

## WSU Anti-racism statement

Worcester Students' Union (WSU) is committed to representing and championing diverse cultural heritage and our members from ethnic minorities, and to striving to be anti-racist in all we do. The death of George Floyd in May 2020, and the Black Lives Matter movement awakened society and organisations across the globe to the urgent need to address long-standing inequalities and to fight racism - including structural racism - wherever it exists.

The Students' Union accepts that it should not have taken the death of George Floyd to awaken the world to structural racism and inequality, but it did, and the WSU Executive Committee and Senior Management at the time felt it was of paramount importance that WSU changed for our members - the students. We remain passionate about the need to continue this change.

We released a statement in June 2020, a copy of which can be found [here](#). Each May, at the end of the academic year, we have published an end of year EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) update. These reports have detailed our actions towards our commitment to being anti-racist, as well as to other areas within our annual EDI annual action plan. The latest update from the year 2023/24 can be found [here](#).

We recognise that most of our staff are white and so, as a team, we have limited lived or personal experiences of racism. We want to be honest about this but, in mitigation, work with students and experts in the field of EDI to ensure we understand and act accordingly. We recognise we are part of a larger system of inequality that has prevailed for too long and, therefore, we continue to critically reflect on our organisation and the ways in which we engage students from ethnic minorities and with diverse cultural heritages. This was a significant element when developing and agreeing our Strategic Framework for 2023-2028, which you can find [here](#). We remain alert to the fact that intersectionality means that students can be oppressed and affected by discrimination in a variety of ways, not just through racism.

Things we are doing on our journey to anti-racism, as part of our short and longer term operational and strategic plans, include:

- Using external expertise, reviewing, and changing how we recruit core staff and how we can widen access to our employment opportunities to create a more diverse and representative team that reflects our student body.

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- We have an internal EDI Working Group to scrutinise all aspects of our operations, within which anti-racism is high on the agenda. This meets monthly throughout the year. Our EDI Policy, which underpins the work of this group, can be found [here](#).

- Pressing the University to develop their own EDI strategy, based on a Race Equity paper the SU President and Chief Executive drew up in July 2020, with the University's then Pro Vice Chancellor (Students) and the Director of Access and Inclusion. The President of the SU now has a seat on a (relatively) new EDI Oversight Group of the University and President and the Chief Executive of the SU also sit on the University's EDI Forum.

Things we believe need to be addressed include (but are not limited to) the black awarding gap, diversity of staffing in academic and professional support roles, improved cultural competency across the University's workforce, recognition (within policies and practices) of religious observance, and decolonising the curriculum.

- Training our core staff on a rolling basis in race equity (which includes concepts such as privilege and unconscious bias). Members of our senior leadership team have, also, undertaken Leadership on Race Equity training. Our Chief Executive is part of a cohort of SU senior leaders who are championing race equity developments across the sector.

- Working with our student Networks and societies who represent and engage students of diverse cultural heritage to build relationships, support them to flourish and grow their membership, and to bring issues around their experience to our attention that need addressing.

We aim to eradicate barriers to participation and involvement so the SU can say it is truly inclusive. Our Welfare and Inclusion Council, for example, exists to drive debate, consider student and societal issues, form policy, and create a space for collaboration on the Union's representative work on welfare, inclusion, and equity.

- Continuing to work with students to review the terminology we use, particularly with our REN (Race Equality Network).

- Monitoring student engagement statistics with our opportunities, including (but not limited to) societies, sports clubs, networks, elections and officer roles, academic representation (Course and Department Reps), and advice and support. This is to ensure we identify where students are not getting involved, do our best to understand why, and create action plans to address it.

- Eradicating and taking a zero-tolerance approach to any discriminatory or racist behaviour within our student groups, invoking our disciplinary procedures when students breach our code of conduct.
- Promoting, hosting, and collaborating with students on events that are culturally significant for students of diverse heritage, all year round.
- Endeavour to be less euro-centric in the things we talk about and communicate and make proactive efforts to broaden our horizons in the things we debate and do.
- Consistently reviewing our events programme in the Hangar, working with colleagues in the University's International Experience Team, and take on feedback from our student groups to ensure we are welcoming to students of diverse heritage and that they feel at home in our venue and at our events.
- Ensuring that the Union and the University mark Black History Month and Race Equality Week each year (in October and February respectively). This forms part of Union policy passed and mandated by Student Council.

We know change will continue to take time and that we still have a long way to go but we are passionate about achieving tangible results and ensuring a positive environment where diversity is celebrated.

Those with lived experience are not responsible for making the changes needed and we recognise that it can be emotionally very harmful for people when this is asked of them. We are determined to lead the change

If you want to speak to us more about our aims, however, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please contact the President, Ruttuja, on [ruttja.mane@worc.ac.uk](mailto:ruttja.mane@worc.ac.uk) and/or the Chief Executive, Sophie on [s.williams@worc.ac.uk](mailto:s.williams@worc.ac.uk).

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(NB This document was originally published in January 2023. It has been revised and updated in August 2024, to ensure accuracy around the Union's programmes of work and initiatives).