALITY CHARTER STUDENT SURVEY

### 1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This paper highlights the results of the Race Equality Charter (REC) staff and student surveys as part of a planned consultation exercise to engage University groups and committees in wider discussion on the results. The consultation period offers the opportunity to reflect on the results and identify where they may provide a steer or guidance as to priority areas of activity across the University in relation to antiracism work.

The Group has access to the full set of staff and student results. To support a focused discussion, however, and to signpost to the aspects of the results which may be of specific interest to the Group, the paper provides an overview of the 'Course Content' aspect of the *student* survey.

### 2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY /FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

	Board/Committee	Date
Previously considered/approved by	Senior Management Team	20 October 2022
	Race Equality Strategy Group	26 October 2022
Further consideration required by	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee	25 January 2023
	University Education Committee	16 January 2023
	Student Support and Experience Committee	7 March 2023

### 3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group is invited to:

- Note the results of the REC student survey (section 9 of the [Report](#))
- Review and discuss the main issues highlighted by the students in relation to their 'Course content' (section 5 below)
- Where appropriate, identify actions at an institutional or Group level arising from the report, noting that an Antiracism Strategy Action Plan is being developed.

### 4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The University of Aberdeen is addressing racial inequalities and creating an inclusive culture and environment where individuals can thrive, irrespective of their race or ethnicity. An ambitious [Antiracism Strategy](#) was launched in October 2022 alongside a [video](#) featuring staff and students providing their perspectives on how the Strategy will drive forward race equality in the University.
- 4.2 The University undertook its first Race Equality Charter (REC) staff and student surveys in February/March 2022 to assess the culture of the University and explore whether racial inequalities exist within our policies and processes. A [Report](#) containing the qualitative and quantitative results of the staff and student surveys was released to staff and students on the 16<sup>th</sup> of November 2022. The response rate for the student survey was 4% and the response rate for the staff survey was 40%.
- 4.3 The Race Equality Strategy Group has identified the initial areas where action is required following a review of the results and will take forward the work through an Antiracism Strategy Action Plan 2023-2025. Moreover, issues identified in the surveys are being followed up through additional consultation with staff and students as well as with relevant internal University committees, groups and external networks which will support the Institution to identify solutions and actions. The Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group is therefore receiving this paper as part of this wider consultation process.

- 4.3 It is noted that the surveys form an integral part of the self-assessment process that the Race Equality Strategy Group (RESG) is currently undertaking in preparation for the Race Equality Charter Bronze application which will be submitted in 2024.
- 4.4 The results of the surveys indicate that inequalities exist in our Institution and provide insights as to the specific areas where improvement is required to achieve our ambition of becoming an antiracist University as set out in our Antiracism Strategy. The responses show the importance of fostering a sense of belonging in the working and learning environments. Staff and students have reported that they have experienced racism and are unclear as to the most appropriate route for reporting it. Staff indicated the importance of transparency in recruitment and selection and career development processes, and students indicated that race could be discussed in the learning environment more frequently.
- 4.5 In alignment with the purpose of this Group to “*develop an approach which addresses embedded racial stereotypes and/or limited perspectives in the curriculum and support Schools to develop learning materials which offer students a rich diversity of views and role models*”, this paper focusses on the student survey results (full set of staff and student results can be found in sections 8 and 9 in this [Report](#)) and specifically on the students’ views on their ‘Course content’.
- 4.6 It is noted that to support an assessment of whether racial inequalities exist within the University, respondents to the survey were invited to disclose their ethnic background. This has enabled the survey data to be split by respondents who identified as White (W) or from a Racialised Group (RG) background. This is important as the experiences of staff and students from Racialised Groups impact on the success of our Antiracism Strategy. Further information about ‘Presentation of the results and Terminology’ can be found in section 5 of the [Report](#).

## 5 DISCUSSION

### 5.1 QUANTITATIVE RESULTS OF THE STUDENT SURVEY ON ‘COURSE CONTENT’

This section of the student survey explored whether students considered that the content of their course matches their expectations, their course reflects the opinions of a wide variety of people, whether issues of ethnicity/race are included in academic discussions and whether course tutors/lecturers are confident/competent in facilitating discussions around race and ethnicity.

The results showed that:

- 79% of White and 82% of Racialised Groups respondents agreed that their course matches their expectations; 13% of White and 10% of Racialised Groups *did not* agree that their course matches their expectations.
- 70% of White and 71% of Racialised Groups respondents agreed that their course reflects the opinion of a wide variety of people; 14% of White and 10% of Racialised Groups respondents *did not* agree that their course reflects the opinion of a wide variety of people.
- 65% of White and 51% of Racialised Groups respondents agreed that, when relevant, issues of ethnicity and race are included in academic discussions; 10% of White and 22% of Racialised Groups respondents *disagreed* that this was the case (a disparity is observed between the two cohorts).
- 62% of White and 53% of Racialised Groups agreed that, when relevant, course tutors and lecturers are confident and competent in facilitating discussions around ethnicity and race; 9% of White and 15% of Racialised Groups respondents *disagreed* that this was the case (a disparity is observed between the two cohorts).

The results outlined above indicate that work needs to be done to ensure:

1. The University curriculum includes the perspective of a variety of people
2. Where relevant, issues about race and ethnicity are appropriately discussed
3. Tutors/lecturers have the appropriate knowledge about race and ethnicity issues and feel comfortable to facilitate these discussions in the classroom.

The work that the Decolonising the Curriculum Steering Group is undertaking will enable the University to address the issues highlighted in points 1 and 2 above.

In relation to point 3, educating ourselves and increasing our understanding of issues related to race and ethnicity has been our priority. We have been networking across the sector and beyond, and keeping our community up to date with new thinking and approaches through:

- The creation of [race webpages](#)
- The delivery of a series of race literacy training sessions initially to frontline staff and subsequently to all staff and postgraduate researchers to enable participants to increase their understanding of how race

can impact staff and student experiences in the University of Aberdeen, and build participants' knowledge, understanding and confidence in relation to race and discussion about race. Race training has been backed up with [e-training](#) opportunities and all staff are strongly encouraged to complete the *Tackling Racial Bias* online module.

- Supporting knowledge creation on race-related terminology through the work of the [Race Definitions Task and Finish Group](#)

## **6 WHAT NEXT**

An Antiracism Strategy Action Plan is being developed to reflect the Themes of the Antiracism Strategy and address the issues identified in the REC staff and student surveys. The Action Plan is a live document and new actions will be incorporated during the consultation with committees/groups and networks.

## **7 RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

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## **8 FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further information is available from Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal Education, [ruth.taylor@abdn.ac.uk](mailto:ruth.taylor@abdn.ac.uk)

2 December 2022

Status: **Open**