

Race Matters

**A report on the experiences
of Black staff in the student
movement**



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- Rajinder Kaur Mann, Chief Executive, Network for Black and Asian Professionals
- Nona McDuff, Chair of HERAG (Higher Education Race Action Group) and Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Kingston University London
- Chris Nichols, Equality Support Official, University and College Union
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Foreword

We are very pleased to present the first ever research report on the experiences of Black staff in the student movement. This report provides an invaluable and powerful insight into the current landscape for Black staff. We hope that it not only stimulates conversation, but is also a catalyst for change.

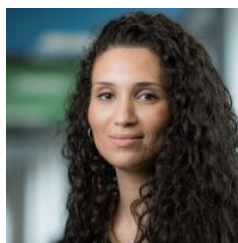
In addition to highlighting the passion, commitment and enthusiasm Black staff have for the student movement, this report presents a sobering account of the experiences and barriers Black staff can face. Essentially it highlights there is still a great deal of work to be done if the student movement is going to be truly inclusive. For instance, when asked to consider if they had ever observed race equality being promoted, Black staff were unable to provide any examples that were not student-focused.

One of the most concerning findings is the lack of Black staff working in the student movement. This lack of Black representation at all staff levels, especially in senior management positions, is undeniably an area that requires our attention. If we are going to effectively represent the diversity of our membership, we need diversity in our workforce and must take positive action to recruit, retain and develop people from diverse backgrounds. This includes taking collective responsibility to understand and remove the structural barriers that restrict the employment and promotion of Black staff in the student movement.

One of the key ways in which we can begin to address this will be to focus our efforts on increasing the number of Black elected officers, as for many officers their career path leads them to being a union staff member. Growing the talent we already have is also essential. However, these are only some aspects of the work that needs to be done. The recommendations in this report outline steps to begin addressing the current barriers that exist for Black staff.

Ultimately, this report seeks to help redress the inequalities that exist for Black staff in employment and we need to be bold in our commitment to addressing its findings. Through implementing the recommendations, we will not only strengthen the student movement but will also improve the student experience.

We look forward to working collectively to make change happen and create a student movement that promotes race equality.



Malia Bouattia
NUS Black Students' Officer



Raechel Matthey
NUS Vice-President (Union Development)



Peter Robertson
NUS Acting Chief Executive and Deputy Chief Executive, Business and Resources

Executive summary

Increasing Black representation is not just about numbers or improving business delivery, it is about tackling systemic practices of inequity and to do this effectively requires leadership.

Executive Summary

During January and February 2014, NUS carried out the first ever survey exploring the views and experiences of Black¹ staff in the student movement. The research project was initiated after all NUS diversity surveys from 2005 to 2012 highlighted the lack of ethnic diversity at every level in the workforce of students' unions.

The research project comprised of a literature review and online survey, collating both qualitative and quantitative data. The survey explored a range of areas, such as the lack of Black staff representation, career development, inclusion, and equality and diversity. In total, the survey received 68 responses from African, Arab, Asian and Caribbean non-student staff in the student movement.

Our findings provide a valuable insight into the experiences and barriers that many Black staff face in students' unions, and confirm a wider picture of race inequality and under-representation beyond the third sector.

Respondents demonstrated enthusiasm and commitment for the student movement and more than half of them had some management responsibility. However, when the research specifically explored areas related to race and the lack of Black representation, it became evident that there is still work to be done if the student movement workforce is going to embody its core values of equity and social justice.

To represent the diversity of students fully, we need Black staff working in every level of a union. To achieve this, we need greater support for Black staff to not only enter the student movement but also progress within it. Increasing Black representation is not just about numbers or improving business delivery, it is about tackling systemic practices of inequity and to do this effectively requires leadership. Without a collective commitment to address the findings of this report, the pace of change will be slow.

Summary of findings

Working in the student movement

- Some 40 per cent of respondents cited the values of the student movement as what attracted them to working in a students' union.
- A quarter of respondents had previous experience in a students' union, and wished to continue working in the student movement as a result. This confirms that there is a direct correlation between becoming an elected officer or student staff member and wanting to continue working in a students' union as a staff member.

Career development

- Half of the respondents stated that they had good career development opportunities in their current union. However, more than a third (35 per cent) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had access to career opportunities. More positively, three-quarters of respondents felt able to speak with their managers about their career development.
- The qualitative data revealed barriers to career progression. For instance, respondents indicated that the structure of their organisation was not favourable to career progression and that there was a lack of support from other colleagues to progress.

Inclusion

- A large majority (79 per cent) of respondents agreed that their union was an inclusive and diverse place to work, however we should view this result with caution, based on additional data highlighted in this report.
- Qualitative analysis highlighted that the ethnic diversity of a union's workforce, and the union's commitment to this, was an indicator of how inclusive respondents felt their union was or was not.
- Respondents also commented on the lack of genuine commitment from unions in

promoting equality and diversity and that equality and diversity activities can be tokenistic or an afterthought.

Feeling valued

- Over two-thirds (70 per cent) of survey respondents agreed to some extent that their views and opinions are valued in their union. Some 20 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed with this and 11 per cent disagreed.
- Respondents' qualitative comments highlighted this difference in experience, as some staff stated that they felt valued for their views, whereas others felt ignored and invisible.

Promoting race equality

- Only half of all respondents said their union had taken some action to consider the needs of Black staff, mainly through celebrating Black History Month, providing time off for religious holidays and/or celebrating religious and cultural festivals and events.
- Respondents could only cite examples of race equality good practice that were student-focused — none were able to cite staff-focused examples.

The lack of ethnic diversity

- Respondents commented that one of the main reasons for the lack of Black staff representation is because the student movement is dominated by white staff and sabbatical officers. For some, this signifies that the union environment is not one that understands and welcomes the Black experience and Black staff.
- Respondents also suggested that students' unions' employer brands need to improve as they are traditionally associated with sports societies and bar and club nights, which is not appealing to some Black people.
- The correlation between the lack of Black officers and the lack of Black student union staff was also highlighted. For some respondents, student politics is associated primarily with white students, which leads to

an absence of political role models for Black students.

"If more ethnic minorities were employed within the union then all students would feel that they relate to the union."

Increasing ethnic diversity

- Respondents felt the ethnic diversity of the student movement workforce could be improved through a range of strategies. For example, 65 per cent of respondents stated the need to advertise jobs beyond NUS Connect and have more targeted advertising. Increasing the proportion of elected Black officers was viewed as the second most important way of increasing ethnic diversity in the workforce and was chosen by 45 per cent of respondents.

Improving the experience of Black staff

- In order to improve the experience of Black staff, respondents stated that unions need to begin by acknowledging that Black staff are under-represented, particularly among senior leaders. Related to this, respondents commented on the need to increase the number of Black staff, alongside support in their career development, greater recognition of the contribution of Black staff, and an understanding of the cultural differences and needs among Black people.

"I am really concerned that there are very few Black senior managers and leaders in the movement. What is more concerning is that nobody seems to be willing to say it and do anything about it."

Discrimination

- Some 18 per cent of respondents had experienced racism while working in a students' union. However, despite knowing how to report such incidents, only a quarter went on to do so.

Summary of recommendations

The following summary outlines a starting point for students' unions' race equality work. The main recommendations on page 33 provide further detail, as well as additional recommendations. An outline of how NUS will

support students' unions in addressing the findings of this report is also highlighted in the main recommendations section.

Engaging Black students in the student movement

NUS recommends that students' unions:

- Undertake targeted work to increase the number of Black students running in elections. It is also crucial that every union has a Black students' officer who is well supported.
- Provide awareness events for Black students interested in applying for positions in the student movement.
- Provide Black officers with access to training and networking at a regional and/or national level.

Leadership

NUS recommends that leaders in students' unions:

- Publicise and increase awareness of the findings of this report to all relevant audiences.
- Ensure their union has an equality and diversity strategy and policy that includes targeted work to address inequality and inclusion.
- Identify a race champion to drive progress on addressing the findings of this report.

Diverse recruitment

NUS recommends that students' unions:

- Evaluate their current recruitment policy and practices, resulting in a recruitment strategy that focuses on increasing the diversity of candidates.
- Ensure they have a recruitment and selection strategy or policy in place and that all recruitment processes are monitored to measure their level of effectiveness.

- Monitor the diversity of applicants, shortlisted candidates and appointees and identify progress towards, and/or barriers preventing, diversifying the workforce.
- Use [positive action](#) initiatives to encourage applicants from diverse ethnic backgrounds, in circumstances where an under-representation of Black staff has been identified.
- Review and develop how they communicate information about their organisation to potential applicants (their employer brand).

Career development for Black staff

NUS recommends that students' unions:

- Invest in initiatives to promote talent management and support the progression of Black staff into leadership roles.

Organisational culture

NUS recommends that students' unions:

- Carry out equality impact assessments (EIAs) to ascertain how union activities and policies impact a diverse range of groups, such as Black staff and officers.
- Use their staff engagement surveys to explore staff views on inclusion, equality and diversity.
- Demonstrate their commitment to challenging all forms of racism and discrimination, through an equality and diversity policy and 'zero tolerance' policies that are well publicised and actively supported at senior levels.
- Train staff and officers to ensure they are able to identify racism and are confident in dealing with incidents of racism and discrimination.
- Embed equality, diversity and inclusion in all union staff development activities.
- Actively support their Black staff and be sensitive and supportive of any specific cultural or religious needs they may have.

- Ensure that all staff and officers receive mandatory equality and diversity training.
- Regularly review and update all equality, diversity and inclusion training.
- Ensure that work to promote diversity goes beyond Black History Month.

Introduction

All NUS diversity surveys from 2005 to 2012 have highlighted the lack of ethnic diversity in the workforce of students' unions at every staff level.

Introduction

Scope of the research

During January and February 2014, NUS carried out the first ever survey exploring the views and experiences of Black staff in the student movement.

The research project was initiated after all NUS diversity surveys from 2005 to 2012 highlighted the lack of ethnic diversity in the workforce of students' unions at every staff level. The *Diversity Survey 2011–2012* also highlighted that students' unions need to undertake work to become more inclusive.²

This research project comprised an online survey, which aimed to:

- begin to understand why the proportion of Black staff in students' unions is low
- better understand the experiences of Black staff in students' unions
- expose any barriers that Black staff may face
- use the findings to inform targeted work to increase the recruitment and retention of Black staff in students' unions

Structure of this report

This report outlines the findings from the online survey, which explored a range of areas such as the lack of Black staff representation, career development, inclusion, equality and diversity. The report is divided into three main chapters that aim to synthesise the qualitative and

quantitative data. Although there are distinct sections in this report, it is important to note that themes in each chapter interrelate with one another.

The report strives to include the voice of Black staff where possible, therefore each chapter will draw from the qualitative data gathered from the survey. Furthermore, when appropriate, this report includes comparisons with other research.

The recommendations in this report provide comprehensive guidance on how students' unions can begin to address the under-representation of Black staff, as well as race inequality. These recommendations have been informed by the research findings and also race equality good practice.

In addition to three students' unions, a range of leading education, leadership and race equality organisations provided guidance and feedback on the project, which has been included in the report. The advisory group consisted of the following organisations:

- Diversity Practice
- Equality Challenge Unit
- George Smalling & Associates
- HERAG (Higher Education Race Action Group)
- Leadership Foundation for Higher Education
- Leeds University Union
- Network for Black and Asian Professionals
- Race for Opportunity
- Runnymede
- University and College Union
- University of Bristol Students' Union
- University of West London Students' Union

Throughout this report, the term 'staff' is used to refer to non-student staff and does not include sabbatical officers or student staff.

A complete list of survey questions is provided in Appendix 1.

'Black'³ is used in this report to refer to members of the African, Arab, Asian and Caribbean communities.

Who is this report for?

This report is intended for anyone involved in the student movement who wants to develop their awareness of the experiences of Black staff and increase the ethnic diversity among staff in students' unions.

For any readers less familiar with the student movement, the structure of NUS and students' unions, including their workforce, please refer to Appendix 2.

Leadership will be crucial in addressing the findings of this report, so it is important that students' unions' CEOs and senior leaders read the report. It will also be of particular interest for human resources leads, equality and diversity leads and union presidents.

How to use this report

This is the first report to explore the experiences of Black staff in students' unions. It provides a valuable insight into their current experiences and possible reasons why the ethnic diversity among staff is so low. This information can be used to inform and improve students' unions' work to tackle structural barriers to race equality and create a diverse and inclusive student movement.

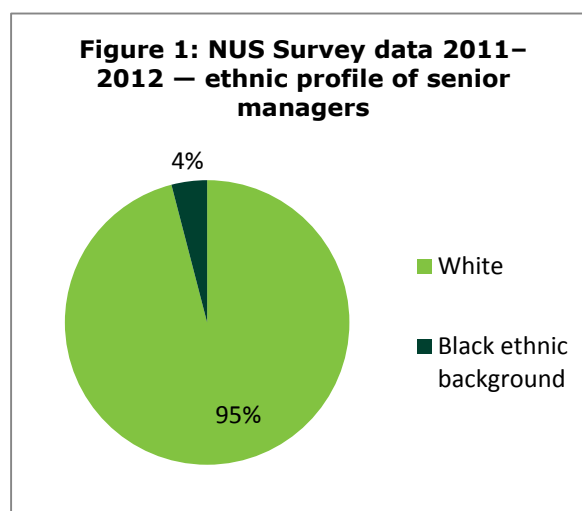
We acknowledge that each students' union will be different, therefore this report should be used as a starting point to examine what can be done to address the concerns and challenges that Black staff face.

Most importantly, any work to address this report's findings should involve Black staff. Black staff are passionate about the student movement and their involvement will be critical to the success of any initiatives to improve their experience in students' unions.

Background

All NUS diversity surveys have highlighted the need to improve the ethnic diversity in the student movement. For example, the 2011–2012 survey was completed by 1,103 non-student staff, 7 per cent of whom were Black.

The survey also showed that the overwhelming majority of staff with senior management responsibilities were white (Figure 1). Compared to the Black UK population of working age, the number of Black staff working in the student movement is low.⁴ This figure is also lower in comparison to other sectors. Labour force surveys from 2012–2013 state that 8 per cent of the voluntary sector is Black,⁵ compared to 9 per cent of the public sector and 10 per cent of the private sector.⁶



Base: 174

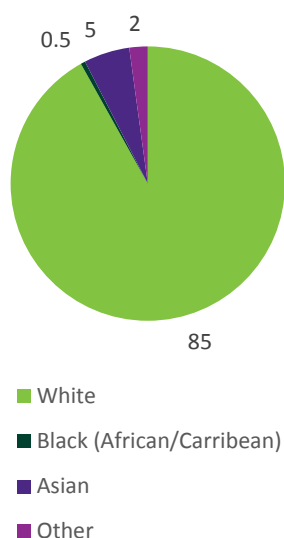
In the *NUS Diversity Survey 2011–2012*, staff frequently commented that the lack of ethnic diversity requires attention, otherwise students' unions will not be able to properly represent or engage their institution's student body or local area. When compared to the Black student body in higher education (HE) and further education (FE), the low number of Black staff in students' unions is even more worrying. Within HE, 19.6 per cent of UK-domiciled students with known ethnicity information are Black,⁷ while 16.5 per cent are Black international students.⁸ In the FE sector, 18.6 per cent of students are Black.⁹

This lack of ethnic diversity in the workforce is not restricted to the student movement and is evident across other sectors, especially in management, senior management and board-level positions.¹⁰ For example, Race for Opportunity's research on Black staff in management and senior management roles identified that, based on current trends, the

proportion of Black staff in management positions will never reflect the overall population.¹¹ This is further illustrated by recent research into the diversity of FTSE 100 companies,¹² which found that more than half have no Black leaders at executive or non-executive board level, and two-thirds have no full-time Black executives at board level.

There is also extensive evidence that Black staff are under-represented at senior levels in higher education institutions,^{13 14} especially as academics. This is clearly evident in the 2012–2013 Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data (Figure 2).¹⁵ The lack of Black representation is further reflected at senior management level among higher education institutions, as HESA data for the same year indicated that the majority of senior managers are white (92 per cent), while 1 per cent are Black and 3 per cent Asian.¹⁶

Figure 2: 2012–2013 HESA data on the ethnic profile of professors (in %)



Base: 17,800

The Equality Challenge Unit has also highlighted an ethnicity pay gap in the HE sector, in favour of white academics, and has found that Black staff in universities are less likely to be on permanent employment contracts.¹⁷ This is a real concern as Black students surveyed in NUS research on the attainment gap emphasised the need for more Black lecturers, as this would not

only allow for a more diverse teaching perspective, but would also provide students with inspiring role models,¹⁸ a finding echoed by research by Black British Academics.¹⁹

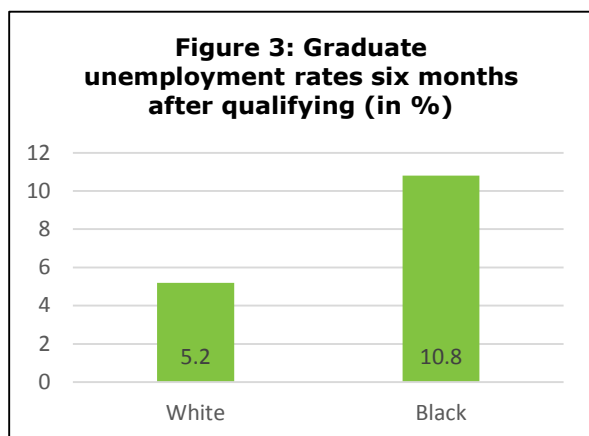
To address the under-representation of Black staff and academics in the HE sector the Equality Challenge Unit has begun work to tackle unconscious bias with a range of 'train the trainer' events. Importantly, this work understands that looking at unconscious or implicit bias should not overlook the fact that explicit bias and discrimination continue to exist.²⁰

The lack of Black staff in various sectors, and more specifically in management roles, can be linked to the barriers that Black communities face in accessing employment and the opportunities and treatment once employed, which has been widely shown over the last 40 years.

For example, research by the Department for Work and Pensions in 2006 illustrated poorer outcomes for Black communities, in terms of rates of unemployment, the level of work attained and pay levels.²¹ Further research by the same department in 2009 highlighted that an applicant with a 'white-sounding' name would submit nine applications before receiving an invitation to an interview or a positive telephone call. However, Black British people with the same qualifications and experience had to send 16 applications before receiving a similar response.²² Therefore, Black applicants needed to send 74 per cent more applications to achieve the same level of employment opportunities as their white counterparts.

This correlates to Race for Opportunity's work, which found that 6 per cent of white graduates remained unemployed a year after graduation.²³ In stark contrast, among Bangladeshi, Pakistani and African graduates, 15 per cent of each group were still unemployed after the same period of time. This pattern is echoed in the Equality Challenge Unit's higher education statistical report on students (Figure 3).²⁴

Research by Runnymede further showed that Black graduates from Russell Group universities are more likely to experience unemployment early on in their career than their white peers.²⁵



Discrimination and race inequality is a long-standing factor in the employment experiences of Black communities, especially in relation to progression. For instance, Black staff in the FE sector identified racism and discrimination as the main barrier to their recruitment, retention and progression.²⁶

Additionally in HE institutions, Black staff feeling isolated, unsupported, marginalised and discriminated against in relation to promotion opportunities and career progression has been well documented. For example, the 2011 Equality Challenge Unit report found that the majority of Black HE staff who took part in its research had experienced damaging effects on their careers by being excluded or treated as subordinates because of their race.²⁷

A recent survey of 100 Black staff and students at UK universities by Black British Academics also showed that 73 per cent believe their institution has a 'poor' or 'very poor' attitude to race equality.²⁸ The survey highlighted that 58 per cent of respondents feel they have been discriminated against or disadvantaged because of their ethnicity, and provided data evidencing both subtle and overt forms of racism. One lecturer told how she applied for a job in her own, non-white, name and in a white pseudonym and only got invited for an interview under the white name. Another respondent stated, "Black staff are treated with contempt and disgust, and career progression

is almost non-existent among our demographic."²⁹

The findings from the FE and HE sectors have been supported by research data in other sectors, such as Race for Opportunity's *Race to Progress: Breaking down barriers* research, which showed that despite high levels of ambition and motivation Black workers across sectors face barriers in career progression and enjoy fewer promotions than their white counterparts.³⁰ The research states, "a white British employee has an average of almost four promotions during their career. However, British African, Indian and Pakistani employees have been promoted an average of just 2.5 times."³¹

In the context of research on the FE and HE sectors and wider society it seems unlikely that Black staff in students' unions will be unaffected by such barriers and attitudes. The findings of this particular research study confirm this to be the case and are outlined in the next chapter.

Methodology

Research was carried out in 2013–2014 and consisted of a literature review and an online survey. The survey was created after reviewing existing data on the barriers that Black communities face in the labour market.

The survey was open to all Black non-student staff in the student movement and publicised via various communication methods, such as NUS Connect, Jiscmails, Twitter, NUS Contacts and NUS Update. The timeframe for the survey was also extended to encourage more survey participants.

The survey collected 68 valid responses from staff in FE and HE students' unions and NUS. This small sample size may reflect the low number of Black staff in students' unions or barriers to taking part in the survey. For example, in the NUS *Diversity Survey 2011–2012*, 1,103 non-student staff took part and only 77 were Black.³²

While this research project is not a comparative study between Black and white staff, our

findings are backed up by related research and trends exploring the experiences of Black staff in employment. We wanted to solely focus on Black staff in this research project, however for future projects it will also be important to consider the value of comparing the experiences of Black staff to those of white staff.

Data analysis

The survey data was analysed using Snap survey software. Due to low base sizes, statistically significant differences between respondents cannot be identified. In terms of levels of agreement, where compared in crossbreaks, levels have been grouped as 'strongly agree and agree', 'neither' and 'strongly disagree and disagree', to provide a more robust base for comparisons. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole number, which has the effect that sometimes percentages do not add up to exactly 100 per cent.

Respondent demographics

Some 79 per cent of respondents were from HE and FE students' unions and 21 per cent were from NUS.

The majority of respondents (68 per cent) were from London (for a further breakdown please

see the endnote).³³ Most respondents were also aged 21–30 (51 per cent) or 31–40 (28 per cent).

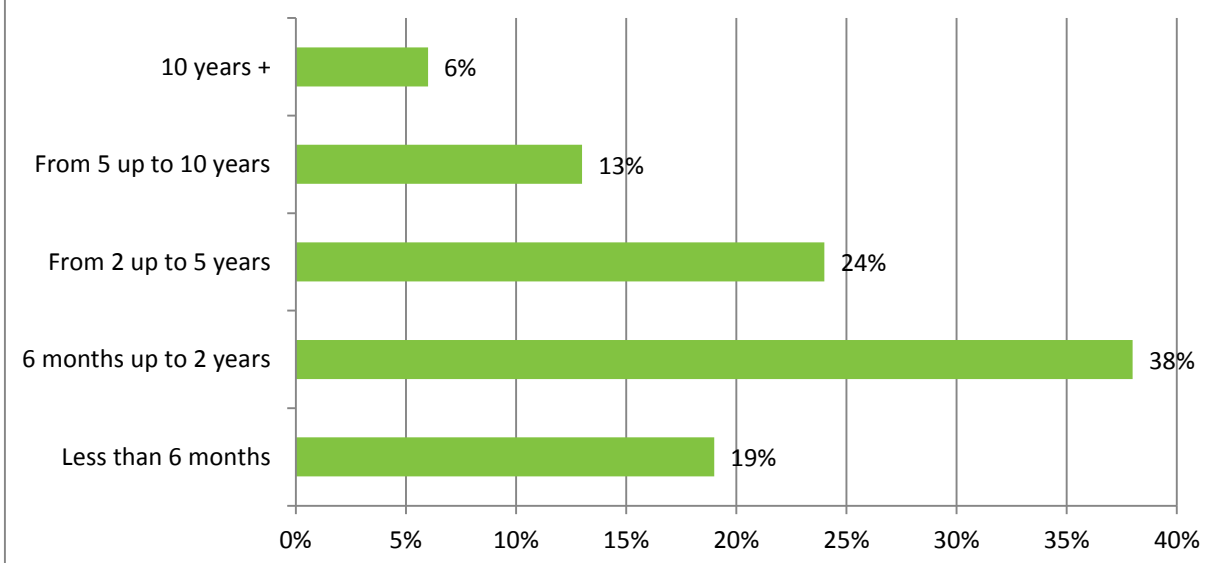
All respondents identified as Black, with the five main groups being Asian British — Indian (24 per cent), Black African (16 per cent), other Black (African or Caribbean) category (12 per cent), Black Caribbean (9 per cent) and Asian British — Pakistani (7 per cent).

Due to the low response rate from some ethnic groups, differences between ethnic groups are not shown in this report. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise that Black communities are heterogeneous. As well documented in existing literature, people's experiences will vary across ethnic groups.

Just under half of the respondents were women (49 per cent), while 44 per cent were men, 4 per cent identified their gender in another way and 3 per cent preferred not to state their gender. Some 18 per cent considered themselves to have a disability or long-term health condition, while 11 per cent reported their sexuality as lesbian, gay or bisexual, or self-defined in another way.

Figure 4 outlines respondents' length of service in their current students' union.

Figure 4: Length of service in current students' union



More than half (56 per cent) of respondents indicated that they had management or supervisory responsibilities for other staff, but were not senior managers. While 19 per cent of respondents were on their union's senior management team, no respondents identified themselves as a CEO or general manager and one respondent preferred not to state whether they were a CEO or general manager.

Working in a students' union and career development

“I get to work with really interesting and intelligent students that want to change the world!”

Working in the student movement and career development

Factors influencing becoming a staff member

For many elected officers, their career path leads them to being a staff member in a union. To ascertain whether this was true for survey respondents they were asked if they had prior experience of the student movement by being a student staff member or elected officer, which is highlighted in figures 5 and 6.

Figure 5: Have you ever been an elected officer in any students' union before you became a non-student staff member?

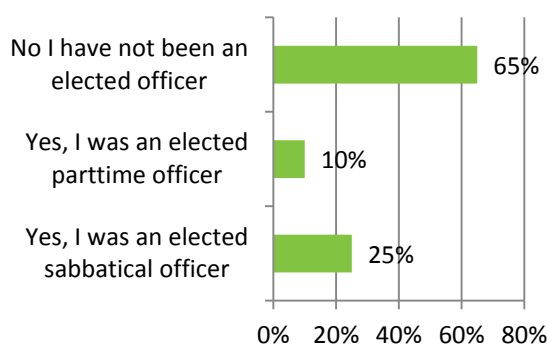
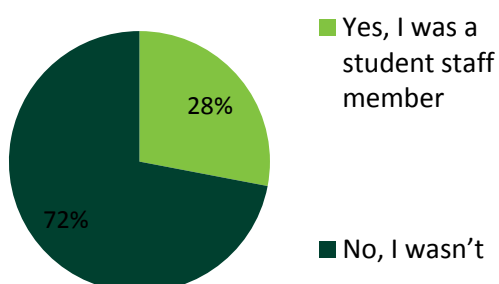


Figure 6: Have you ever been a student staff member in any students' union before you became a non-student staff member



When respondents were asked what attracted them to working in a union, 40 per cent cited the values of the student movement. While just over a quarter (26 per cent) said it was a local job in the sector they wanted to work in.³⁴

A quarter of respondents stated they wanted to continue their involvement in the student movement due to their previous experience of working in a union, as an officer or student staff member. This confirms that there is a direct correlation between becoming an elected officer or student staff member and wanting to work in a union as a staff member. This could explain why 22 per cent of respondents stated that their role reflected a natural and/or logical progression in their career.

The least attractive feature of working in a union was the pay and benefits, which was chosen by only 15 per cent of respondents as a reason for them working in the movement. Some 15 per cent also chose the 'other' category and cited reasons for being attracted to working in a union as: wanting to help unions meet the needs of their diverse student body; to have a new experience; or to further their professional development.

What's good about working at your students' union?

Qualitative analysis identified a range of features that respondents considered positive about working in a union, as outlined in the following themes:

The people — respondents highlighted that their colleagues are passionate, friendly, committed and supportive.

"I like the people I work with; they are all passionate and most work beyond the call of duty."

Feeling valued — respondents gave examples of having their skills and identity acknowledged by peers and managers, which for some had led to a sense of openness and appreciation for one another.

"Openness, small inclusive group, strong work ethic with acknowledgement and appreciation of specialised skills individuals have."

Driving change and working with students

— respondents described the variety of work carried out in a union as being very positive, especially in relation to the impact on students and society, working face-to-face with students and the possibility for innovation.

"I get to work with really interesting and intelligent students that want to change the world!"

The environment — respondents described the union environment as inclusive, safe and supportive, with a relaxed atmosphere. A minority of staff also mentioned working in a diverse team as a positive aspect of their role.

"SUs are great places to work, [it's] always motivating to be working with student leaders... I find that working in a students' union is a really safe environment where discrimination is more widely challenged than other sectors that I have worked in."

"I love the energy and vibe in a SU and the possibility for driving large-scale change, as well as the opportunity to lead and promote good values."

Career development

Good career development opportunities in their current union were identified by half of the respondents. However, more than a third (35 per cent) disagreed or strongly disagreed that they had access to career opportunities. More positively, three-quarters of respondents felt able to speak with their managers about their career development, with a similar proportion identifying their manager as supportive in this area.

Lack of career advice, support and development could be experienced by anyone working in a students' union and there will be a range of reasons for this. However, it is important to consider intersectional issues (how different types of discrimination compound each other, as highlighted by other research) in potentially further limiting the career development opportunities available to Black staff.

Analysing the qualitative data revealed barriers to career progression. For instance, respondents indicated that the structure of their organisation was not favourable to career progression and that there were limited career opportunities available in the student movement generally. Some respondents also commented on a lack of career progression support from other colleagues, such as managers and senior leaders.

"My manager is very supportive of my career development, but I find it hard to work out how I can pursue a career in the movement itself. There is not that much progression."

"I believe I have a lot of potential, which can contribute to my career development. I have discussed this with a member of the senior management team — [to] date I am yet to obtain feedback."

"There is very much a sense that there is nowhere for me to progress to within this SU, and so I should stick to my job description and stay 'in my box'."

Despite some respondents undertaking various career development activities, many felt they would have difficulty in progressing within the student movement. This is demonstrated further by only a quarter of respondents claiming to have been promoted during their time at work and two-thirds suggesting they would have to leave their current employment to find opportunities to progress.

One respondent made reference to the fact that white peers seem to progress faster in comparison to Black staff.

"It's interesting to note that other non-Black peers in my professional network, who began at the same level as me, have advanced to more senior roles within organisations at a much quicker pace."

One respondent also mentioned that the lack of Black staff in students' unions acts as a barrier to career progression as there are no informal networks to seek advice and guidance about career development opportunities. Another respondent commented on the need to take positive action to provide career development opportunities for Black staff.

"There is not enough guidance about pursuing a career in the student movement. As a Black woman, I find it hard to find anyone that I can relate to or seek guidance from that has been in a similar position to me."

Inclusion

“As there are so few Black staff, it can be seen as if their union does not appreciate equality, as it is not reflected in the workforce.”

Inclusion

Inclusive students' unions

In order to attract and retain a diverse workforce, it is imperative an organisation promotes equality and diversity and is inclusive. Positively, 79 per cent of survey respondents agreed that their union is an inclusive and diverse place to work.

Qualitative analysis further highlighted that the ethnic diversity of a union's workforce, and the union's commitment to this, is an indication of how inclusive respondents felt their union to be.

"The majority of the staff in our union are Black so there is no issue concerning ethnic identity or lack of integration – actually it is one of our strengths."

"As there are so few Black staff, it can be seen as if their union does not appreciate equality, as it is not reflected in the workforce."

"We have a very diverse team with over 50 per cent of staff who are Black. It feels that the organisation values diversity, but also is making conscious decisions through its process and structures to ensure that diversity is something that we live and breathe, rather than something we do."

Although this result is positive, we should read it with some caution. When asked about whether their union valued equality and diversity, Black staff respondents to the NUS Diversity Survey 2011–2012 were much less positive. Black staff (non-student and student) were twice as likely as white respondents to select 'in-between', 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' to the statement 'my union values equality and diversity' (16 per cent and 8 per cent, respectively).

"I often feel like I have filled the Black quota."

Even more worrying was the fact that Black elected officers surveyed in 2012 were almost four times as likely to select 'in between' or 'disagree' as white elected officers (15 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively).³⁵ This makes it clear that unions need to do more to make unions inclusive for Black staff and officers. Furthermore, the negative responses from Black officers may suggest why Black officers do not continue to work in the student movement. This disparity between the two surveys requires further exploration.

In order to further explore previous diversity survey findings, respondents were asked to comment on why they felt Black staff were twice as likely as their white peers to be negative about whether their union valued equality and diversity. Respondents provided a range of possible reasons, which is highlighted by the following themes.

Heightened awareness of inequality

Respondents frequently commented that as a result of having a Black identity they have experienced discrimination and can recognise behaviours and actions, no matter how small or nuanced, that represent race inequality. For instance, one respondent commented on being very aware of being the only Black person in meetings, which is something they felt their white peers would not necessarily consider. Some respondents also highlighted that there can be a disparity in the way Black staff and students are treated, which is compounded when there is a dominant, often white middle class, culture in the union.

"We see what you don't. Little things such as how uncomfortable or awkward someone is talking to a Black student (no one's fault, this one). We see the lack of presence of Black students. We see the assumptions about Black people ... We didn't all grow up in 'the hood', for instance."

"They [Black staff] live and breathe E&D [equality and diversity]. A white peer is less likely to pick up the smaller things."

"Because white is considered 'the norm' or default identity and white people are less likely to experience negative discrimination, their Black counterparts are more likely to be treated (even if unconsciously) as 'the other' and to be affected by negative discrimination."

Lack of understanding among white peers

Several respondents stated that Black staff feel more negative about how their union values equality and diversity because there is a lack of understanding among white peers about how racism operates and the impact of racism on Black people. For instance, respondents mentioned that some white staff have a lack of cultural competency and are unaware of white privilege and why certain comments could be viewed as offensive by Black staff.

"White peers do not face discrimination [and] therefore don't know the experience of it, and white peers do not know, at times, when they are discriminating."

"Many people are unconsciously racist. For example, they may see Black staff as 'exotic', which is patronising, or they may make judgements about them such as that they do not drink, come from strict families – or the one I always get is people talking about arranged marriages. Even though they are trying to talk positively, it makes you feel they don't understand you and have judged you."

"There's a lack of understanding of how to better manage Black staff and a lack of sensitivity of cultural practices and how this affects staff."

Tokenism

Respondents commented on the lack of genuine commitment from unions in how they promote equality and diversity and that these activities are more of an afterthought or tokenistic. This is further highlighted in the section on promoting race equality on page 26.

"Many of the equality and diversity things seem to be tokenistic and patronising. They are done and organised by white people to tick a box and say, 'Yay!!! We are an ethnic-friendly place! Look at us! We are better than xxx union,' rather than actually talking to the BME staff members and seeing what they want."

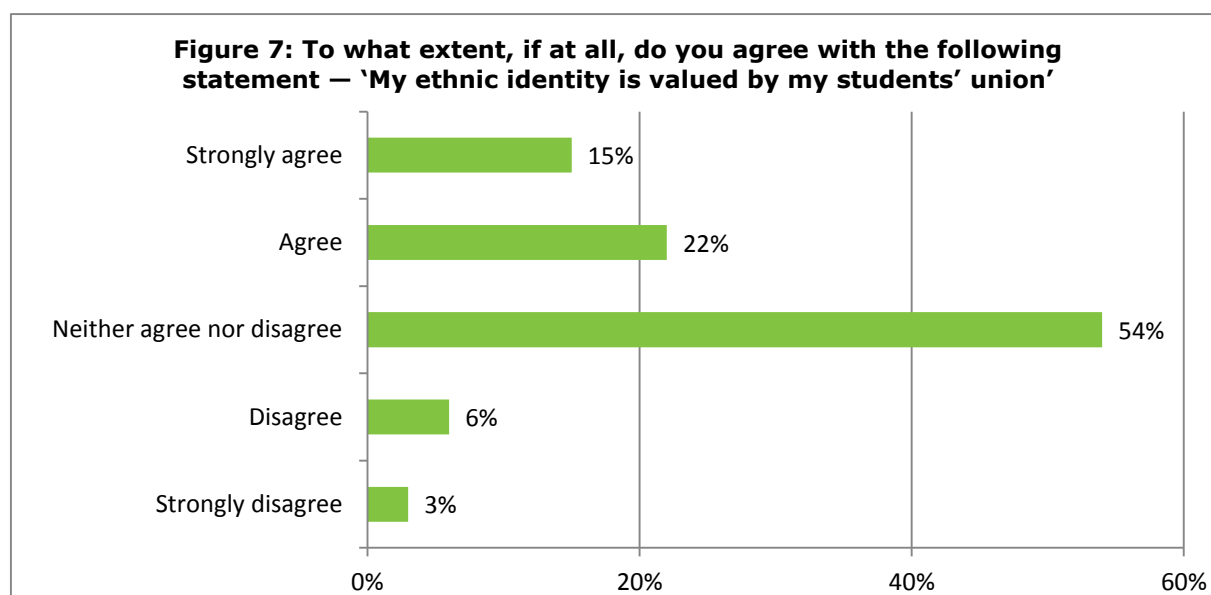
Feeling valued

Just over two-thirds (70 per cent) of survey respondents agreed to some extent that their views and opinions are valued in their union. While 20 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed with this, and 11 per cent disagreed. Qualitative comments highlighted this difference in experience, as some staff said they felt valued for their views and opinions, whereas others felt ignored, invisible and only valued by some colleagues.

"I am approached on issues which affect the Asian/Muslim community to share my thoughts and opinion. I have also been approached to discuss stereotypical notions regarding culture."

"I am often left frustrated and feel invisible, as my views and opinions are overlooked and dismissed in my SU."

Respondents were also asked to consider if they felt their ethnic identity was valued, as shown in Figure 7. Further comments on this topic indicated that some respondents found it difficult to ascertain what would need to happen for their ethnic identity to be valued. In contrast, there were also some respondents who stated that their Black identity was not valued. A small minority of staff also stated that their ethnic identity has nothing to do with their job and therefore bears no consequence on how



valued they feel.

"I do not feel that my ethnic identity is recognised within the wider picture of the make-up of the company."

"I would like to think that my ethnic identity is valued, but I haven't seen or experienced any evidence to suggest either way."

Socialising with colleagues

The majority of respondents felt comfortable to varying degrees socialising with their colleagues. Respondents commented that how comfortable they felt depended on the social activity, for example whether it involved alcohol. Anecdotal evidence from the student movement suggests that alcohol-related social activities can be a barrier for some Black staff.

This finding echoes research by the Equality Challenge Unit, which found that Black staff felt excluded and uncomfortable about being asked to socialise in a way that took no account of cultural and religious preferences and patterns.^{36 37} Consequently, staff were hindered from developing their 'social capital' and were unable to establish social relationships with colleagues. In some instances, this also restricted their access to important information about work, including career progression opportunities.

"I feel totally fine [socialising with colleagues], though if I didn't drink alcohol I would probably never socialise."

"I appreciate that my colleagues will accommodate my needs, e.g. having lunch in a restaurant instead of a pub where I would feel uncomfortable."

One respondent stated that although they were comfortable socialising with colleagues, they were conscious that they were often the only Black person at the social event.

"I do not have any issues about socialising with my colleagues although it is noticeable to me that there are very few Black staff members in the university, let alone in the students' union. This makes me aware that I can be singled out easily, however I don't feel uncomfortable being the only Black person in the room."

"I think the union movement is difficult for practising Muslims when it comes to social activities ... Events revolve around bars/alcohol."

Race equality

“Student politics has always been a game for white, middle class young men.”

Race equality

Activities to promote race equality

Only half (50 per cent) of all respondents said their union had taken some action to consider the needs of Black staff, mainly through celebrating Black History Month, providing time off for religious holidays and/or celebrating religious and cultural festivals and events.

Just one respondent mentioned that their union ensured their dietary requirements are met. Another respondent commented on their appreciation for their union, which had altered their workload while they were fasting during Ramadan.

"[The union has] held a huge range of events, including lots put on during Black History Month. Examples of [marking] religious holidays include The Tamil Soc organising a Pongal Celebration later this week."

"I don't have a problem taking my annual leave for my religious holidays – they are very understanding."

Qualitative analysis found that the level of action and commitment to promoting race equality varied depending on the union. For instance, Black History Month activities for some respondents were viewed as tokenistic or mainly aimed at students.

"We have tried to promote Black History Month although it does come across as an afterthought rather than something that has been well planned in advance."

"It was a box ticking exercise ... they remembered because they were prompted by a student's complaint. It was not on my radar either though, as I am Black throughout the year. I tend to forget that I should really 'Black up' in a major way one month of the year!"

In addition to thinking about what their current union had done to consider the needs of Black staff, respondents were asked if they had any examples of race equality being promoted within the student movement in general. Respondents were only able to cite student-focused examples of race equality good practice – none cited staff-focused examples. The examples provided by a small proportion of respondents included ensuring that a budget is set aside for Black History Month and clubs and societies to celebrate diversity, campaigning for a Black students' officer position and celebrating cultural events.

Although respondents were unable to provide examples of Black staff and employer-focused activities, they did offer a range of suggestions to improve the experience of Black staff in their current union.

Why is there a lack of ethnic diversity in students' unions?

To begin to address the lack of Black staff, it is important to identify the possible reasons for this lack of ethnic diversity. One of the main reasons identified by respondents is because the student movement is dominated by white staff and sabbatical officers. Respondents commented that informal networks established among white staff and officers are difficult to join, and also include information sharing and encouragement to participate in opportunities in the movement, especially employment opportunities. All of which creates a self-perpetuating culture.

For some, the predominance of white staff and officers also indicates that the union environment is not one that understands and

welcomes the Black experience and therefore Black staff, which acts as a deterrent for Black applicants.

"As a student, I didn't see any Black people within my students' union so I assumed that it wasn't a sector that they worked in. I also noticed that staff members were usually popular ex-students who had connections with others in the union. I think it would be hard for a Black person to work in an all-white team."

"There is no cultural reference and [Black staff] could begin to feel alienated. Black people have a long history of oppression and I feel that the all-white structure of most unions is not appealing to most potential Black staff."

"A lot of staff get appointed through personal friendships ... The movement is very cliquey. The politics at officer level is replicated for full-time staff roles at a lot of places, and they get away with it."

"Student politics has always been a game for white, middle class young men. I also believe that whilst 'service' workers in the movement can be Black (ie coffee shop staff etc), people working in desk jobs generally come from SU backgrounds."

For some respondents the employer brand of unions is another barrier as they are traditionally associated with sports societies and bar and club nights, which some Black people do not find appealing. For example, one respondent stated that alcohol-related environments are not attractive to Muslims and would deter a Muslim from applying for a union job.

It is evident from the qualitative analysis that because some unions do not have high levels of participation from Black students, these students lack knowledge about employment opportunities in the student movement. This also applies to Black communities, as respondents mentioned that Black people in general are unaware of the types of jobs

available in unions or that unions are a part of the third sector.

"Black people do not always understand and realise the benefits of SUs, and more work needs to be done to reach out to Black students in order to provide more engagement."

"Perhaps not many Black staff have traditionally gone into SU work, leading to a lack of visibility of Black staff in this field, reinforcing the idea that this may not be a good career path for Black people."

A minority of respondents also mentioned that Black graduates may not be driven to work in unions and are more attracted to other sectors that are more lucrative. However, this may be due to a lack of awareness about the career opportunities within the student movement.

Respondents also inferred that there is a correlation between the lack of Black officers and a lack of Black staff. For some respondents, student politics is associated primarily with white students, which has led to an absence of political role models for Black students. This, combined with the low number of Black staff in unions, may mean that Black students do not aspire to be a part of the student movement, a finding echoed in the NUS *Diversity Survey 2011–2012*.³⁸ For instance, anecdotal evidence suggests that unions with a high proportion of Black staff have a high level of engagement with Black students.

"If more ethnic minorities were employed within the union then all students would feel that they relate to the union, as they would identify with the staff. We have a lot of Chinese students in our university, but not one full-time staff member is Chinese."

The link between being a sabbatical officer and then a staff member was clearly highlighted by one respondent, who is now in a management role: ***"I was a sabbatical officer, a year later was a casual staff member, then progressed into being given a pro rata contract, then a 52 week contract. As I continued, I was given more***

responsibilities and then became a manager. I now have line management responsibilities for eight staff over six areas. I have had several training opportunities through work, but a lot of development has been self-funded.”

Increasing the number of Black staff in students’ unions

In order to increase the number of Black people working in students’ unions, respondents were asked what strategies could be used to create change (Figure 8). They were also given the opportunity to provide their own views on increasing Black staff representation, all of which is highlighted in the following themes.

Recruitment

Improving recruitment procedures in unions was identified as one of the main ways to increase diversity. For instance, 65 per cent of respondents stated the need to advertise jobs beyond NUS Connect and have more targeted advertising such as in the local newspaper, charity job sites and in networks and publications aimed at Black communities. This would also ensure that people from outside the student movement might consider applying.

As well as having a diverse interview panel, 32

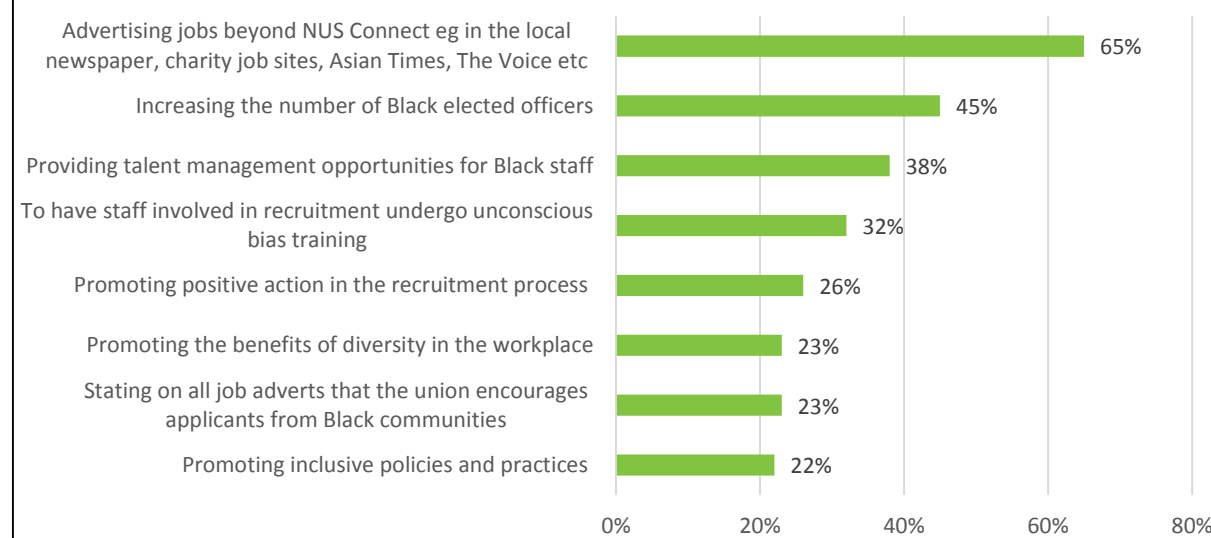
per cent of respondents stated that staff involved in recruitment should undergo unconscious bias training. Just over a quarter (26 per cent) of respondents identified the need to adopt positive action in the recruitment process. This could include stating on all job adverts that the union encourages applicants from Black communities, which was chosen as a strategy to help increase diversity by 23 per cent of respondents.

“I think it stems from where we recruit the staff. For example, a lot of staff at my union were sabbatical officers. The majority of sabbs are white, so by default your workforce becomes predominately white. I think we need to think about where and how we recruit, and how we recruit people [from] outside the movement.”

Increasing the number of Black elected officers

Almost half (45 per cent) of survey respondents believed that increasing the number of Black elected officers was the second most important way to increase the number of Black staff. Respondents cited the need to increase the engagement of Black students in student politics and therefore improve the proportion of Black candidates running in elections.

Figure 8: Do you feel any of the following would be helpful in increasing the number of Black staff working in students’ unions?



Respondents were able to select three of the available options.

"The lack of Black sabbatical officers is mirrored by the lack of Black staff, because a large number of people in the movement have been officers before. Therefore if Black students are not sabbatical officers, it is rare that they will become staff members. There is a lack of Black staff members at the very top (CEO or SMT), which means there is nothing to aspire to – it makes it seem as though you will never get there."

"Unions should specifically target student societies with large numbers of Black members to encourage them to stand in elections. Hopefully, more of those Black officers will stay on in the movement as staff."

Targeted support

More than a third (38 per cent) of respondents believe Black staff should receive talent management opportunities. This is in addition to opportunities to network, be mentored and raise the profile of Black members of staff and the work they do.

Improving practice

Survey respondents commented on the need to improve equality and diversity practice in unions. For instance, 23 per cent stated the need to promote the benefits of diversity in the workplace, while 22 per cent believed unions should promote inclusive policies and practices. Respondents also identified the need for diversity training for all union staff.

Changing the image of unions

As already stated, the image of unions among some Black students and communities does not reflect what they do, and therefore some respondents felt more work needs to be done to counter this.

"Give the student movement a better name and image. Many of my peers ... see students' unions as irrelevant relics of the past ... They don't see all the welfare and advice work that is done for students. They don't see all the sports and societies and development opportunities that unions facilitate. Until this anarchistic and

militant reputation from a bygone age has disappeared, many people are put off wanting to work in a students' union. I've heard this from many of my friends when I've tried to convince them to apply for a job at my union or ones I've seen on NUS Connect."

Improving the experiences of Black staff

In order to improve the experiences of Black staff, respondents stated that unions need to begin by acknowledging and engaging with the fact that Black staff are under-represented in the student movement, particularly among senior leaders. Respondents went on to say that they should be consulted when addressing this issue, especially as Black people are not a homogenous group, they come from a variety of cultural backgrounds and experiences, and therefore have a diversity of opinions.

"Talk to the staff members! Get their viewpoints on issues which you think that they would have an insight into."

Related to this, respondents commented on the need for support in their career development, greater recognition of the contribution of Black staff, and an understanding of the cultural differences and needs among Black people. Some respondents also stated the importance of being able to express their culture. However, other research has shown that some Black employees experience barriers to expressing their culture. For instance, Race for Opportunity's research on leadership and cultural identity found that 90 per cent of Black women felt they would have to leave their cultural identity behind to progress in the workplace.³⁹

"Employ more people of ethnic backgrounds so you do not feel like the token Black or Asian person."

Strategies such as mentoring and networking, especially with senior leaders and other Black staff through the creation of a Black staff network, were also suggested as ways to improve the experience of Black staff.

"I think my union could recognise ... how their senior management does not reflect the diversity of the institution and give Black (or any liberation) staff the opportunity to be mentored by other people in the movement ... Also, there could be more internal celebration of our staff's cultural backgrounds, allowing us to express ourselves at work."

Unsurprisingly, respondents also stated that increasing the number of Black staff in the student movement would in itself improve the overall experience of Black staff. A finding echoed in research into the experiences of Black staff in FE, which found some evidence to suggest that colleges with a significant Black workforce may be less susceptible to racism and discrimination, and that in larger colleges the organisational culture may be more receptive to the views of Black staff.⁴⁰

Based on this respondents felt that focus should be placed on employing and retaining people of all ethnic backgrounds, particularly in senior positions. Increasing the number of Black senior managers was also seen as an important step in creating role models for staff.

"On a structural level, we need to see more Black staff in higher positions, as role models, as seeing senior leaders meetings full of white men is discouraging."

"It would feel like the SU actually values Black staff if more were employed."

"I am really concerned that there are very few Black senior managers and leaders in the movement. What is more concerning is that nobody seems to be willing to say it and do anything about it."

A minority of survey respondents further stated the importance of acknowledging cultural and religious holidays and having policies and procedures that allow staff the flexibility to take leave for these events.

Discrimination

Just under two-thirds of respondents (63 per cent) said they knew how to report acts of discrimination in their union. While 18 per cent of respondents (12 people) had experienced racism while working in unions. However, despite knowing how to report such incidents, only a quarter went on to report them. Of these, only one out of three respondents claimed they were satisfied with how their complaint was handled. Reasons given for not reporting the incident were varied, including it being too much trouble, a perception that the union would not do anything about it and racism being too common to report every incident.

Despite the small sample of this research study, Black staff experiencing racism in the workplace is a trend that has been highlighted by other research. In *Barriers to progression: The experience of black and minority ethnic staff in further education*, Black staff identified covert and overt racism and discrimination as the main barrier to their recruitment, retention and progression.⁴¹ Examples cited include white college staff ignoring Black staff and excluding them from information about career progression opportunities. Research by the Black British Academics also highlighted shocking overt and covert forms of racism experienced by academics in HE,⁴² a finding reflected in *The experiences of BME academics in higher education: aspirations in the face of inequality*.⁴³ Furthermore, research conducted by the University and College Union found that "almost half of black members have experienced racism or racial discrimination at the workplace".⁴⁴

Conclusion

There is still work to be done if the workforce is going to embody the student movement's core values of equity and social justice.

Conclusion

One of the most noticeable aspects of this research is that only 68 Black staff took part. This is very informative in itself as it clearly highlights the lack of Black staff representation in the student movement. Additionally, the fact that more than two-thirds of respondents were from London is also very revealing. However, despite being a small-scale piece of research, the data provides a valuable insight into the experiences and barriers many Black staff face in students' unions, and confirms a wider picture of race inequality and under-representation beyond the third sector.

In contrast to other research, these findings also highlight the enthusiasm and commitment Black staff have for the student movement and their unions specifically. Positively more than half of the respondents held management responsibility, many felt valued in their workplace and respondents cited a few examples of ethnically diverse unions. This should all be acknowledged and celebrated. Nonetheless, exploring areas related to race and the lack of Black representation in unions made it clear that there is still work to be done if the workforce is going to embody the student movement's core values of equity and social justice.

To fully represent the diversity of students in colleges and universities, we need Black staff working in every level of a union. Currently, there is a lack of Black staff, particularly in senior positions. In turn, this provides limited opportunities for Black staff to inform union policies and also leads to an absence of role models for other Black staff and students. In NUS' *Race for Equality* report, Black students identified ethnic diversity in students' unions as crucial elements in ensuring that Black students were satisfied with their further and higher education experience.⁴⁵

Having a diverse workforce is often framed as a way of improving business delivery, as diversity allows organisations to attract and retain the best talent, which brings diverse ideas and perspectives. Although this rationale

has merit, we cannot be reductive in how we look at Black representation. Increasing Black representation is not just about numbers, it is about tackling systemic practices of inequity that are reproduced through institutional life.⁴⁶ As Bhopal and Myers state, "racism exists at every level of society; it permeates our schools, our colleges and our universities. It is alive in all elements of popular culture, our media and the social spaces that we occupy."⁴⁷

Moreover, in *On Being Included*, Ahmed clearly states that diversity is more easily incorporated than equality into policy and practice.⁴⁸ This is evident in our own research study, as respondents were unable to share an example of a union promoting race equality that was staff and employer-focused, but a range of examples of unions celebrating diversity such as Black History Month and celebrating cultural and religious festivals were shared.

Creating a culture in a union that not only embeds race equality but actively promotes it requires leadership. Leaders in the student movement need to instigate this culture change proactively and begin by creating a narrative that addresses race inequality and increasing Black representation. Without this collective commitment, the pace of change will be slow.

Furthermore, research suggests that inclusive leadership leads to increased employee motivation, loyalty, performance and productivity.⁴⁹ More importantly, it has been shown that inclusive leaders are able to address the barriers that women and Black staff face, allowing them to join an organisation and progress within it while retaining their authentic identity.⁵⁰

Any work on engaging Black students and Black people in general in the student movement cannot be viewed through a deficit perspective. A perspective that attributes Black people's lack of engagement to inherent characteristics, often based on negative stereotypes and assumptions. Therefore, if unions are to effectively address the barriers

that Black staff face, they cannot begin by locating the problems among Black students or Black communities. The problem of under-representation is both a societal and an institutional one and requires a collective response.

Increasing the representation of Black staff and promoting race equality needs dedication. Although there are examples of unions being diverse, which we should learn from, this research report and anecdotal evidence indicates that greater support is needed for Black staff to enter the student movement and progress within it. NUS hopes that this report will act as a catalyst and compel unions to create change and promote race equality in the student movement.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are designed to start addressing the structural barriers to race equality in the student movement, increase the representation of Black staff and ultimately create inclusive unions. They have been informed by the research findings, including the views of survey respondents, but also race equality good practice in employment and organisational culture.

These recommendations should be viewed as a starting point and not an exhaustive list. Additionally, progress will only be made if all unions consider them and take meaningful action that goes beyond legal compliance. Nonetheless, the approach of individual unions will differ depending on their own context.

To provide a starting point for unions some recommendations have been marked with an asterisk*. These recommendations should be considered as setting the foundations for your race equality work. The additional recommendations will enable unions to build on this foundation and establish good race equality practice.

Most importantly, any work to tackle race inequality and representation should be informed by, and involve, Black staff.

For students' unions that do not have any Black staff it is important to begin by exploring the recommendations related to engaging Black students, leadership and recruitment. They may also find it useful to join the Race Matters Practitioners' Network, which will enable them to share ideas with other students' unions. NUS will also seek to support students' unions and has committed to a range of recommendations that will be delivered between 2015 and 2017.

Engaging Black students in the student movement

For many elected officers, their career path leads them to being a staff member in a union. Therefore, increasing the number of Black students running in elections could also lead to increased Black representation among union staff. Increasing the number of Black officers will also ensure the range of issues that Black students face are addressed and challenged. However, increasing the number of Black officers is not enough in itself — unions must support the work of their officers.

NUS recommends that students' unions:

- * Undertake targeted work to increase the number of Black students running in union elections. This work could include understanding the barriers that prevent Black students from taking part in student politics. It could also include workshops on manifesto writing, public speaking, campaigning and how being an officer can be educationally beneficial and lead to varied employment opportunities. It is also crucial that a Black students' officer position is created and supported in every union.
- * Provide awareness-raising events for Black students interested in applying for positions in the student movement.
- * Provide Black officers with access to training and networking at a regional and/or national level.

Share good practice and success stories regarding diversifying elections to engage and include Black students.

- Provide Black officers with opportunities to explore career progression.

NUS will:

Support unions in increasing the proportion of Black candidates running for elected officer positions and share good practice.

Extend the *I Will Lead the Way* coaching programme, which aims to increase the number of women in elected leadership positions, to provide a parallel programme for Black students. This will provide tailored support for Black students intending to stand for election or who have already been elected and are considering standing for the position of president in their union.

Leadership

For race inequality and the under-representation of Black staff to be addressed requires leadership. Therefore, it is vital that senior leaders champion equality, diversity and inclusion and are accountable for creating organisational change.

NUS recommends that leaders in students' unions:

- * Publicise and increase awareness of the findings of this report to all relevant audiences, and make it clear that more needs to be done to promote an inclusive culture in unions. Initiating an open and honest dialogue that acknowledges the barriers outlined in this report will lead to a narrative about race equality in the student movement.
- * Ensure that their union has an equality and diversity strategy that includes targeted work to address inequality and inclusion. This strategy can be viewed as a part of a students' union's work to meet its duties under the Equality Act 2010 (although the Equality Act does not apply in Northern

Ireland, it represents a good benchmark for Northern Irish unions).

- * Identify a race champion to drive progress on addressing the findings outlined in this report. A key element of the champion's role will be to consult with Black staff and officers from their union and through the various student movement networks.
- Include equality, diversity and inclusion when undertaking strategic and business planning and, where possible, appropriate financial investment.
- Take into account talent management and positive action when developing a succession planning strategy.
- Look into whether their university is taking part in the [Equality Challenge Unit's Race Charter Mark](#) and explore ways to incorporate aspects of the charter mark in their union. This should be done in partnership with the university's Race Charter Mark lead. This recommendation is only applicable to higher education unions.
- Practise [inclusive leadership](#) that promotes an understanding of inter-cultural working. This will contribute to students' unions not only growing their diverse talent, but also ensure that Black staff receive support in their career progression and leadership.

NUS will:

- Develop an inclusive leadership resource for students' unions, which outlines what inclusive leadership is and examples of how to adopt this as a leadership style.
- Provide continued focus on race equality in the student movement and monitor whether progress has been made in terms of the representation of Black staff and officers.
- Collate best practice from students' unions and share case studies.

- Develop a Race Matters Practitioners' Network for union staff who are working to address the findings in the report and leading on race equality in the workplace.

Diverse recruitment

Survey respondents believed that one of the key ways to increase the ethnic diversity in the workforce is to improve students' unions' recruitment processes. This includes recruiting from outside the student movement and going beyond NUS Connect to attract diverse candidates.

NUS recommends that students' unions:

- * Ensure that they have a recruitment and selection strategy or policy in place and that all recruitment processes are monitored to measure their level of effectiveness.
- * Use NUS guidance on [How to carry out an equality impact assessment](#) to evaluate their current recruitment policy and practices, resulting in a recruitment strategy that focuses on increasing the diversity of candidates. This strategy could look at, for example, setting targets for diverse candidates, monitoring equality data, anonymous shortlisting, where jobs are advertised and the language used in job adverts. For some unions this may require liaising with their education institution.

A union's recruitment strategy can be informed by Race for Opportunity's guidance on [How to conduct diverse recruitment](#).

- * Monitor the diversity of applicants, shortlisted candidates and appointees and identify progress towards, and/or any barriers preventing, diversifying the workforce.
- * In circumstances where there is an under-representation of Black staff, use [positive action](#) initiatives to encourage applicants from diverse ethnic backgrounds.
- * Review and develop how they communicate about their organisation with potential

applicants (their employer brand) to ensure that potential candidates are aware of the various functions of the union and understand what a career in the student movement has to offer.

- Ensure that staff and officers responsible for recruitment receive mandatory recruitment training that explores equality and diversity.
- Ensure that staff and officers responsible for recruitment receive 'unconscious bias' training and know how to implement positive action, as already outlined.
- Ensure that interview panels consist of people from diverse backgrounds to demonstrate to candidates that the students' union takes equality and diversity seriously. Furthermore, candidates may be more comfortable with, and responsive to, a diverse panel.⁵¹
- Check that recruitment agencies can demonstrate their ability to conduct diverse recruitment and understand the importance of attracting a diverse pool of candidates.

NUS will:

- Develop equality monitoring templates to help unions monitor the diversity of their job applicants, shortlisted candidates and appointees.
- Ensure that all recruitment agencies on its preferred suppliers' list can demonstrate their commitment to equality and diversity and carry out diverse recruitment, which includes ensuring a diverse range of candidates.
- Create a resource on using positive action.

Career development for Black staff

More than a third of respondents did not feel they had access to career development opportunities and some highlighted a lack of support from other colleagues, such as managers and senior leaders, for their career progression. To tackle this, there is a need for

targeted work to support career development and raise the profile of Black staff.

NUS recommends that students' unions:

- * Invest in initiatives to promote talent management and support the progression of Black staff into leadership roles. This could include mentoring and career coaching opportunities.
- Monitor the progression and retention of Black staff, as well as other staff and officers with protected characteristics.⁵² This data should be used to identify patterns and monitor progress.
- Monitor which staff and officers apply for, and receive, career development opportunities.

NUS will:

- Establish a Black leaders' network for all Black staff, which will provide an opportunity for Black staff to build their network and offer information and guidance on career development. The network should have links into decision-making and inform the work of the student movement on race equality and Black representation. This network could also work in partnership with other organisations such as the higher education network of networks for Black staff.
- Organise annual career development training for Black staff.
- Organise an annual Black leaders' conference that focuses on leadership, learning and development for Black staff.

Organisational culture

Recruitment is only one aspect of addressing Black representation. Retaining Black staff and officers in the student movement will depend on how inclusive unions are. Therefore, any policies and procedures to address race inequality need to go beyond 'ticking boxes' and should be instrumental in implementing cultural and structural change.

NUS recommends that students' unions:

- * Showcase their commitment to being a fair employer, service provider, representative body, business and contributor to society by developing an equality and diversity policy and strategy to address inequality. This organised approach will ensure that unions comply with the Equality Act 2010 and continuously improve. This strategy should include targets to measure progress, including for race and ethnicity. Unions can use NUS guidance on [creating an equality and diversity policy](#) and [developing an equality and diversity strategy](#).
- * [Carry out equality impact assessments \(EIAs\)](#) to ascertain how their activities and policies, such as recruitment and annual leave entitlement, impact a diverse range of groups, such as Black staff and officers. An EIA may also reveal previously unknown areas to improve, such as the lack of Black applicants for union jobs.
- * Use their Staff Engagement Surveys to explore staff views on inclusion, equality and diversity and use this knowledge to address any concerns, for example through tailored training. Where sample sizes allow, this data should be collated based on protected characteristics.
- * Demonstrate their commitment to challenging all forms of racism and discrimination, through zero tolerance policies that are well publicised and receive active support at senior levels.
- * Train staff and officers to ensure they are able to identify racism and are confident in dealing with incidents of racism and discrimination.
- * Embed equality, diversity and inclusion in all union staff development activities such as team meetings, appraisals and staff satisfaction surveys.
- * Actively support their Black staff and be sensitive and supportive of any specific

cultural or religious needs they may have, such as having time and space to pray, socialising in non-alcoholic spaces, fasting and providing time off to celebrate religious and cultural events.

- * Ensure that all staff and officers receive mandatory equality and diversity training.
- * Regularly review and update all equality, diversity and inclusion training.
- * Ensure that any work to promote diversity goes beyond Black History Month. Although this can be an important activity, it should only be one aspect of acknowledging ethnic diversity and promoting race equality.
- Ensure that all staff and officers receive inter-cultural competencies and 'unconscious bias' training.
- Explore the benefits of receiving support in addressing race equality, and equality and diversity more widely, by taking part in the [Investors in Diversity Accreditation Scheme](#) (unions receive a 10 per cent discount).

NUS will:

- Develop factsheets on religious festivals and events and how unions can best support their staff and officers with a religion or belief.
- Organise a range of training for unions on equality, diversity and inclusion.

Appendices

Appendix 1

This survey aimed to investigate the experiences of Black non-student staff in the student movement, examining various aspects of union life such as career development, inclusion, and equality and diversity. Respondents were also asked questions to explore why they felt Black staff were under-represented in students' unions and what they felt should be done to address this under-representation.

Data was captured through both quantitative and qualitative means, with survey respondents given the opportunity to elaborate on their responses in open text boxes, in addition to answering direct questions.

The following is a list of headline questions asked in each section.

About you

- In which region is your place of work located?
- Please select the option which describes the total time you have worked for your current students' union, including in different roles.
- Have you ever been an elected officer in any students' union (before you became a non-student staff member)?
- Have you ever been a student staff member in any students' union (before you became a non-student staff member)?
- What attracted you to working in a students' union?

Career development

- To what extent, if at all, do you agree with the following statements?:
 - I have good access to career development opportunities at my students' union.
 - I feel able to speak to my manager about my career development.
 - My manager is supportive of my career development.

- Have you been promoted during your time working for your current students' union?
- Which of the following statements do you agree with *most*?
 - I feel I can progress my career working for my current students' union.
 - I would have to leave my current students' union to progress my career further.

Your students' union

- To what extent, if at all, do you agree with the following statements?
 - My students' union is an inclusive and diverse place to work.
 - My views and opinions are valued in my students' union.
 - My ethnic identity is valued by my students' union.
- How comfortable, if at all, do you feel participating in social activities with your colleagues?
- Is there anything your union has done that has considered the needs of Black staff?
- Do you have any good practice examples of promoting race equality in the student movement?
- Do you know how to report any act of discrimination in your union?
- What do you think is good about working for your students' union?
- How, if at all, could your students' union improve the experiences of Black staff?

The student movement

- Have you ever experienced racism or any other negative treatment because of your race or ethnic identity, while working in students' unions?
- Across the country there is a lack of ethnic diversity among non-student staff in students' unions, why do you think this is?

- How do you think we can increase the number of Black staff working in students' unions?
- Do you feel any of the following would be helpful in increasing the number of Black staff working in students' unions?
 - Advertising jobs beyond NUS Connect.
 - Stating on all job adverts that the union encourages applicants from Black communities.
 - Increasing the number of Black elected officers.
 - To have staff involved in recruitment undergo unconscious bias training.
 - Promoting positive action in the recruitment process.
 - Promoting the benefits of diversity in the workplace.
 - Promoting inclusive policies and practices.
 - Providing talent management opportunities for Black staff.
- According to previous NUS research, Black staff were twice as likely to be more negative about whether their union valued equality and diversity, in comparison to their white peers. Why do you think this is?

Appendix 2

This appendix outlines the basic structure of NUS, its decision-making bodies and its relationship with its members (students' unions). As with many membership organisations, this structure is subject to change over time and is intended as a guide only.

How we work

As a confederation of nearly 600 students' unions, NUS aims to ensure the collective and democratic representation of seven million students through our member students' unions.

Our governance

NUS UK is governed by the National Executive Council, the NUS UK Board and by an annual national conference. NUS UK is part of a group structure made up of seven separate legal entities, each with their own board of trustees.

Decision-making

NUS has multiple ways to influence decisions for both student representatives and our member unions. Our national conference is held annually in April and is the head decision-making body of NUS. Delegates are elected from each local students' union that is an affiliated member of NUS to represent students' views on a national level.

Devolved nations

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland each have their own elected representatives who campaign on issues that are relevant to students studying in that nation. Each nation also has its own executive council and national conference.

Liberation campaigns

Our liberation campaigns are politically autonomous and made up of students who self-define as Black, disabled, LGBT and/or women. They have their own policy decision-making

process, run specific campaigns mandated by their own conferences and are led by their own elected representatives.

Student sections

Sections are groups of students who are registered into a particular mode of study. These include international students, postgraduate students and mature and part-time students. They are linked to the main NUS policy zones and also have their own policy decision-making process, run specific campaigns mandated by their own conferences and are led by their own elected representatives.

NUS Group structure

NUS as an organisation has many different activities contributing to its wider vision and mission, all of which are supported, to differing degrees, by a team of staff.

The NUS Group has offices in central London, Cardiff, Belfast, Edinburgh and Macclesfield. Each section of the NUS Group has its own functions, staff and trustee board.

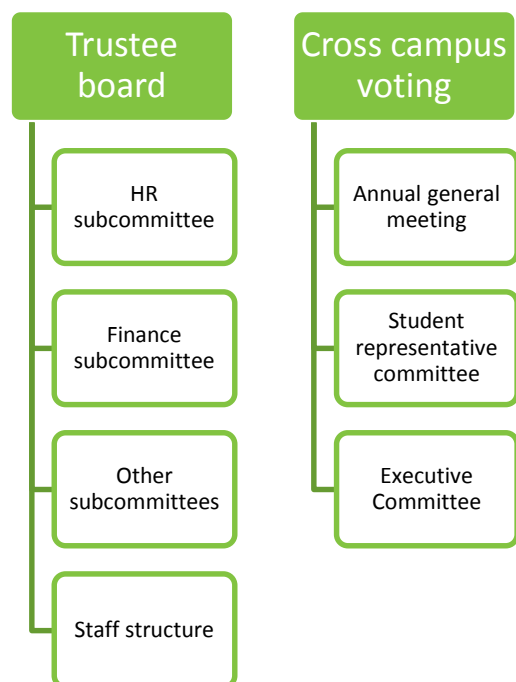
Our members

Any students' union in further and higher education recognised under the Education Act 1994 and fulfilling certain administrative requirements can apply to affiliate to NUS. They retain their independence throughout their affiliation and are completely separate organisations. When comparing models of membership with the trade union movement, NUS is more akin to the TUC and its independent affiliates than a particular union with branches across the UK.

Students' union structures

As each students' union remains completely independent, there is no uniform structure that defines them. However, as all unions are defined as charities under the Charity Act 2006,

they all share some common characteristics. The political leaders of students' unions are called 'officers' and can be full- or part-time alongside their studies. Typically, a medium to large students' union will follow a structure similar to the one below:



The trustee board is the charity's governing body but does not make political decisions. The students, through their various democratic and representative structures, develop policy. The relationship between the two sides is unusual in the charity sector, but similar formats are found in other membership organisations.

Larger students' unions have layered staff structures, typically with a senior management team and operational staff working to support the priorities of the full-time officers and general student body. It is important to remember that one particular structure does not fit all students' unions, either because of financial restrictions or a political preference.

Endnotes

¹ 'Black' is used by NUS as an inclusive term to refer to members of the African, Arab, Asian and Caribbean communities.

² NUS (2012) *Diversity Survey 2011–2012*. Available from: <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/pageassets/resources/equality-and-diversity-hub/equality-and-diversity-resources/diversity-surveys/NUS-Diversity-Survey-Report-2011-2012.pdf> [Accessed 6 December 2013].

³ 'Black' is used by NUS as an inclusive term to refer to members of the African, Arab, Asian and Caribbean communities. It is a political statement, borne out of the UK civil rights movement in the 1970s, that encompasses individuals who live in the UK and have a shared history of exclusion, inequality and discrimination because they are not white. The term 'Black' is meant to be inclusive, not exclusive, and we recognise that individuals may describe themselves in different ways.

⁴ Department for Work and Pensions (2010) *Labour market status by ethnicity*. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269606/labour-market-status-by-ethnic-group.xls [Accessed 18 July 2014].

⁵ National Council for Voluntary Organisations (2013) *Civil Society Almanac*. Available from: <http://data.ncvo.org.uk/a/almanac14/who-works-in-the-voluntary-sector-3/> [Accessed 18 July 2014].

⁶ Clark, J., Kane, D., Wilding, K., and Bass, P. (2012) *The UK Civil society Almanac 2012*. London: National Council for Voluntary Organisations.

⁷ Equality Challenge Unit (2014) *Equality in higher education: statistical report 2014 Part 2: students*. Available from: <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/EQU-HE-stats->

[report_student_v19.pdf](#) [Accessed 24 November 2014].

⁸ Higher Education Statistics Agency (2013) *Student population 2012/13*. Available from: <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/3129/#eth> [Accessed 19 September 2014].

⁹ *FE and skills participation: all ages demographic summary 2012/13*. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/fe-data-library-further-education-and-skills> [Accessed 30 October 2014].

¹⁰ Runnymede (2010) *'Snowy Peaks': Ethnic Diversity at the Top*. Available from: <http://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/SnowyPeaks-2010.pdf> [Accessed 19 August 2014].

¹¹ Race for Opportunity (2008) *Race to the Top. The place of ethnic minority groups within the UK workforce*. London: Business in the Community.

¹² Green Park Interim and Executive Search (2014) Press Release: 'Britain's Competitiveness at risk from deep "diversity deficit" says new study'. Available from: <http://www.green-park.co.uk/press-release-britains-competitiveness-risk-deep-diversity-deficit-says-new-study/#sthash.qhgspICC.dpuf> [Accessed 29 September 2014].

¹³ Equality Challenge Unit (2011) *The experience of black and minority ethnic staff in higher education in England*. London: Equality Challenge Unit.

¹⁴ Bhopal, K. and Jackson, J. (2013) *The Experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic Academics: Multiple Identities and Career Progression*. Available from: <http://blackbritishacademics.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/Research-Report-The-Experiences-of-Black-and-Minority-Ethnic->

[Academics-Dr-Bhopal.pdf](#) [Accessed 28 August 2014].

¹⁵ Higher Education Statistics Agency (2014) *Staff at Higher Education Institutions in the United Kingdom 2012/13*. Statistical First Release (SFR)198. Available from: www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=3106&Itemid=161 [Accessed 6 October 2014].

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Equality Challenge Unit (2012) *Equality in higher education: statistical report 2012, Part 1: staff*. London: Equality Challenge Unit.

¹⁸ NUS (2011) *Race for Equality, A report on the experiences of Black students in further and higher education*. London: NUS.

¹⁹ Black British Academics (2014) *Race Equality Survey*. London: Black British Academics.

²⁰ Equality Challenge Unit (2013) *Unconscious bias and higher education*. London: Equality Challenge Unit.

²¹ Heath, A. and Cheung, S. (2006) *Ethnic Penalties in the Labour Market: Employers and Discrimination*. DWP Research Report No. 341. London: Department for Work and Pensions.

²² For non-white applications, ethnic identity was conveyed using names found to be widely associated with Black African, Black Caribbean, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups.

²³ Race for Opportunity (2011) *Race into higher education — update June 2011. The race into work*. London: Business in the Community.

²⁴ Equality Challenge Unit (2014) *Equality in higher education: statistical report 2014 Part 2: students*. Available from: [\[report_student_v19.pdf\]\(#\) \[Accessed 24 November 2014\].](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/ECU_HE-stats-</p>
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²⁵ Runnymede (2014) *When education isn't enough. Labour market outcomes of ethnic minority graduates at elite universities*. London: Runnymede.

²⁶ Learning and Skills Network and the Network for Black Professionals (2011) *Barriers to Progression: The experience of black and minority ethnic staff in further education*. Lifelong Learning UK.

²⁷ Equality Challenge Unit (2011) *The experience of black and minority ethnic staff in higher education in England*. London: Equality Challenge Unit.

²⁸ Black British Academics (2014) *Race Equality Survey*. London: Black British Academics.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Race for Opportunity (2011) *Race to Progress: Breaking down barriers, Ensuring race is no barrier to workers' career prospects*. London: Business in the Community.

³¹ Ibid.

³² NUS (2012) *Diversity Survey 2011–2012*. Available from: <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/pageassets/resources/equality-and-diversity-hub/equality-and-diversity-resources/diversity-surveys/NUS-Diversity-Survey-Report-2011-2012.pdf> [Accessed 6 December 2013].

³³ Some 68 per cent of respondents were from London, while 8 per cent were from the North West and South East, respectively. Some 5 per cent were from the West Midlands and 3 per cent from Wales. Some 2 per cent were from the South West, East of England, Yorkshire and Humber, North East England and Scotland, respectively.

³⁴ Respondents had the choice of choosing two of the available options.

³⁵ NUS (2012) *Diversity Survey 2011–2012*. Available from: <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/pageassets/resources/equality-and-diversity-hub/equality-and-diversity-resources/diversity-surveys/NUS-Diversity-Survey-Report-2011-2012.pdf> [Accessed 6 December 2013].

³⁶ Equality Challenge Unit (2011) *Religion and belief in higher education: the experiences of staff and students*. London: Equality Challenge Unit.

³⁷ Equality Challenge Unit (2011) *The experience of black and minority ethnic staff in higher education in England*. London: Equality Challenge Unit.

³⁸ NUS (2012) *Diversity Survey 2011–2012*. Available from: <http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/pageassets/resources/equality-and-diversity-hub/equality-and-diversity-resources/diversity-surveys/NUS-Diversity-Survey-Report-2011-2012.pdf> [Accessed 6 December 2013].

³⁹ Race for Opportunity (2012) *Leadership and Cultural identity, An exploration into the perceptions of BAME women in the UK workplace*. London: Business in the Community.

⁴⁰ Learning and Skills Network and the Network for Black Professionals (2011) *Barriers to Progression: The experience of black and minority ethnic staff in further education*. Lifelong Learning UK.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Black British Academics (2014) *Race Equality Survey*. London: Black British Academics

⁴³ Bhopal, K. (2014) *The experiences of BME academics in higher education: aspirations in the face of inequality*. London: Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.

⁴⁴ University and College Union (2009) *Black Members News* 15: 7. London: University and College Union.

⁴⁵ NUS (2011) *Race for Equality, A report on the experiences of Black students in further and higher education*. London: NUS.

⁴⁶ Ahmed, S. (2012) *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham: Duke University Press.

⁴⁷ Bhopal, K. and Myers, M. (2011) 'Racism in rural primary schools in England: a post-Macpherson moment'. Paper presented to BERA Annual Conference, London, 8–11 September, in Bhopal, K. (2014), *The experiences of BME academics in higher education: aspirations in the face of inequality*. London: Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.

⁴⁸ Ahmed, S. (2012) *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham: Duke University Press.

⁴⁹ Opportunity Now (2014) *Inclusive Leadership: culture change for business success*. London: Business in the Community and East Sussex: Shapiro Consulting.

⁵⁰ Shapiro, G., Wells H., and Saunders, R. (2011) *Inclusive Leadership — from pioneer to mainstream*. London: Business in the Community.

⁵¹ Race for Opportunity (2012) *How to Conduct Diverse Recruitment, A comprehensive guide for organisations*. London: Business in the Community.

⁵² There are nine protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010. These are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

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