

UCL Faculty of Mathematical and Physical Sciences

Race Pledges 2020-2021

27 Nov 2020

1. Vision

We aim to understand and challenge the systemic and structural biases, inequities and injustices that affect and disadvantage members of our student and staff body. This means taking effective actions to be conscious of, correct and prevent negative experiences lived by students and staff in our departments and institutes. Through taking effective action we aim to increase staff and student trust in our systems and procedures, to foster their sense of belonging and to make sure that lines of accountability are clear to all.

2. Context

We are living through the Covid-19 pandemic which has implied major changes to the way we live and work. Everyone has been affected, yet we recognise that some members of our academic and work communities have been facing a disproportionately negative impact given the disadvantaged conditions they were already subjected to, became subjected to, or, in other cases, because of the workload increase while adapting, managing or leading during the crisis. We know the pandemic has affected in a disproportional manner Black, Asian and Ethnic minority groups (BAME).

Most of our staff members have been working from home and non-stop since March 2020. For several months many staff worked while undertaking a much larger load of additional caring responsibilities due to limited school and child-care options. Staff have made and continue to make an extraordinary effort to transition to, and deliver, online teaching and to provide online learning experiences to cohorts of students that in many departments are much larger than in previous years. While staff have demonstrated incredible resilience, the circumstances we have faced, and will continue facing, indicate we need to be mindful and prevent at all costs the burnout of already overworked members of staff.

With the above context and within the uncertainties of this academic year, we remain committed to ensure that disproportional disadvantages faced by students and staff are not deepened further during these times.

We encourage the MAPS community of staff and students to provide feedback and to hold the Faculty and Departments accountable on our pledges.

3. Faculty-level pledges

Our race equity agenda this year builds upon the cultural change we have set to achieved as part of our 2020-2023 Faculty strategic EDI plan and aligns with the 2020-2021 UCL EDI strategy that places as a priority to challenge all forms of racisms and unacceptable behaviours in the UCL community.

For the academic year of 2020-2021, our pledges address culture shift, student experience, staff recruitment and promotion, and accountability. We pledge to:

- Develop a series of MAPS Lunch hour conversations that will run throughout the academic year and which are titled “Tackling racial inequity in higher education and in STEM.” The purpose of the series is to ensure continuity in the conversation and dialog around building and strengthening an anti-racist culture across the Faculty [see Appendix 1].
- Support MAPS departments in the implementation of the Inclusive Curriculum Healthcheck as well as in ensuring that departments carry out a continuous assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in the BAME student experiences and that mitigating impact plans are put in place accordingly.
- Continue encouraging our staff and student community to take collective responsibility in preventing and challenging unacceptable behaviours, including challenging racial harassment, by launching a video series that encourages members of our community to understand, reflect on, prevent and report unacceptable behaviours. This is a resource that will be available across the faculty and that will be launched in Term 2.
- Continue using the Fair recruitment Specialist scheme, whenever possible, for recruitments taking place this year.
- Proactively encourage and support widespread participation of staff in the Accelerate to Leadership programme.
- Hold a faculty-wide forum as a safe space for students and staff to hold both Faculty and Departments accountable on their 2020-2021 pledges and to discuss learnings and future actions.

4. Departmental-level pledges

The departments and institutes in our faculty also are committed to advance race equity by addressing their local specific challenges. Bellow you find the pledges they make for 2020-2021.

Science and Technology Studies

- Establish a student-led, safe space for students from a BAME background to come together, discuss race-related issues and recommend actions as required to the STS Equalities and Equities Subcommittee. This student-led, safe space will be set up in consultation with students to ensure that the space can fit students' needs as required.
- Make anti-racism training available to staff within STS. The STS department will be one of the pilot departments to attend a UCL-wide diversity training, available to staff in terms of teaching and inclusive practice.
- Continue to review student recruitment practices to encourage inclusivity and increase diversity across our student body.
- Review the STS Curriculum to include content about structural inequalities and social justice, review and expand reading lists, whenever possible, and develop the language and concepts to discuss and address structural inequalities, such as racism, sexism, class discrimination, ableism, homophobia and their intersections. This will be set as ongoing work in the Department over the next few years.

Earth Sciences

- Proactively target Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic scientists to apply to our forthcoming recruitments by making widespread advertisement in targeted networks such as *The International Association for Geoscience Diversity* (IAGD) and the *Geoscientists of Color* network. During the recruitment process we will include a Fair Recruitment specialist to assist the entire process from advertisement through to shortlisting and selection.
- Expand our EDI committee to ensure the creation of departmental networks that can drive effective actions for inclusion of underrepresented groups. The focus will be to expand the committee to include members taking the roles of BAME officer, LGBTQ+ officer and Disability officer, and work with them to create Departmental Networks for these underrepresented groups.
- Have a “safe space” conversation with all permanent staff. The members of our predominant white-male Department have expressed their willingness to embrace change. To support such, we would arrange a “safe space” conversation with all staff, under the guidance of an expert facilitator, to encourage frank discussion around language, behaviour and culture, and thus determine a clear way forward.

Mathematics

- Improving the recruitment process, primarily for academic and teaching posts where we do not have much ethnic diversity on the current staff. Here we have two actions:
 - (a) To seek a wide race representation in the pool of applicants by circulating news of all new departmental posts to ethnic minority networks.
 - (b) To ensure fairness in the recruitment process. We will trial the use of a Fair Recruitment Specialist in one academic appointment round this year. There has been local pushback against the use of people whose expertise is far from the discipline, which is why we are initially planning a controlled trial of the scheme rather than wholehearted adoption.
- Ensuring that our black undergraduate and graduate students feel welcome, and part of a wider community of black mathematicians. This means:
 - (a) Ensuring that the new Black Doctoral Students' Network is advertised to all new and existing departmental research students
 - (b) Advertising specific targeted events – such as Chalkdust magazine's "Black Mathematicians Month" and the upcoming joint IMA/LMS conference "Black Heroes of Mathematics" to our undergraduate students
- Ensuring we nurture our BAME PS colleagues and enhance their career development by nominating them for UCL's Leadership Programmes (e.g. Accelerate to Leadership) whenever it is appropriate for their career stage. We commit to making sure it is considered in every round of the programmes.

Physics and Astronomy

- Raise awareness of, and challenge, the predominant white and male role model representation in the P&A curriculum. Every module taught by P&A staff to develop portraits of eminent scientists from underrepresented groups in their fields as role models. Portrait information will be collected by the Department to ensure diversity and comprehensiveness.
- Implement a PhD buddy system across the Department. Assign new PhDs to an existing senior student. The buddies will be provided with access to EDI resources and encouraged to undergo training, e.g. with regards to unconscious bias. Evaluate impact of scheme with annual or bi-annual surveys.
- Keep track of speaker backgrounds more comprehensively across the Department. Increase the share of speakers from BAME backgrounds at seminars and outreach talks, also exploring the potential to reach out to global universities outside the traditional physics institutions via online sessions.

- Encourage at least one member of staff in the Department to be trained as a Fair Recruitment Specialist and trial the scheme in at least one recruitment within the Department, with subsequent evaluation.
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Chemistry

- Develop a new mentoring scheme – the mentoring scheme will be for Early Career Researchers and we aim to open this up to PhD students to encourage them to stay on in academia and help bridge any BAME Attainment Gap. Training will be provided to both mentors and mentees. Nicola Philips will arrange the training and the mentors will be allocated to mentees via the EDI committee initially. Evidence for where mentoring has been successful is in the advancement of women academics in the department who have received active mentoring from senior colleagues (both male and female). Hence, our aim is to expand this success in all areas of diversity to our early career researchers and PhD students.
- Continue to review student recruitment practices to encourage inclusivity and increase diversity across our student body. This will include ensuring that outreach and engagement activities are reaching underrepresented groups. With increased use of remote activities our aim would be to expand outreach activities to underrepresented groups in urban areas such as Bradford and Manchester. We would also look to potentially develop some summer internships after the successful teaching and remote internships this summer.
- Recruitment process for staff positions. Previously, we proactively targeted female researchers in an effort to expand the numbers of women applying for academic positions, which was successful (7 out of 10 recent lecturer appointments in chemistry were female). We will attempt to proactively target BAME researchers in future positions and we will look to trial the use of a Fair Recruitment Specialist in one appointment round.
- Expand the EDI committee with a targeted role. The Culture working group of the committee has a LGBTQ+ Champion and a Wellbeing Champion we will aim to expand this to also have a BAME Champion. The LGBTQ+ Champion enabled an active network to be developed in the department so we would work with the BAME Champion to develop a similar network for this underrepresented group.

Institute of Materials Discovery

- Create a forum to raise awareness among staff and students of UCL EDI policy so that they can understand cultural differences and understand the importance of race and gender equality which may be different in their culture.
- Organise diversity and inclusive training and anti-racism training for IMD staff.
- Highlight EDI policy in IMD Recruitment Activities. Include EDI statement in job advertisements and include EDI awareness as one of the desirable personal specifications.
- Make all staff well aware of EDI policy to promote the inclusiveness in all Curricula.

Space and Climate Physics

- Deliver racial sensitivity training to all staff and students.
- Identify staff to be further trained in fair recruitment practices and include fair recruitment specialists on selection and interview panels; provide fair recruitment guidelines to all staff with line management responsibility.
- Develop and deliver a programme of targeted schools' outreach activities that are inclusive.
- Provide training on inclusive education to all teaching staff and bespoke workshops for PhD supervisors on cultural and racial awareness.

Natural Sciences

- Create spaces and opportunities for Natural Sciences community reflections about race, such as on the history and legacy of eugenics and genetics at UCL. This activity will build on and enhance events already run in 2019-20 and 2020-21. Encourage the adoption of diversity statements in module syllabi and continue to promote "Report and Support".
- Support and facilitate activity to "Decolonise the curriculum", such as by working with UCL Justice Collective and establishing/highlighting local pathways for race-related community input. Agenda item on SSCC to recommend actions to Natural Sciences Management Board through its EDI representatives.

- As an outcome of student-staff discussions, establish at least one active intervention that can be locally supported, such as staff/student champion roles, mentoring, or funding for development activities.

Statistics

- Widening the pool of applicants through specific targeting. For example, by looking into the database of professionals/graduates affiliated with institutions like RSS and the ASA, who identify themselves with some form of ethnic minority
- Promote EDI awareness amongst the students. For example, introduction to EDI values in the induction.
- Developing the mentoring scheme for A- level students with high potential in mathematics and statistics from BAME background.
- EDI awareness to become part of the person specification (essential or desirable) for the candidates who apply to work in the department.

LCN

- Create an undergraduate summer research bursary for the LCN, targeted at under-represented BAME groups (we would aim to amplify this by establishing similar bursaries at King's and Imperial);
- Assign mentors to all staff when they are promoted and change grades (this is an example of an action that we hope would benefit everyone, but especially those from minority groups who might not find it so easy to form professional networks);
- Trial the use of a Fair Recruitment Specialist for at least one LCN appointment during the coming year.

5. Contributors to this document

These pledges are the result of discussions and conversations both within departments and across the faculty. This document has been compiled by the Alexandra Olaya-Castro, MAPS vice-Dean (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) with contributions from the MAPS Dean, Ivan Parkin, and from members of the MAPS EDI group, which includes the vice-Dean (EDI) as well as EDI representatives and Inclusion leads of each department and institute within MAPS, members of the Faculty operations team, and the Faculty BAME Awarding Gap Project lead. Contributors listed in alphabetical order are: Alexandra Olaya-Castro, Andy Gormanly, Andrew Fisher, Benjamin Joachimi, Claire Calmat, David Rowley, Dimitra Stamogiannou, Donna Williamson, Emma Grant, Emma Tobin, Giuseppe La Rosa, Helen Higgins, Helen Wilson, Ivan Parkin, Lidunka Voadlo, Luciano Rila, Mengyan Nie, Nicola Phillips, Niloufar Aburashchi, Sara Mathews, Tamara Alhifi, Zak Liddell.

Appendix 1: MAPS Lunch Hour conversations 2020-2021

This initiative was created by colleagues and students in the MAPS Faculty who explicitly contacted the MAPS vice-Dean (EDI) with their desire of contributing to the faculty work around mitigating racial inequity. The series is curated by Alexandra Olaya-Castro, Nick Achilleos, Giovanna Tinnetti, Emma Tobin, Lidunka Voadlo, Lia Li, Ash Talwar. We have also received input from Ana Pellicari Silva, an UG student in Earth Sciences. We are currently seeking input from students through the SU Black and Minority Ethnic Students Officer.

Title of series:

Tackling racial inequity Higher Education and STEM

Aim

The aim of the MAPS Lunch Hour Conversations is to create a safe and open space for continuous dialog that allows understanding different forms of racism and how we can strengthen an anti-racism culture in MAPS.

Frequency

We aim to run one conversation per month during term time starting on the 4th Dec 2020 when will be in conversation with Dr Jason Arday: “We must come together to dismantle racism in higher education.”

Format

The guest speaker will give a 30-min formal talk or 30-min conversation with a chair, followed by a 30 min guided discussion with the attendees. The guided discussion will be done in breakout rooms using an online tool to facilitate that all the groups discuss a proposed question and their discussions are collected online. We will have a trained facilitator for each group.

Proposed themes to cover

- Understanding institutional and structural racial inequities in HE [Dec 2020]
- Creating the anti-racist STEM Lab [Jan 2021]
- Disaggregating experiences within Black, Asian, and Ethnic minority [Feb 2021]
- Student-led conversation [March 2021]
- Decolonizing the STEM curriculum [May 2021]
- Collective action for a better tomorrow [June 2021]

