

Anti-Racism Strategy 2025-2029

“Building an anti-racist Brunel”

Brunel University of London
Kingston Lane
Uxbridge
UB8 3PH
EDI@brunel.ac.uk
staff.brunel.ac.uk/directorates/hr/equality-diversity-inclusion

BRUNEL UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
“BUILDING AN ANTI-RACIST BRUNEL”
ANTI RACISM STRATEGY 2025-2029¹

1. INTRODUCTION

We at Brunel University of London are truly unique as a UK higher education provider in the stunning breadth of our diverse Black, racially and ethnically minoritised communities who choose to study, research, and work here (approximately 38% of employees as at January 2025 and 75.3% of students as at December 20224). These communities are gender and sexuality diverse, international including from the Global South, and consist of disabled, neurodivergent, multi-lingual, multi-faith and non-faith peoples.

As a university, our strength lies in the recognition and foregrounding of our collective and intersectional differences, not only of our community at large, but specifically of our Black, racially, ethnically minoritised communities who constitute and shape us as an institution.

It is therefore imperative that we simultaneously recognise that racism – both structural and interpersonal, and manifesting at the global, national, societal and communal levels, also shapes our campus life. Racism at our university can manifest in multiple ways, including, but not limited to, the following examples:

- It makes itself known in our ethnicity pay gaps and degree awarding gaps.
- It lurks in our curriculum.
- It surfaces in employee recruitment processes
- It permeates sabbatical processes
- It underpins research grant peer reviews
- It undergirds promotions
- It shapes interactions between colleagues on the corridors, at meetings, and committees.
- It is present in institutional policies and practices
- It shows up in social interactions between students on campus
- It is an everyday reality that debilitates our Black, racially, and ethnically minoritised communities, and prevents them from thriving at Brunel.

Despite constituting such a significant proportion of Brunel’s student and employee population, it is worth being attentive to what some of our data below tells us about the barriers faced by our Black, racially, and ethnically minoritised communities.

¹ Please note that this strategy document will remain live to remain responsive to the need for review during this four-year period and any substantial changes will seek feedback from trade unions and staff networks and will be led by the Anti Racism Steering Group. This strategy recognises and builds on the work of anti-racism that has been undertaken at Brunel University of London till date.

- Our degree awarding gap between our white students and Black stands at 19.8%, between our white students and our Asian students stands at 8%, and our white students and our mixed heritage students stands at 6.2% as per our 2023-2024 Equity and Inclusion Annual Monitoring Reports for Students and Staff.
- Brunel's mean ethnicity paygap stands at 16 % in comparison to the sector mean ethnicity pay gap standing at 6.4%
- Our Black, racially and ethnically minoritised colleagues make up 38% of our employees, but occupy only 23.9% of senior leadership positions²

It should be noted that all the above measured and confirmed outcomes of disadvantage occur systemically at Brunel even as the 'A' level entry tariffs for students and satisfying the job specifications for vacancies for employees are uniform. Students and employees are recruited because they successfully fulfil or exceed the requirements set by Brunel for everyone regardless of their identity. However, the data above demonstrates that structural barriers impede our Black, racially and ethnically minoritised communities from progress.

Acknowledging and understanding what this data tells us requires anti-racist education, critical self-reflection as a university, and awareness-raising as a community. All of these are vital to eliminating barriers to success for our Black, racially, and ethnically minoritised communities.

In conversation with Brunel's Equity Strategy 2025-2029 and Equity Delivery Plan 2025-2029 that places equity at its heart, our Anti Racism Strategy 2025-2029 focuses on anti-racist interventions with a clear [intersectional](#) focus. The strategy recognises that discriminations on the basis of race and ethnicity get further compounded by other minoritised social identities such as age, caste, class, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion, sex, sexuality, socio economics, and other factors.

2. SO WHAT IS RACISM?

To understand racism, we need to first understand the terms race and ethnicity. This strategy starts from the position that it might be helpful to understand *what race does* as opposed to *what race is*.

While the mainstream understanding of race focuses on ***what race is*** – basing its definition on visible and aural markers of social identity such as skin colour, accents, physical features, language, religion, and others), ***what race does*** is to divide and hierarchise people. And most importantly, it keeps this racialised power structure in place in the world social order. It situates and perpetuates whiteness as the top of the hierarchy and thus the norm against which all other racialised people are situated.

² Senior Leadership in this instance has been determined by the number of senior staff that report to the Vice Chancellor, the number of academic staff on senior leadership allowances, and the number of professional staff on spot salaries (G11).

For a detailed scholarly discussion of the terms race and ethnicity, please refer to the Appendix of this strategy document.

Race/ethnicity and religion are distinct legally protected characteristics in UK's Equality Act 2010. This means discrimination on the grounds of race/ethnicity and religion are illegal. It is important not to conflate the categories of race, ethnicity, and religion, while simultaneously recognising that in some instances an individual's religion shapes their ethnicity, and can also become an integral part of their racialised identity.

Racism is the act of discrimination based on someone's race and ethnicity as signaled by their accent, clothes, cultural customs, food, language, nationality, physical features, religion, skin colour, and other identity markers, that results in their stereotyping, undermining of self-worth, and dehumanization.

Racism manifests at multiple dimensions in our social and work lives:

- Interpersonal racism manifests as both overt acts (slurs, physical and psychological violence for instance) and in covert ways (interactions that reveal biases and hierarchies and perpetuate stereotypes)
- Structural racism manifests in social, economic, health and political policies and practices that uphold barriers to success for Black and racially minoritised communities, and lead to their systemic oppression and disparities in outcomes.
- Institutional racism manifests in schools, universities, workplaces etc by upholding structural racism within larger society, which leads to the disadvantaging of Black and racially minoritised communities.

It is critical to note that racisms manifest in distinct ways against different racially and ethnically minoritised groups, and the experience of racism should not be conflated or understood as the same for all racially and ethnically minoritised groups. Below we alphabetically list known and distinct forms of racism, by no means exhaustive, and as collated by all those in the Brunel community who helped shaped this document:

- Anti-Arab Hate
- Anti-Asian Hate (East-Asian, South Asian, South-East Asian)
- Anti- Blackness
- Anti-Immigrant Hate
- Anti Indigenous People Hate
- Anti-Jewish Hate
- Anti-Muslim Hate
- Anti Romany Hate
- Anti Traveller People Hate

The experience of each kind of racism can be further compounded by belonging to a minoritised religion and also other social positions such as age, caste, disability, ethnicity, gender, neurodivergence, sexuality and others. For instance, misogynoir is a particular compounded experience of anti-Black racism and misogyny that Black women experience as their race and gender intersect to inform the simultaneously racist and misogynist discriminations that they experience in the world.³

3. WHAT IS ANTI-RACISM IN A UNIVERSITY SETTING?

Anti-Racism is the proactive effort to dismantle structural, prejudicial, and inter-personal manifestations of racism in order to decentre whiteness as norm. It is important to recognise that anti-racism is a personal and an institutional practice, undertaken by people of all racialised groups.

An anti-racist practice is also a fully intersectional practice that recognises that the experience of racism is compounded by other minoritised social positions such as age, caste, disability, ethnicity, gender, neurodivergence, religion, sexuality and others.

Within a university setting this involves being open to challenging conversations on racialised privilege and understanding how this shows up, taking deliberate and concerted steps to counter such privileges in our systems, interactions, and processes, eliminating structural barriers to success, and confronting and sanctioning racial harassment and racial bias without any excuses. Sincere anti-racist efforts should lead to culture change.

Within a university setting, it requires:

- self-reflective ownership of historic racial injustices on which universities are founded
- recognition that a racially diverse community does not automatically signal that these community members feel safe and empowered within the setting
- systematic review and appraisal of all current policies and practices examined against equity and inclusion data to determine which racially minoritised groups are most adversely impacted and under what criteria
- decolonisation⁴ of curriculum design and content to ensure that both *what* is how and assessed and *how* it is taught and assessed remove barriers to success, ensures that curriculum is representative of our student demographics, and challenges and decentres systemic privileging of white, male, Eurocentric and Global North voices, examples and content
- quantitative and qualitative data driven interventions to remove structural barriers to success for racially minoritised groups across awarded degrees, promotion outcomes, pay gaps and other categories
- accountability and commitment to culture change at every level of the university, starting with senior leaders at the helm
- recognition that our anti-racist commitments extend beyond the university and are upheld by external stakeholders and placement providers
- the recognition, valuing and upliftment of Black, Indigenous, Global South means of knowledge production and research methods in our curriculum and our research strategies

³ The term misogynoir was [first coined by Moya Bailey](#), Associate Professor in the School of Communication at Northwestern University in 2010.

⁴ The work of decolonisation within Brunel's university curriculum will uphold principles of academic freedom, such that lawful perspectives can be expressed, debated, and respected within learning environments by students and staff in the spirit of open enquiry and learning, and in line with the University's [Freedom of Speech Statement](#).

4. BUILDING AN ANTI-RACIST BRUNEL

At the heart of our new Anti-Racism Strategy is a recognition that the following five areas will be focused on through Brunel's Anti Racist delivery plan. Please refer to the Equity Strategy and Delivery Plan where our action plans for building an anti-racist Brunel have been consolidated, shaped by this strategy.

- *Student Academic Provisions and Student Experience*

These actions will focus on developing and sustaining anti-racist curricula across the university through decolonising our curriculum and reducing our awarding gap with the view to its elimination altogether.

- *Research Culture*

These actions will focus on building and sustaining an anti-racist research culture that values Black, racially and ethnically minoritised, decolonial, and Global South researchers and knowledge systems.

- *Employee Experience (Recruitment & Selection Processes, Probation, Sabbatical, Grant Writing Support, Progression and Promotions Processes)*

These actions will focus on embedding anti-racist approaches through data driven positive action initiatives throughout our employee lifecycle at Brunel – both academic and professional services.

- *Academic Staff, Leadership Roles & Representation*

These actions will focus on increasing representation from Black, racially, and ethnically minoritised colleagues in leadership roles across departments, colleges and the university to address the discrepancies between student demographics and leadership across the institution (academic and professional services).

- *Critical Culture Change & Education*

These actions will focus on the development and implementation of anti-racism workshops and education opportunities across the institution for all employee and students. This will be aimed at making anti-racism a foundational core of Brunel.

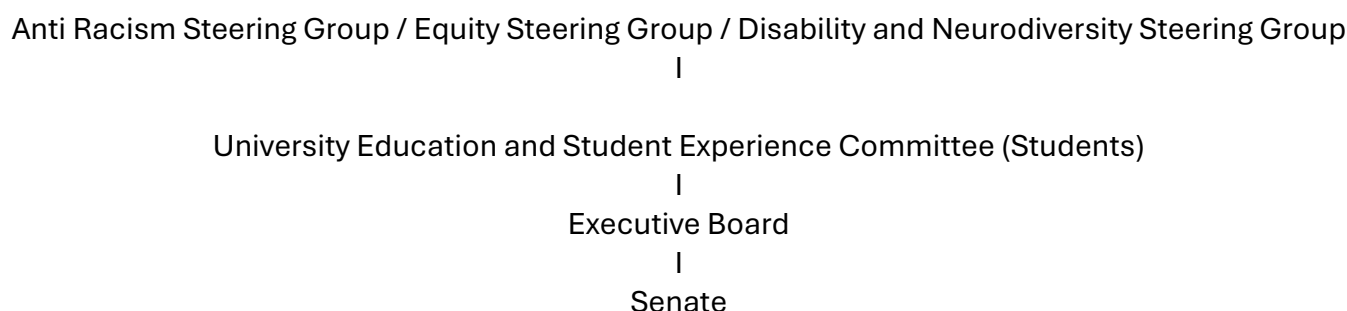
5. ANTI RACISM ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

The governance responsibility of ensuring that our Anti Racism Strategy is embedded, reviewed, implemented and delivered through every dimension of the institution is reported through the following structures:

EMPLOYEE GOVERNANCE



STUDENT GOVERNANCE



Beyond this reporting structure, every individual at Brunel - employee and student - will be responsible for upholding and implementing the principles, values, and proposed actions that underpin this Anti Racism Strategy.

Every strategy and policy document at Brunel will need to align themselves with this Anti Racism Strategy and Delivery Plan, and every stakeholder in charge of these policies will be responsible for doing so. Review of these strategies need to be prioritised once this Anti Racism and Strategy Delivery Plan is published.

The successful completion and sustainability of these anti-racism specific performance indicators as identified in Brunel's Equity Strategy and Delivery Plan 2025-2029 will mark the first stage of the journey of culture change towards an Anti-Racist Brunel.

6. LIST OF KEY PUBLIC LEGISLATION DOCUMENTS

Please find below a list of key legislation that underpins Brunel's Equity Strategy and Delivery Plan 2025-2029.

[Equality Act 2010](#)

[Public Sector Equality Duty Guidance](#)

[Office for Students Equality and Diversity Guidelines](#)

[Gender Pay Gap Reporting Guidance](#)

7. BRUNEL'S EQUITY RELATED POLICIES AND REPORTS

ED&I Annual Report Staff

ED&I Annual Report Students

Brunel's PayGap Reports

APPENDIX

1. WHAT RACE IS VERSUS WHAT RACE DOES

In [Racism without Racists](#), Critical Race Studies scholar Eduardo Bonilla-Silva explains how the insistence of colour-blindness as default practice on the part of whiteness has led white majority contexts to claim that racism does not exist. The logic of people “not seeing colour”, Bonilla-Silva argues, leads to the conclusion that they cannot possibly discriminate on the basis of race, and are therefore not racist. Once racism has been dismissed on these grounds, there is no need for accountability at both personal and structural levels.

Yet racism persists, because race is more than the colour of one’s skin.

While the mainstream understanding of race focuses on **what race is** – basing its definition on visible markers of social identity such as skin colour, accents, physical features, language, religion and others), Critical Race Studies academic [Alana Lentin](#) shifts our understanding of race to **what race does** by defining race as “a technology of power”. She “formulate[s] race as a technology for the management of human difference, the main goal of which is the production, reproduction, and maintenance of white supremacy on both a local and a planetary scale” (2020, Page 5, [Why Race Still Matters](#)).

Lentin explains that it is based on *what race is* that people have historically been divided, and most importantly hierarchised, into groups with white racialised groups at the top of the hierarchy.

What race does is to divide and hierarchise people, and most importantly, it keeps this racialised power structure and hierarchy in place in the world social order. And it is this hierarchisation that remains at the heart of historical and ongoing colonial projects that dehumanizes people. It situates and perpetuates whiteness as the top of the hierarchy and thus the norm against which all other racialised people are situated.

British universities were founded on and shaped by such principles of coloniality and whiteness – not just in terms of who is empowered to study and work here, but also whose knowledges are considered as more valuable over others. To move towards racial justice from these beginnings thus requires sustained education, constant critical reflection, and courage to own and dismantle these historical injustices.

2. WHAT IS ETHNICITY AND HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND ITS COMPLEX RELATIONSHIP TO RACE?

It is critical to understand how race and ethnicity intersect and shape each other in any anti-racist effort.

There is no universally accepted definition for ethnicity. However, the Black British cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall (1996) described ethnicity as a particular social position that acknowledges the compounded place of racialisation, history, language and culture in the construction of identity. Ethnicity helps us to understand how people racialised as belonging to the same group can still experience structural and social disparities based on their ethnicities.

An instance of structural ethnicity-based discrimination becomes apparent in the term GRT and its problematic use to merge three distinct ethnic and national groups under one umbrella term. Travelers are an indigenous nomadic people from Ireland who have a separate identity, heritage and culture from

the community in general. The Irish Traveller community is categorised as an ethnic minority group under the Race Relations Act, 1976 (amended 2000); the Human Rights Act 1998; and the Equality Act 2010. Romany people have been in Britain since at least 1515, after migrating from continental Europe as part of the Roma migration from India and have much in common linguistically with more recent Roma arrivals coming from Eastern Europe. It should be noted that the word 'Gypsy' is considered a slur by Roma people and highlights the problematic nature of the umbrella term GRT.

In the EU, both the Racial Equality Directive and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights prohibit discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin. At the same time, the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) specifically protects the rights of groups and individuals based on national origin (European Commission 2017).