

# **Decolonising the curriculum**

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# Background

- Joint work with Samira Diebire (SU Black Officer) and Dr Kyle Jerro (Lang+Ling).

“One of the biggest complaints by students from our community is that their courses are too Eurocentric.”

- ‘Decolonising the curriculum at Essex: anti-racist pedagogy, and learning and teaching for all’ (Education Strategic Fund 2019-20).

# Background

- Open meetings
  - Common themes emerged
  - Mailing list (details at end of presentation)
  - Working group – peer support and exchange
- Reading + resources list (h/t Library colleagues)
- Anti-racist reading group
- ~~Workshops~~

# Background

- Tackling Racism Working Group (June 2020 - ongoing).
- Key themes emerged from listening phase:
  - Racial harassment and racist incidents
  - Experiences of BAME students and staff
  - **Under-representation of BAME staff**
  - **Decolonising the curriculum**

# Students call the University of Essex to proactively combat racism at the university



**537 have signed.** Let's get to 1,000!

## **1. Decolonising the curriculum**

We want the university to take a holistic approach to decolonising the curriculum across ALL departments at the university. We want the university to set clear DEADLINES for meeting objectives for decolonising the curriculum. The University has been passive on this front.

There needs to be a budget and resources made available to facilitate this work. This work cannot be done without the leadership of the university.

We want the university to work with expert academics to create a central resource space on anti-racism and approaches to decolonising the curriculum in teaching.

We request that appointed members of each department work with a wider cross-departmental group facilitated and led by management to ensure continued revision of curriculums.

# But what does it mean?

**diversity**

**inclusion**

**decolonising  
the curriculum**

**equality**

**anti-racist  
pedagogy**

# Why 'decolonise'?

# The call to decolonise

- Highlight the link between present-day (racial) inequalities and historical processes of colonialism.
- Global histories of Western domination have impacted on, and limited, what is considered knowledge and whose knowledge is recognised.
- This has affected both what we teach and how we teach.



# The call to decolonise

- Universities play(ed) a central role in structures of empire.
- Knowledge production is central to transformation.
- Educational spaces provide a fantastic opportunity to deconstruct and rebuild.



#LeopoldMustFallQM

NUS: Why is my curriculum white?

Absent from the Academy

Black Lives Matter

#RhodesMustFall

#FeesMustFall

Reclaim Harvard Law School



# What I'm not talking about today

- The award gap
- Decolonising the (whole) university

# The bad news

- Not easy, not quick (although see slide 16)
- This is not a destination
- We can't do this alone
- University education is just part of the picture

# The good news

- This can be (and should be?) a conversation
- We can't do this alone
- There are some fantastic resources out there
- We have a chance to make a huge difference!

**But I teach...**

# No quick wins but...

- Acknowledge gaps
- Talk (learn?) about the history, origins and (mis)uses of our fields
- Talk about who is (not) on your reading list (UKent 'Diversity mark')
- Think beyond reading
- Encourage students to make suggestions and additions (Talis)
- Situate yourself and the knowledge you teach
- Encourage students (and colleagues) to talk about themselves

**Questions, thoughts?**



# Resources

- Kingston University Inclusive Curriculum Framework

<https://www.kingston.ac.uk/aboutkingstonuniversity/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/our-inclusive-curriculum/inclusive-curriculum-framework>

- University of Essex Decolonising the curriculum Talis list

<https://rl.talis.com/3/essex/lists/81A0B6A4-B09C-5DE1-9C8E-519F0EC342A3.html?lang=en-US&login=1>

- University of Essex Anti-racist reading group Talis list

<https://essex.rl.talis.com/lists/845CC3FB-2BFD-758C-6E8F-5B106DD7B382.html?edit&version=v1&lang=en&login=1>

# Resources

- Student blog posts

Adeyemi Awomodu

<https://blogs.essex.ac.uk/essexspirit/2020/09/15/decolonising-the-curriculum-english-dominates-but-at-a-cost-to-african-languages/>

Samira Diebire

<https://blogs.essex.ac.uk/essexspirit/2020/07/02/decolonising-the-curriculum-at-essex-a-student-perspective/>

# Contact

- Feel free to get in touch: [h.gibson@essex.ac.uk](mailto:h.gibson@essex.ac.uk)
- To join the decolonising the curriculum and anti-racist pedagogy mailing list contact:

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