

**University of Westminster Black and Minority Ethnic Network:  
A Collective Statement of Demands  
22 June 2020**

The BME Network has collated our diverse, individual and collective voices. More than 130 colleagues have been consulted through MS Teams and emails to compile a list of actions that will help tackle silences, unconscious biases, overt racisms and the absence of BME voices in strategic decision-making and thus help the University to realise its purported values of equality, diversity and inclusion in general and become an anti-racist university as a matter of urgency. We see our demands as going along with those made by our students.

We seek the University's clear commitment to action the following summarised under these headings: Inclusion and Visibility; BME Career Progression; Senior Management and Leadership; Reporting and Indicators; Time, Resources and Complaint Handling; and, Training.

**1. Inclusion and Visibility**

The BME Network wants to see genuine, visible and practically impactful engagement from those who dictate the culture in Westminster through the development of systems and mechanisms that will address exclusion and invisibility of BME colleagues and their achievements:

**KEY ACTIONS:**

- a) Carry out impartial consultations to ensure EDI is embedded throughout our administrative structures.
- b) Support Equality Impact Assessment with special focus on race and ethnicity for each administrative and academic unit to be carried out by external expert with specialism in anti-racism
- c) Commitment to decolonise and diversify curriculum and teaching practices in all Schools within three years. This commitment should not be carried out as a single exercise but become an integral part of the validation process managed by Quality and Standards.

**2. BME Career Progression**

There is an urgent requirement for transparent recruitment and progression practices. Concomitantly, there are currently no BME colleagues in the senior management team. Within Professional Services, majority are on NG7 or below, despite their high level of expertise, and are being blocked from the opportunity to progress further. A lack of representation and progression stifles the possibility of a greater diversity of talent and backgrounds:

**KEY ACTIONS:**

- a) EDI must be made an essential part of the appraisal process for all colleagues and a high-level objective for all those with line managerial responsibilities.
- b) Periodic reviews must be carried out, to include reports on BME colleagues' progression including those on short-term contracts, guest speakers/VLs used to increase visibility but who are not embedded as full-time staff members. This

must be followed by development and implementation of an action plan to ensure:

- i. fair and better career progression opportunities and processes for BME colleagues.
  - ii. BME research and researchers are actively supported and promoted using mentoring, career progression, and representation at senior and committee levels.
  - iii. Research communities as well as Readers and Professors groups must undertake internal audit to identify privileges and unconscious biases and adopt better practices to proactively support BME colleagues.
- c) A dedicated training and development budget is established for BME colleagues.

### **3. Senior Management and Leadership**

Many BME colleagues feel under-valued, ignored, discriminated against and isolated. Colleagues also have a lack of faith in the HR complaints process, the stress involved and fear losing their jobs, so do not tend to voice their concerns formally:

#### **KEY ACTIONS:**

- a) Mandatory training for Senior and all Line Managers focused on racism and discrimination in the workplace.
- b) Regular internal and external auditing to ensure anti-racism measures are implemented at departmental level.
- c) Managers who have failed to act upon racist complaints or have actively built up a culture of discrimination should be temporarily blocked from recruitment panels, making decisions on which staff have access to training and development courses, and restructuring decisions.
- d) EDI in general and anti-racism in particular should become a standing agenda item in all high level university and unit level committees.

### **4. Reporting and Indicators**

Annual EDI Report to include:

- a) An annual Equality and Diversity Workforce Report;
- b) Ethnicity pay gap data published and given the same prominence as gender pay gap reporting;
- c) A diversity audit of the Leadership Team both in Academic and Professional Services carried out by an external person/organisation with experience in race equality;
- d) Regular internal and external auditing to ensure anti-racism measures are being implemented at departmental level;
- e) Reported data (i) stratified by ethnicity to avoid assumptions around BAME homogeneity; (ii) collected from operational processes; and, (iii) used to inform key strategic indicators to measure, improve and transform the workforce.

### **5. Time, Resources and Complaint Handling**

There is a systemic lack of HR engagement and action when dealing with BME issues regardless of complaints raised by past and current colleagues. All colleagues and students must have an opportunity to log any form of discrimination they face (whether

anonymously or named) in order for the University to obtain a more complete picture of what is happening beneath the surface at Westminster:

**KEY ACTIONS:**

- a) An independent complaints committee to be established (operating separately from HR) in order to record, review and take action on complaints (with particular regard to their frequency and persistence), discrimination, bullying, and systematic racism.
- b) Establish a Whistle Blower helpline.
- c) Clear and transparent allocation of workload/WAM hours/Professional Development hours for diversity/equality work.

**6. Training**

Without compassion and empathy, the danger is that we will default to autopilot responses, practices and habits that are endemic to systemic racism.

**KEY ACTIONS:**

- a) Mandatory unconscious bias training is required for all colleagues. This should not be carried out as a “one-off” tick box exercise.
- b) A listening exercise (like the Human Library) or other ways, and at regular intervals. One powerful exercise is to listen to the other person for 5 minutes without interruption and then summarise what you think you heard.

This list should not be seen as exhaustive. Instead, it is a useful starting point to address a history of hostile working conditions at Westminster and reflects the desire by BME colleagues see these replaced with a culture that is welcoming, actively supportive and inclusive. We look forward to working with the University to see these actions realised.

**The BME Network at the University of Westminster**

**Compiled June 2020**