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**“It’s not just about the Curriculum.... the
Importance of Decolonising the whole
Institution and Building an Anti-Racist
University”**

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“It’s not just about the Curriculum.... the Importance of Decolonising the whole Institution and Building an Anti-Racist University”

- A look back at why Freedom to Achieve
- Moving onwards into Decolonising DMU (DDMU)
- Lets talk about the curriculum
- Beyond the curriculum
- Decolonising DMU: one year on
- Risks and hopes about decolonisation
- Opportunities to engage and influence
- Ways to contact us

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REMEMBER THE HEADLINES?

Can living abroad close the attainment gap for BAME students?

Universities' shame – unpicking the black attainment gap

Two contrasting gaps in black students' achievement

Black students are more likely than white ones to attend university, but less likely to do well once enrolled. What explains the gap?

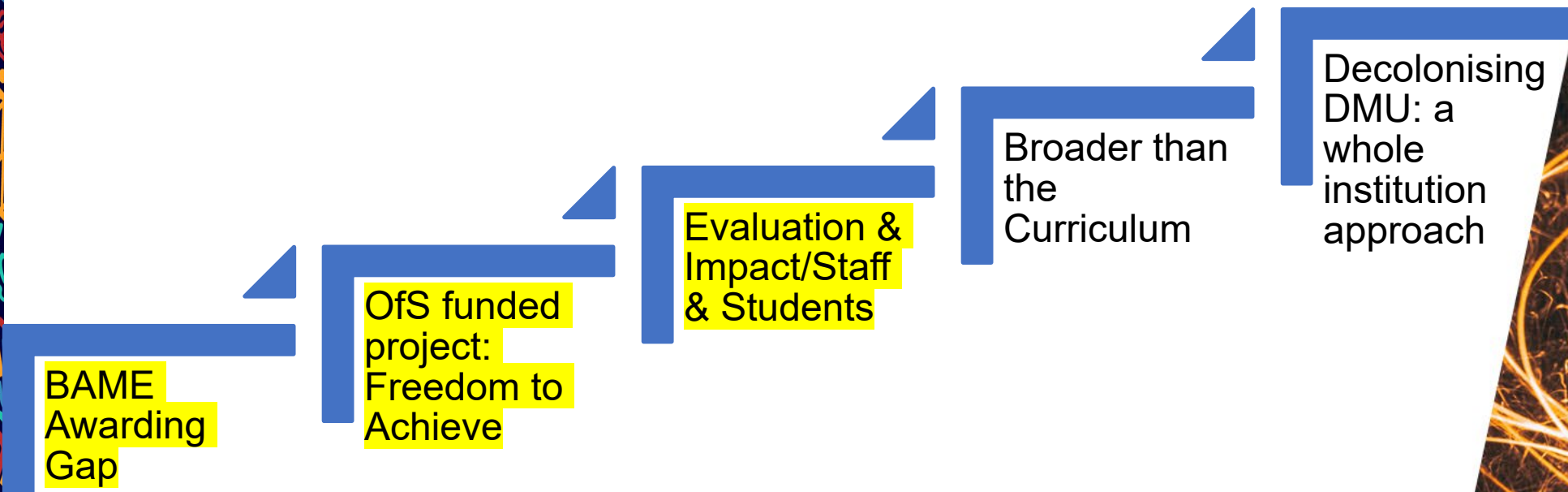
'Attainment gap' varies dramatically between ethnic groups, analysis shows

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Freedom to Achieve to Decolonising DMU



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Freedom to Achieve

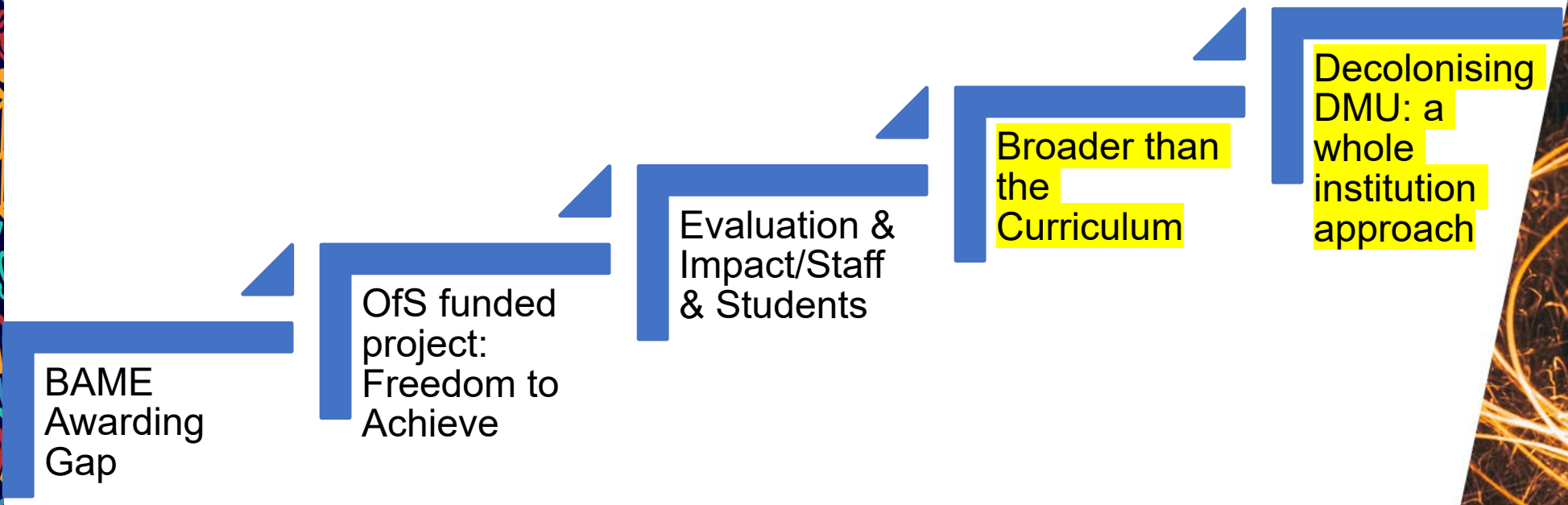


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Decolonising DMU: a whole institution approach



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Decolonising DMU recognises that **racial inequality in Britain originates from colonialism**. In seeking to decolonise, we are creating an anti-racist university which allows all to succeed, and which celebrates the rich diversity and heritage of DMU. It **shifts the burden and conversation away from one of deficit, blame and shame, to recognise that racial inequality has been built over centuries on the dominant western and northern hemispheres** and patriarchal interpretation of values and merit. This in turn has created systems, hierarchies and behaviours that create disadvantage and **fail to recognise the rich history and world contributions of the global majority**.

Different to the strategies of many Higher Education Institutions, Decolonising DMU stretches far beyond the curriculum. It **acknowledges that the scale of the challenge runs deep into examining the everyday norms of university life** and will require all DMU staff and students to acknowledge, identify, discuss and seek to understand the issues. It is **critical that we work collectively, with respect and dignity**, in order to work for institutional solutions that are underpinned by the reality that our staff, students and communities will benefit from an anti-racist university.

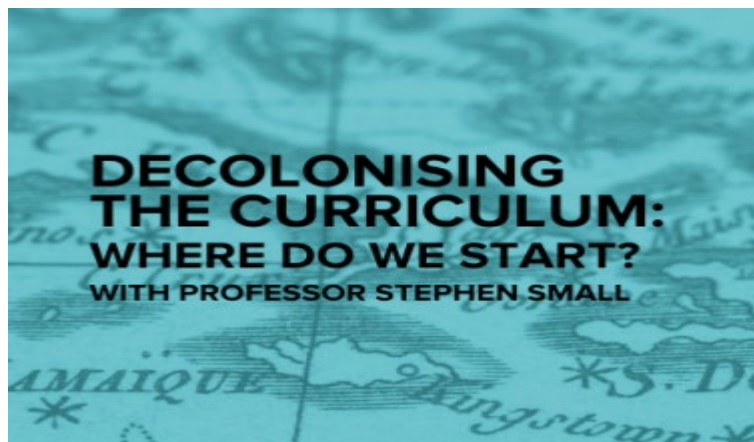
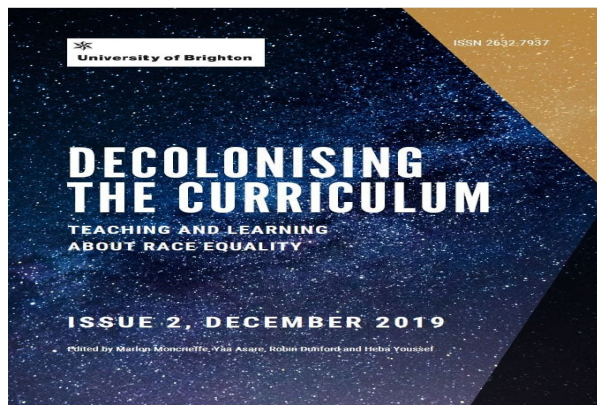
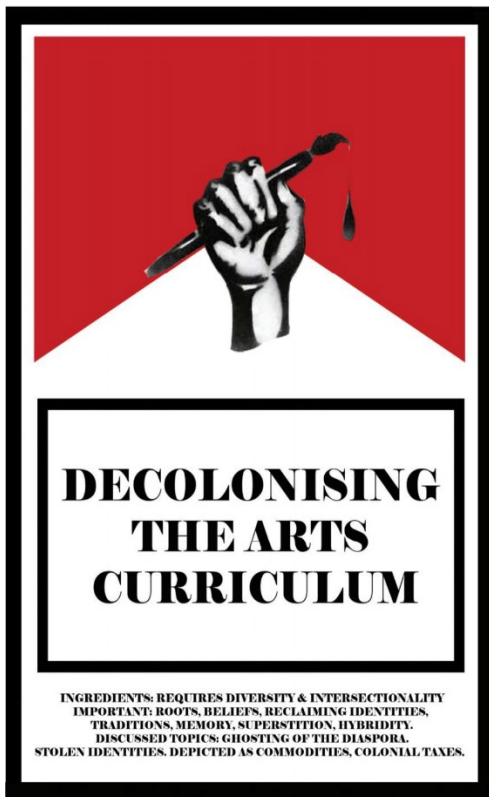
Decolonising DMU, working definition 2019

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Lets talk about decolonising the curriculum.....



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Lets talk about decolonising the curriculum.....

Calls for decolonising the curriculum show:

- Content of University knowledge remains centred in a Eurocentric foundation
- Knowledge imparted centres the global north as the 'norm'
- And writers of the global north as creators of true knowledge

Leads to call from students of:

- Why is my curriculum white?
- Why **isn't** my professor black?

The Rhodes Must Fall Oxford (RMFO) campaign asked:

- “ what is excluded from my curriculum, by whom and why and what is the purpose of my education?”

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Beyond the curriculum.....

Gebrial (2018, 26) asks whether the purpose of our education system should be to perpetuate existing power structures and norms, or equip students with the critical tools to question them.

Furthermore RMFO make connections between these knowledge gaps, and the **structural, material inequalities they engender both within the academy and, most importantly, beyond the academy.**

A decolonising movement also needs to understand its position as responding to **live issues of inequality, colonialism and oppression** – rather than just being a matter of legacies, or unearthing historical accounts for the sake of it. To do this kind of work in the university is to **dig where you are – where you have access** – rather than to view the university as the primary space where transformation happens. It is to enter the university space **as a transformative force, to connect what is happening inside the institution to the outside, and to utilise its resources in the interest of social justice.** (Gebrial 2018, 35)

(Gebrial, 2018 in Bhambra, Gebrial, Nisancioglu “Decolonising the University”)

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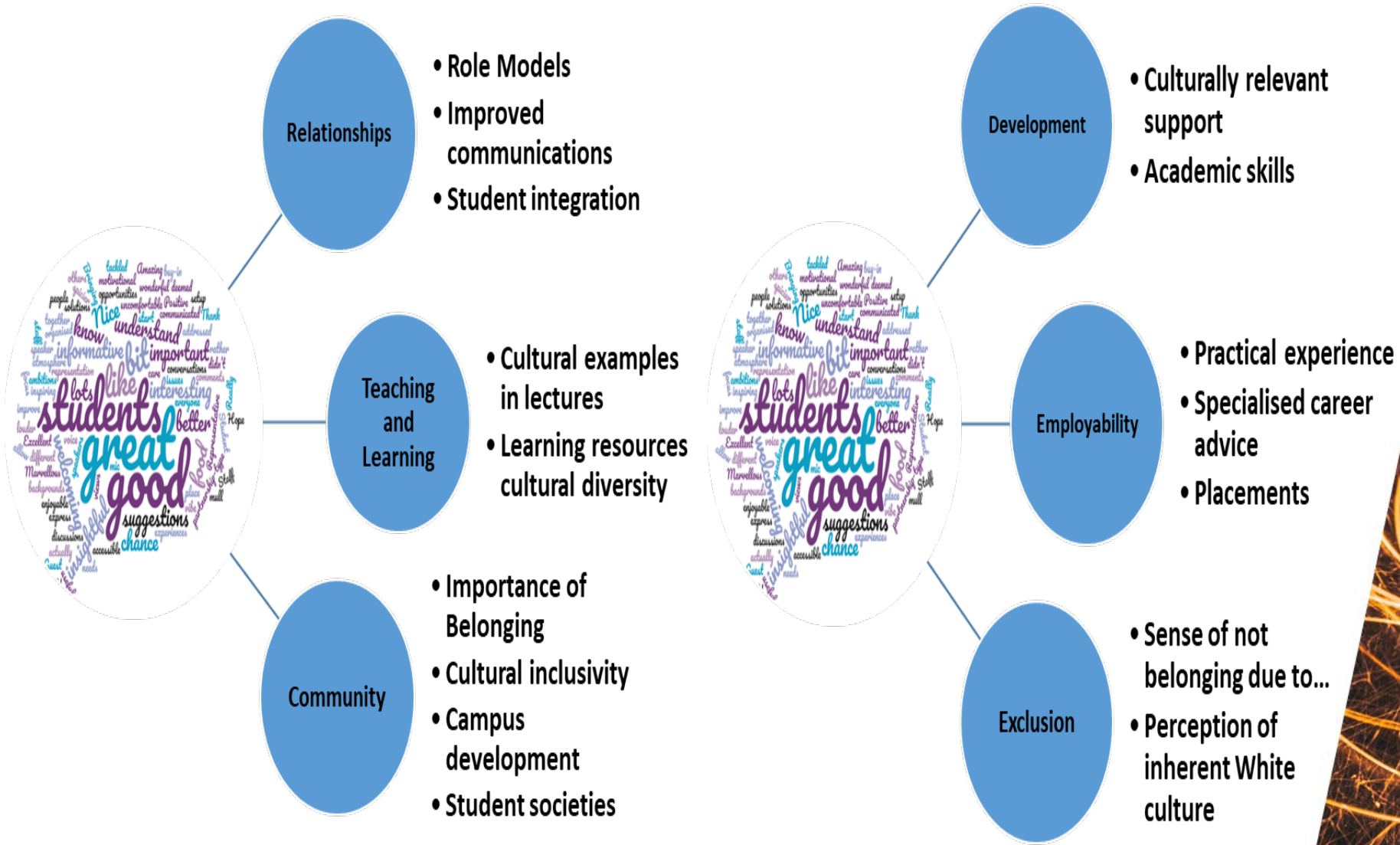
Decolonising Beyond the curriculum.....

The decolonising approach is not just a pedagogic technique.

As Dennis (2018) suggests it is based on other ways of

- being,
- thinking,
- knowing,
- sensing,
- feeling,
- doing and
- living





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Freedom to Achieve to Decolonising DMU (DDMU)

2018-19, surveys with students (n = 233), staff (n = 44), and participation in co-creation events with students and staff (n = 142) generated six themes (Ansley 2018; Ansley and Hall 2019).

- The importance of trusting and authentic relationships on campus.
- A feeling of not belonging leading to exclusion.
- Developing approaches to teaching and learning with which students can connect.
- The creation of safe and pluralistic communities on campus.
- Developing cultures that enable personal development.
- Supporting diverse needs in relation to employability and post-University life.

Differences for groups of international students, and also for some home students e.g. students of Pakistani, Caribbean and 'Other White' heritage were most likely to feel unrepresented within their learning experience.

Differences across each of the institution's four faculties, including in terms of changes to staff practices in the classroom, which tended to focus upon in-class teaching, revisions to assignment styles, changes to curriculum content or changes to personal tutoring.





Institution

- Corporate actions, policies, procedure and ownership
- Institutional knowledge and data
- Representation
- Opportunities
- Places and spaces
- Communication, awareness and conversations



Staff

- Empowering and involving all staff in the journey
- Information, workshops, drop in sessions, training, events
- Toolkit/resource development
- Community of Practice – opportunity to shape the agenda



Students

- Raising awareness: through partnership with DSU, existing student channels, societies and MarComms
- Creating spaces that drive the conversation
- Student-led events/activities
- Engagement with society champions



Research

- Ongoing evaluation
- Supplementary research



Library

- Decolonise collection
- Culturally aware spaces
- Promote workforce diversity
- Raise staff awareness

Dissemination / Institutional links/Race Equality Charter/ Feedback Network / Links with others

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DDMU...one year on:

Developed priorities around:

- **Institutional** structures, cultures and practices:
- effectively aligned with the Race Equality Charter, positioning with the Access and Participation Plan and including work on University policies, understanding impact of racism, talking about whiteness and privilege, decolonising the self/mind as well as the institution, hearing the narratives/stories of those affected by a sense of 'not belonging'
- **Staff** development:
- including developing communities of practice and a curriculum toolkit, DDMU/CAI expert group, briefing sessions, workshops and digital drop in, a new 'partnering model' with faculties and directorates



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DDMU...one year on

- **Student** engagement:
 - including partnership-working with the student union, training and development of tackling racism and microaggressions, 'bouncebackability!', Unapologetically B.A.M.E
- **Library and Learning Services:**
 - including decolonising collections and reading lists, staff development, read to debate sessions, use of place and space in the learning environments,
- **Research:**
 - including enriching the research environment, evaluating practice considering impact and progress, exploring understanding, perceptions and learning

Institution forced to consider the relationships between factors that enable/disable students/staff from seeing themselves, their identities, images, histories and stories reflected in it.

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DDMU...one year on

Priorities developed into a survey with students (n = 35) and staff (n = 66) in Spring 2020:

- The numbers of **students** engaging were significantly hit by the Covid-19 pandemic,
- Flags the potential for the day-to-day realities of uncertainty and crisis as individuals struggle to survive, live, work and study, engagement with cultural change becomes more difficult
- issues from the surveys reflected those that erupted through the Black Lives Matter movement, including:
 - a concrete focus upon equality;
 - explicit working to tackle discrimination, including in disciplinary processes;
 - representation inside and outside the classroom;
 - developing conversations around harassment and discrimination.



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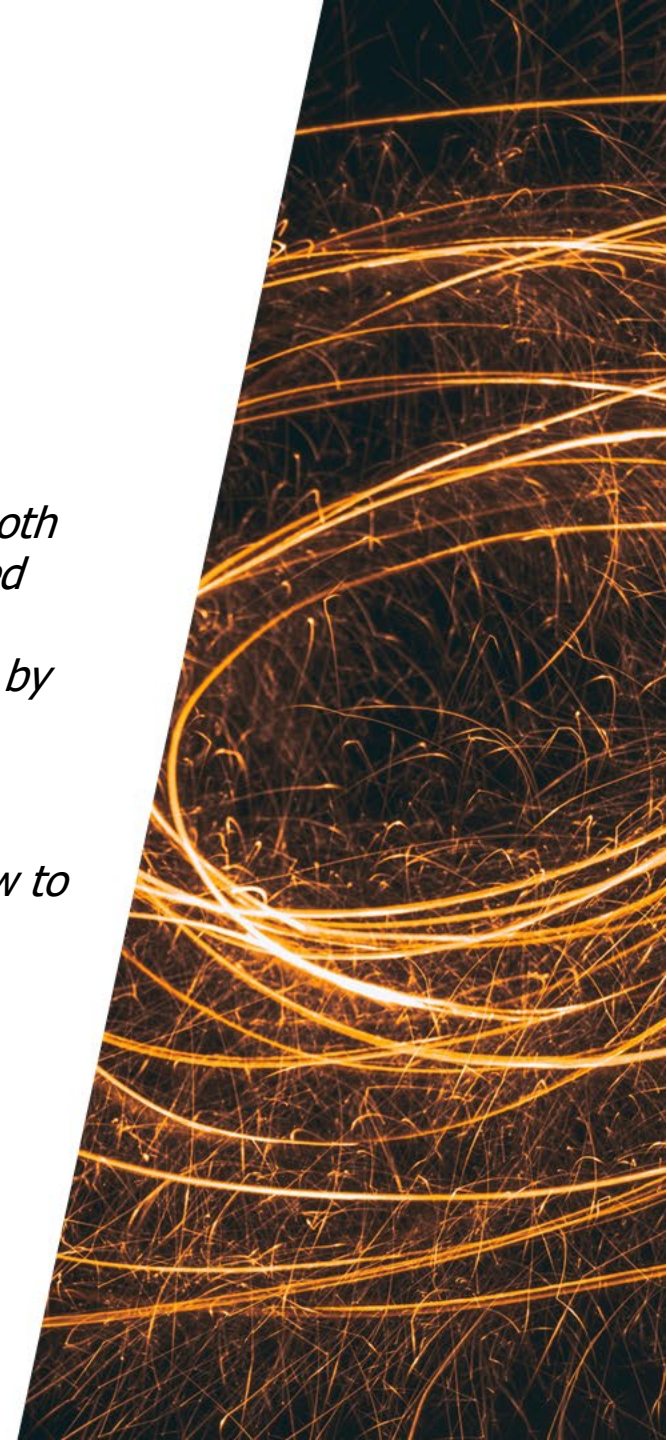
DDMU...one year on

Staff highlighted 10 separate factors underpinning educational inequality, including:

- biases,
- deficit thinking and
- denial

Staff feedback from DDMU workshops:

- *From my perspective, decolonising is a broad umbrella to cover issues relating to both students and the academic staff at DMU. There are issues from both sides that need to be addressed by DMU.*
- *I think more needs to be done to empower students that might be disenfranchised by the system. I'm not sure how I can address that from my work area. Maybe that's something I need to address.*
- *Need to think about the use of language in our interactions with students.*
- *The need to clearly understand the concept of 'colonisation' to help understand how to bring about change where necessary, as not all aspects of colonisation seen as a deficit.*
- *I did all of the pre reading and tests, but was still not sure of the similarities/differences between Decolonising and other racism/ unconscious bias issues.*



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What does Decolonising DMU look like for students ?

Raising awareness: through partnership with DSU, existing student channels, societies and MarComms

Creating spaces that drive the conversation

Student-led events/activities

Engagement with society champions

Training/development

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Student Voices: Unapologetically B.A.M.E

"XXXX tutors/teacher need to familiarise themselves with black students and learn to understand us instead of giving us a 1 year 'trial' period- where they challenge us to see whether or not we match up to the stereotypes or not. It makes us feel like we have to work harder to be recognised as a regular student."

"Bring people who can actually make a change into the conversation."

"Firstly, we need to, as students, speak to members of staff at DMU bring them into the conversation so we can discuss."

"Faculties need to decolonise the reading list".

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Unapologetically B.A.M.E group views:

- Students suggested that conversations about race and racism should not be optional but a compulsory part of each students university experience.
- Students want to see realistic images and communications that reflect their real experiences.
- Students also wanted the University senior leadership and lecturers to be in the room and hear their experiences directly.

Unapologetically B.A.M.E ambassadors views:

- *'I have thought so many times of quitting Uni. This project is the best thing about Uni right now'*
- *'Helping to bring DDMU work to life shows me that I matter. I can be myself and I feel valued for being myself'.*





Library and Learning Services Resources

Some specific databases:

- Black Lives matter Springer nature for researchers (collection of books and journals)
- Black Freedom Struggle in the United States
- History Vault, Black freedom struggle in the twentieth century
- Making Open Access journals truly global
- Diverse leisure reading collection with global representation offering insight into cultures and lived experiences of people from around the world.
- **See** <https://library.dmu.ac.uk/decolonisingDMU/home> for the Library Decolonising DMU guide including useful resources and decolonising reading list tools

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On Research

We are working on four priorities:

- Evaluating the impact of new workstream priorities;
- Initiating a research project into what DDMU means;
- Analysing Research Institute and Centre research outputs, impact and environment, in order to baseline extant, scholarly work, which can be celebrated.
- Analysing the institutional research environment.

In work with research centres and institutes we note that there are rich narratives/case studies that are, as yet, unrecorded, and that might be celebrated.

This includes: research-engaged teaching, PGR, outputs, impact, environment and public engagement.

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On Research

- This work flags discussions around decolonising in relation to home-based work and international activities, including work with international PhD and Master's students. This includes issues of language.
- In particular, there is scope for thinking about decolonising and research-engaged teaching.
- DMU's research tends to articulate a clear link between communities made marginal (intergenerationally, intercommunally, intersectionally), which builds to the work of DDMU/the University's wider EDI work.

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Strategic risks in talking about decolonisation

Culture

- Surfacing latent racism, including race-related incidents
- Lack of institutional understanding: e.g. white privilege/fragility
- Student and staff fears of being accused
- Lack of institutional emotional resilience
- Burden of responsibility falling to students and staff of colour

Business case

- Concerns that student and staff applications will drop
- Just a 'phase' a new 'buzz' word/initiative
- Concerns re partners perspectives, local/national/international
- Reputational challenges? Loss of business?



Strategic hopes in talking about decolonisation

Culture

- Morally bold in language and action, as a societal challenge
- Acknowledge the existence of institutional racism and hate crime
- Centering the University's obligation to open debate
- Enabling a broader range of voices to be heard

Relationships

- Building communities of allies across DMU and wider
- Spaces for the lived experiences of staff/students to be heard
- Recognise and reflect the diversity of the university population

Accountability

- Hold all teams in the University accountable
- Active change to build an anti-racist university

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Defining decolonisation: dignity of difference

Diversify the syllabus, canon, curriculum, infrastructure and staff

Decentre knowledge and knowledge production away from the global North

Devalue hierarchies and revalue relationality

Diminish some voices and opinions that have predominated, and magnify those that have been unheard

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Recognition that.....

- This is a long and slow journey
- Need to educate people about racism and its impact on self, society and the institution
- Creating places and spaces for the conversations is essential
- Needs to be an institution wide approach: Academic, Professional Services and management including Executive team and governors
- Bring DMU's Race Equality Charter award to life

Creating better outcomes for ALL,


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Opportunities to Engage and Influence:

- Community of Practice
 - DDMU/CAI Expert Group: Developing a toolkit
 - Workshops
 - Drop in Sessions
 - Partnering model for Professional Services and Faculties
 - Upcoming Listening sessions for B.A.M.E staff (dates to be confirmed)
 - Upcoming DDMU and Race Equality Charter roadshows (dates to be confirmed)
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Thank You



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