

DECOLONISED TRANSFORMATIONS

CONFRONTING THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH'S HISTORY AND LEGACIES OF ENSLAVEMENT AND COLONIALISM

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Written by the Research and Engagement Working Group (REWG)
as part of the Race Review

Co-Chairs: Tommy Curry and Nicola Frith

REWG members: Kobina Amokwandoh, Ebo Anyebe, Obasanjo Bolarinwa, Simon Buck, Silence Chihuri, Kevin Donovan, Zaki El-Salahi, Omolabake Fakunle, Daryl Green, Roger Jeffery, Nini Kerr, Samantha Likonde, Nasar Meer, Thabani Mutambasere, Abigail Ocansey, Diana Paton, Nicola Perugini, Esther Stanford-Xosei, Ian Stewart, Shaira Vadasaria and Yarong Xie.

Read and approved by: the REWG, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) and the Race Equality and Anti-Racist Sub-Committee (REAR) in consultation with the Steering Group.

In memory of
Professor Sir Geoff Palmer
9 April 1940 – 12 June 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The University of Edinburgh is an ancient Scottish university whose legacy has been defined by the cultivation and nourishing of ideas, philosophical debates and medical innovations. It has long been honoured as the birthplace of the Scottish Enlightenment; a period often celebrated for its ideas on human freedom, scientific inquiry, innovation and liberal democracy. The purpose of this report, however, is to shine a light on some of the darker aspects of the University's history, including those that were taking place at the very time that it was developing itself as a centre of Enlightenment thinking. It does this by investigating the University's historical involvement in enslavement and colonialism, before considering what this means for our institution today in terms both of racial legacies and of recommendations for repair.

This report summarises the three main areas of research and engagement that were conducted over a two-year period. The first area reveals some of the University's links to enslavement and colonialism from different historical perspectives. These include: an investigation into the way that the University benefited financially and materially through endowments and capital campaigns; the role played by Edinburgh scholars in creating colonial networks where knowledge was extracted and exchanged; an exploration into the central role played by the University in developing racial theories on human difference, with scholars such as David Hume, Adam Ferguson, Dugald Stewart, James Cowles Prichard and Arthur James Balfour establishing a foundation for race-thinking; and an investigation into the University's colonial connections to the Middle East, notably Palestine, and the long-term repercussions of that history.

The second area then looks at the current situation of race and racism within our institution, seeing this as indicative of the way that colonial legacies continue to adversely affect the experiences and opportunities afforded to racially and ethnically minoritised staff and students. It looks at trends in racial and ethnic diversification from a statistical perspective. It then examines the results of two University-wide surveys that assessed both attitudes towards racism among the student and staff population and also experiences of racism among staff and students who identify as belonging to a racially or ethnically minoritised group.

The third area summarises the findings of our extensive community engagement programme and its focus on reparatory justice. This identifies the interests and concerns of both communities of reparatory justice interest and of others invested in tackling racial injustice.¹ It concludes with recommendations for the University to begin acknowledging and repairing its imperial legacies through the implementation of a Reparatory Justice Programme.

¹ Communities of reparatory justice interest refer to people who, because of their common social group, race, ethnicity, or nationality, have experienced different forms of racial injustice that are linked to the legacies of enslavement, colonialism and the development of racial thought.

The report is divided into six sections:

- 'Part 1: Review of Work in Equivalent Institutions' reviews reports produced by comparable UK institutions, highlighting points of similarity to and differences from our approach at Edinburgh.
- 'Part 2: Historical Links to Enslavement, Colonialism and the Development of Racial Thought' presents the main findings from three historical research strands.
- 'Part 3: Current Institutional Picture from Statistical Perspectives' analyses racial and ethnic data relating to the University's staff and students from 2019 to 2023.
- 'Part 4: Current Situation of Race and Racism' looks at the racial climate of the institution today based on the findings from two University-wide surveys that assess experiences of racism and attitudes towards racism.
- 'Part 5: Community Engagement' provides an overview of the focus and the events that shaped our extensive community engagement programme and underpin our reparatory justice recommendations.
- 'Part 6: Reparatory Justice Recommendations' concludes the report with a summary of our main recommendations, including calls for the creation of a Research and Community Centre for the Study of Racisms, Colonialism and Anti-Black Violence.

The main findings and ideas from the Decolonised Transformations report are as follows:

- Part 2: Historical Links to Enslavement, Colonialism and the Development of Racial Thought:
 - *Research Strand 1: The University of Edinburgh's Ties to Enslavement and Colonialism:* The University of Edinburgh benefitted financially from the profits of African enslavement and colonialism through individual contributions to endowments that have funded bursaries, scholarship, chairs and fellowships, and from two capital campaigns to finance the building of what is now called Old College (1789–94) and the construction of the 'New' Medical School (1873–83). These 'philanthropic gifts' can be traced to the profits of cultivating, producing and selling colonial commodities — tobacco, sugar, cotton, gold, silk, indigo, linen, iron, opium, to name a few — and the financial, legal, military, medical and administrative services that relied on, benefited from or were in some way linked to the ownership and trafficking of enslaved people of African descent, or the colonisation, exploitation and subjugation of peoples across Asia, Oceania, Africa and the Americas.
 - The University of Edinburgh has 15 historic endowments that have direct or indirect links to the enslavement of African peoples and another 12 historic endowments with links to British colonialism in India, Singapore and South Africa. Some of these historic endowments are still 'active' or 'live', with the potential for more to be identified. Profits derived in part from British colonialism and the enslavement of African people therefore continue to benefit the institution financially today.

- The modern-day equivalences for the total amounts of slavery- and empire-linked money received through the endowments and capital campaigns can be estimated in present-day terms as £30 million (relative price worth), £202 million (relative wage or income worth) or over £800 million (relative output worth).
- Financial concerns often overlapped with the institution's social and intellectual interests. Members of the University of Edinburgh invested time and resource in colonial ventures (such as the Company of Scotland) and created strong colonial networks where knowledge was extracted (for example, from enslaved Africans and Indigenous peoples) and exchanged.
- *Research Strand 2: Theories of Race and Civilisation at the University of Edinburgh, c.1750–1850*: The University of Edinburgh was a haven for professors and alumni who developed theories of racial inferiority and white supremacy, such as the idea that Africans were inferior to whites and that non-white peoples could be colonised for the profit of European nations. These ideas provided powerful intellectual justifications for enslavement and colonialism and underpinned the rapid expansion of European empires around the world.
- University of Edinburgh professors and alumni played an outsized role in developing racial pseudo-sciences that created civilisational hierarchies and habitually positioned Black people at the bottom and white people at the top. These ideas also provided the basis for British ethnology. Examples include Adam Ferguson, Dugald Stewart, David Hume, James Cowle Prichard, Robert Knox and Arthur James Balfour who, through research and teaching, proliferated racist ideas against African, Asian, Middle Eastern and other non-European peoples that underpinned enslavement and colonialism.
- *Research Strand 3: The University of Edinburgh and the Question of Palestine — Balfour's Imperial Legacy and its Afterlife*: One of the University's longest serving Chancellors, Arthur James Balfour (1891–1930), played a unique role in establishing and maintaining a century-long process of imperial and settler-colonial rule in Palestine through the 1917 Balfour Declaration. This Declaration led to the partitioning of Palestine and the permanent exile of many Palestinians from their homeland.
- Balfour assumed race to be a social and biological fact and upheld the right of white Europeans to govern and dominate non-Europeans. This racist view directly affected his attitude towards his governance of imperial and domestic affairs.
- The University of Edinburgh continues to be entangled in the historical harms that Balfour instigated through its direct and indirect investments that are supporting the Israeli government's human rights and international law violations against Palestinian people today.
- Part 3: Current Institutional Picture from Statistical Perspectives:
 - While trends show an increase in diversity among University of Edinburgh staff and students, these trends are predominately driven by an increase in Asian staff and students. Black staff and student population numbers have remained relatively unchanged over the past five years.

- The University of Edinburgh tends to hire non-white staff from outside the UK. The overwhelming majority (95%) of hires from within the UK are white. Racial and ethnic minorities from the UK do not benefit from their UK nationality to the same extent as their white counterparts.
- Part 4: Current Situation of Race and Racism:
 - *Questionnaire 1: Understanding the Present Racial Climate of the University of Edinburgh* assessed staff and students' attitudes towards race and racism. It found a significant difference in racial attitudes between participants of different ethnic heritage.
 - Participants who did not disclose their ethnic background displayed a more prejudiced attitude against members from ethnically/racially minoritised backgrounds.
 - Participants who have spent three to four years studying or working within the University reported a significantly higher level of racial prejudice than those who have spent less time within the University.
 - *Questionnaire 2: Understanding People's Experiences of Racial Discrimination* found that participants who self-identify as a racially/ethnically minoritised members of staff or the student body, experienced racism whilst studying or working in the University of Edinburgh.
 - Participants who identified as Black African, Black Caribbean, Chinese, Indian and Mixed (White and Black Caribbean) experienced racism more frequently than their white counterparts.
 - Participants did not tend to seek the support of, or report experiences of racism to, colleagues or members of staff at the University. This implies a lack of, and potentially inadequate, support from institutional members and the need to improve reporting mechanisms and racial literacy among staff and students.
- Part 5: Community Engagement:
 - *Theme 1: Restitution and the Anatomical Museum* called for: clearer information online about the process of repatriation and who to contact; ringfencing money for descendant communities to visit their ancestors and build relations with Anatomical Museum staff; creating funded PhD programmes to support provenance research; creating an accessible and searchable digital catalogue to assist descendant communities with finding their ancestors; and hiring a dedicated provenance researcher to create a searchable database and be the lead on Anatomical/School of Medicine archives and provenance research to support repatriation claims.
 - *Theme 2: Creating a Research and Community Centre for the Study of Racisms, Colonialism and Anti-Black Violence* called for the inclusion of a physical community space within a dedicated new research centre to be used and managed by racially/ethnically minoritised communities both within and outside the University. Such a space would aim to improve access to University resources and researchers, and integrate community-driven research and initiatives.
 - *Theme 3: Digital Archiving* called for the creation of a publicly accessible, grassroots-driven digital archive to document the 40-year history of reparations

movements in the UK and their contribution to the 'International Social Movement for Afrikan Reparations'. It also called for improving access to institutional records to help communities, researchers and students engage with the long history of the University's links to enslavement, colonialism and the development of racial thought.

- *Theme 4: Curriculum Transformation and Decolonisation* linked to the work being led by Dr Omolabake Fakunle that is looking into the decolonisation aspects of the Curriculum Transformation Programme. It called for more exploration into the ways that pedagogies from the Global South can be incorporated into the current provision and address the lack of recognition of knowledge produced outside of Western contexts.
- Part 6: Reparatory Justice Recommendations hinges on the establishment of a Research and Community Centre for the Study of Racisms, Colonialism and Anti-Black Violence. This would provide a dedicated infrastructure in which to house and implement the REWG's recommendations, while furthering research and community engagement into the history and legacies of racial violence. Unlike equivalent centres at peer institutions, this Centre would be unique in bringing together a transdisciplinary collection of scholars from all three Colleges, while including the work of activists, practitioners, artists and other community groups.

Its aims are:

1. To create a central point for cultural transformation by mainstreaming issues relating to racial discrimination and decolonisation in recognition of the different kinds of racisms experienced by different ethnic/racial groups.
2. To support a public acknowledgement and apology for the University of Edinburgh's historical links to slavery, colonialism and their legacies today.
3. To improve the institutional climate for ethnically/racially minoritised staff and students and address under-representation by improving institutional practices and policies around hiring, retention and racial literacy.
4. To make the study of colonialism, enslavement and their racial legacies, as well as anti-colonial resistance, decolonisation and reparations, central to the educative mission of the University of Edinburgh. This includes supporting the establishment of a dedicated Palestine Studies Centre.
5. To support existing and further research (both academic- and community-led) into the histories and legacies of enslavement, colonialism and the development of racial thought across all three Colleges.
6. To create a bridge between researchers, practitioners, communities and activists by encouraging collaborative and reparative efforts to address racial legacies and enhance the institution's connection with local communities
7. To provide an academic unit responsible for converting research about racism into proactive strategies aimed at improving the life chances of racially and ethnically minoritised peoples and able to influence opinion and policy making in the UK and abroad.
8. To establish a platform for garnering research grants, entrepreneurial opportunities and philanthropic (donor-based) support.

9. To improve access to institutional archives, work on decolonising the archives and repatriation efforts, and secure resource for new archives to improve the visibility of anti-racist and reparations work.

INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

The work of the Research and Engagement Working Group (REWG) and its [Decolonised Transformations](#) project comes out of the University of Edinburgh's Race Equality and Anti-Racism (REAR) Subcommittee that sits within the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC). The REWG responds to Section 10 on 'Reparation and Reparatory Justice' and Section 11 on 'Interrogating Histories' from REAR's original ([2020](#)) and updated ([2023](#)) Action Plan. In 2021, the University's Principal, Professor Sir Peter Mathieson, announced that the University of Edinburgh was committed to a bold decolonisation and reparatory justice programme of action dedicated to looking at 'Issues of race, contemporary racism, Eurocentric and Afriphobic [and anti-Black] aspects of our curriculum and features of the University's history'.² Sir Geoff Palmer was appointed to chair the Steering Group, which has acted as an advisory committee, while Professor Tommy J. Curry and Dr Nicola Frith were appointed to co-chair the Research and Engagement Working Group (REWG). The REWG was tasked with defining and leading areas of inquiry, writing an independent, coherent, evidence-based report on the subject of 'Decolonised Transformations: Confronting the University of Edinburgh's Legacies of Enslavement and Colonialism' and identifying reparatory recommendations to be submitted to the University Executive.³ In addition to contributing to public awareness and knowledge about the role played by the University of Edinburgh in the history and legacies of colonialism and slavery, this report and its findings will also help to inform the University's understanding of the views and opinions of both internal and external communities, which may be distinct from the University itself (as a legal entity).⁴ This work sits alongside that being conducted by the Policy Group that has reviewed and developed policy recommendations regarding how key figures on campus are recognised by the University.

The REWG's investigation has seven aims:

1. To reveal the University of Edinburgh's role in the historical harms committed against Black, African, African-descended, Caribbean, Asian, Middle Eastern, Indigenous peoples and others linked to the histories of African enslavement, colonialism and the development of racial thought.

² Peter Mathieson, 'Statement from the Principal', 20 January 2021, <https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/2021/addressing-contemporary-and-historic-racism/statement-from-principal>.

³ Mathieson, 'Statement'.

⁴ This Report forms part of the University's work to address contemporary and historic racism. It seeks to help the University to recognise historical culpability and inform ongoing discussions about racism, imperialism and colonialism in light of the University's historical role. Its academic research examines the University's approach, both past and present, in order to advise the University Executive on suitable reparatory recommendations and set our standards for the future. The REWG's investigation aims include inviting and exploring the views of the University of Edinburgh's community as a whole, as well as external individuals and communities. Some of these views and opinions on factual matters and questions of alleged wrongdoing may differ from those of the University itself as a legal entity. These have been captured in detail by research contributors, particularly in the linked appendices to the Report, which were collated and authored by a range of academic researchers.

2. To understand how historical harms and racial thinking continue to exist in the structure and culture of the institution today.
3. To recognise the presence and contributions of Black, African, African-descended, Caribbean, Asian, Middle Eastern, Indigenous peoples and others to the University of Edinburgh's historical and contemporary intellectual life and development.
4. To ensure that communities of reparatory justice interest, both within and outside of the University, can engage fully in the work and help shape the research and engagement agenda, priorities and recommendations.
5. To engage with wider communities to understand broader perceptions of the University's links to the development and dissemination of racial pseudo-sciences, colonialism and enslavement, and develop and explore reparatory justice solutions/actions. This includes inviting and exploring the views of the University of Edinburgh's community as a whole.
6. To acknowledge any existing work and initiatives within the University in relation to decoloniality, reparation, equality and diversity.
7. To provide a decolonial and reparatory vision for institutional and cultural change that seeks to restore dignity to Black, African, African-descended, Caribbean, Asian, Middle Eastern, Indigenous peoples and others; including clear recommendations for ensuring future accountability and progression towards the goals of reparatory justice, decoloniality and diversification. Importantly, this will contribute to the work of the Race, Equality and Anti-Racist Subcommittee (REAR), notably Section 10 on 'Reparation and Reparatory Justice' and Section 11 on 'Interrogating Histories' from REAR's original ([2020](#)) and updated ([2023](#)) Action Plan.⁵

The REWG

To achieve these aims, the REWG has worked with a wide range of participants, including academics, students, researchers, reparations activists, community consultants and other relevant professionals, and in direct partnership with affected communities within and beyond the University. In addition to the Co-Chairs, the REWG's membership included the following people and roles:⁶

- Research fellows:
 - [Simon Buck](#) (The University of Edinburgh's financial links to enslavement and colonial networks).
 - [Ian Stewart](#) (The University of Edinburgh's links to the development of racial thought during the Enlightenment).

⁵ REAR, 'UoE Race Equality and Anti-Racist Action Plan for 2020/21', https://edwebcontent.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/atoms/files/uoe_race_equality_and_anti-racist_action_plan.pdf; REAR, 'REAR Action Plan 2023', <https://equality-diversity.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/REAR%20Action%20Plan%202023.pdf>.

⁶ More information on our membership can be found on our [blogsite](#): REWG, 'The Team' <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/decolonise/category/the-team/>.

- [Yarong Xie](#) (Current attitudes towards, and experiences of, racism at University of Edinburgh).
- University of Edinburgh researchers:
 - [Shaira Vadasaria](#) and [Nicola Perugini](#) (The University of Edinburgh's links to Palestine)
- Research assistants:
 - [Obasanjo Bolarinwa](#) (The University of Edinburgh's data on racially/ethnically minoritised students and staff).
 - Hajar Ibrahim, Henry Dee and Tom Cunningham (The University of Edinburgh's links to Palestine)
- Academic mentors:
 - [Diana Paton](#) (William Robertson Professor of History, The University of Edinburgh).
 - [Daryl Green](#) (Head of Heritage Collections and Co-Director of the Centre for Research Collections, The University of Edinburgh).
 - [Nasar Meer](#) (Professor of Social and Political Science at the University of Glasgow, Honorary Professor at University of Edinburgh and former Director of [RaceED](#), The University of Edinburgh).
- Community Engagement Officer:
 - [Samantha Likonde](#) (lead for the community engagement programme to identify reparatory justice recommendations and future actions).
- Community and reparations activists and project consultants:
 - [Zaki El-Salahi](#) (Edinburgh Sudanese Community Partnership).
 - [Esther Stanford-Xosei](#) (co-founder of Pan-Afrikan Reparations Coalition in Europe, [PARCOE](#), and the International Network of Scholars and Activists for Afrikan Reparations, [INOSAAR](#)).
 - Jatin Haria (Executive Director, [Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights](#), CRER) – stepped down in 2022 due to retirement.
 - Silence Chihuri (Fair Justice System for Scotland, [FJSS](#)).
- EUSA's former and current [Black and Minority Liberation Officers](#), Vansh Bali and Maryam Yusuf.
- Community Anchors including:
 - Researchers from the University of Edinburgh: [Omolabake Fakunle](#) (Chancellor's Fellow, Moray House School of Education and Sport and Lead for EDI Decolonisation within the [Curriculum Transformation Project](#)); [Roger Jeffery](#) (Honorary Professorial Fellow, School of Social and Political Science); and [Nini Kerr](#) (Senior Lecturer and Psychoanalytic Practitioner, School of Health in Social Science).
 - Students voices: Ebo Anyebe (Co-President of the [African Caribbean Medical Society Edinburgh](#)) and Abigail Ocansey (Founder of the [The Diaspora Project](#)).
 - Community voices: Kobina Amokwandoh ([INOSAAR-RepAfrika](#), Pan-Afrikan Reparations Internationalist Standing Conference, [PARISC](#), and Planet Repairs

Action Learning Educational Revolution, [PRALER](#)) and Trishna Singh (Founder and Director of [Sikh Sanjog](#)).

Summary of the Report

The completion of this report coincides with the end of the UN International Decade for People of Africa Descent (2015–2024); a decade that was built on the three pillars of recognition, justice and development.⁷ These three pillars provide clear guidance on how states and institutions should be addressing their histories and legacies of colonialism and enslavement. They are relevant not just for people of African descent, but for all those who have been racialised and suffered from racism as a result of these histories. The guidance includes: calls for research and educational institutions to do far more to recognise and respect African cultures, histories and heritages; calls to improve the assessment and monitoring of racism; and calls to acknowledge and express profound regret for ‘the untold suffering and evils inflicted on millions of men, women and children’ as a result of enslavement, transoceanic trafficking, colonialism, apartheid and genocide, to honour the memory of those who were ‘victims of these tragedies’ and to take ‘appropriate and effective measures to halt and reverse the lasting consequences’ of practices that continue to cause harm.⁸ In line with these principles, this report summarises some of the key findings that have emerged from two years of intense research and engagement work.

With more than 400 years of colonial history to interrogate since the establishment of the University in 1583, this report does not claim to be exhaustive. Rather, it identifies some of the ways that the University of Edinburgh and its staff and students were implicated in the practices and systems of enslavement and colonialism and the apartheid and genocide of colonised peoples across the world in Australasia, Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Americas. It also considers some of the consequences of these histories today in terms of statistical under-representation and the persistence of institutional and structural racism. At the same time, it points towards areas for future investigation to throw more light on this long and complex history, while outlining a clear path to decolonial transformation and reparatory justice grounded in our [Principles of Participation](#).

This report is divided into six sections. It includes linked appendices where readers can access more detailed reports and information on the areas covered.

- ‘Part 1: Review of Work in Equivalent Institutions’ begins with a literature review that looks at how the history and legacies of enslavement and colonialism have been investigated at comparable UK institutions. It highlights points of similarity and difference to our approach at Edinburgh.
- ‘Part 2: Historical Links to Enslavement, Colonialism and the Development of Racial Thought’ presents the main findings from three areas of historical research. These include: the University’s links to enslavement, including its financial ties; the

⁷ United Nations, ‘International Decade for People of African Descent (2015–2024)’, <https://www.un.org/en/observances/decade-people-african-descent>.

⁸ United Nations, ‘International Decade’.

development of racial pseudo-sciences notably during the Enlightenment; and the University's imperial and colonial connections to the Middle East, notably Palestine.

- 'Part 3: Current Institutional Picture from Statistical Perspectives' analyses racial and ethnic data relating to University staff and students from 2019 to 2023.
- 'Part 4: Current Situation of Race and Racism' joins the dots between the past and the present by looking at the racial climate today. It presents the findings from two University-wide surveys to assess experiences of racism and attitudes towards racism.
- 'Part 5: Community Engagement' provides an overview of our extensive engagement programme with reparations activists and experts, communities of reparatory justice interest and other interested parties. These include academics with expertise in the history and racial legacies of enslavement and colonialism, and other professionals working with decolonising and reparatory practices both within and outside of the University of Edinburgh.
- 'Part 6: Reparatory Justice Recommendations' concludes this report with a summary of the main recommendations emerging from our research and public engagement. This includes a Research and Community Centre for the Study of Racisms, Colonialism and Anti-Black Violence that will act as a focal point for addressing the University's racial legacies and inspiring future decolonising and reparatory justice action.

A Word on Language

The nature of this report means that it necessarily includes troubling material. For example, some of the sources analysed in the historical section (Part 2) refer to racist and genocidal language and ideas, or acts of violence and other modes of domination. While the inclusion of these details is common in historical studies, decisions about whether to include direct quotations with offensive or disturbing content has not been taken lightly. Numerous scholars have underlined how research that draws on the archives of slavery, race-making and colonial domination is irrevocably fraught with ethical as well as methodological concerns.⁹ Economic studies of slavery and colonialism, in particular, can be perceived as lacking compassion for human suffering and thereby marginalising histories of trauma. Such research runs the risk of unintentionally reinforcing the same racial logics that legitimised the dehumanisation of people by transforming them into property as measurable units of labour. While unsettling, it is nonetheless important to investigate exactly what the University's professors, alumni, chancellors, principals, benefactors and their associates and representatives said and did. This represents a reliable route to understanding the institution's links to enslavement, colonialism and the development of racial thought. Importantly, the inclusion of such detail helps us to situate historical subjects within their

⁹ See, for example, Katharine Gerbner, 'Archival Violence, Archival Capital: Ethics, Inheritance, and Reparations in the Thistlewood Diaries', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 79 (2022), 595–624; Stephanie E. Smallwood, 'The Politics of the Archive and History's Accountability to the Enslaved', *History of the Present*, 6 (2016), 117–32; Temi Odumosu, 'The Crying Child: On Colonial Archives, Digitization, and Ethics of Care in the Cultural Commons', *Current Anthropology*, 61 (2020), S289–S302.

proper context, particularly the racial and imperial ideologies of the times and societies in which they lived and worked. The approach taken here has therefore been to look at sources on a case-by-case basis and assess the relative value which their reproduction might have towards the overall analysis.

Truth-telling, though vital to the task of explaining both our past and present, is never without its complications; not least for those who continue to live with the ongoing legacies of enslavement and colonialism in the present. But the purpose of the Decolonised Transformations Project has been to generate the evidence needed to identify a clear path for the University of Edinburgh to begin acknowledging, addressing and repairing its imperial legacies. Throughout this process, we have recognised that any meaningful decolonial and reparatory approach leading to recommendations and then action is predicated on a full and proper engagement with communities of reparatory justice interest in dialogue with the wider University community. Ultimately, this review aims to provide a pathway for cultural change within our institution; one that is premised on accountability and progression towards the goals of reparatory justice, decoloniality and diversification.

PART 1: REVIEW OF WORK IN EQUIVALENT INSTITUTIONS

The move to bring about deep institutional reflection and change within the higher education sector has been propelled by many years of campaigning by grassroots communities of reparatory justice interest, students-led organisations, scholar-activists and willing academics. Within the University of Edinburgh, examples include the student-led BlackEd Movement, networks such as the International Network of Scholars and Activists for Afrikan Reparations (INOSAAR) which held the first conference on reparations for African enslavement at University of Edinburgh in 2015, and staff groups such as the Edinburgh Race Equality Network (EREN) and RaceEd.¹⁰ Coalitions such as these are part of a broader movement to push UK higher education institutions (HEIs) towards paying closer attention to their historical involvement in enslavement and colonialism. This has led many to ask about the kinds of actions needed to address the longstanding effects of these histories on racially/ethnically minoritised communities today. As outlined in the literature review below, there are many possible approaches that have been taken by HEIs and other public institutions. These have both informed our work and allowed the REWG to develop its own unique way of working, with a strong emphasis on connecting the research to community engagement and centring the needs of communities of reparatory justice interest to find a pathway towards institutional transformation.

Work at Comparable Institutions

Over the past few years, UK higher education institutions (HEIs) have begun the long overdue task of investigating their links to enslavement and colonialism. Whereas chattel enslavement has been acknowledged by many HEIs as having left a permanent stain on American society, equivalent institutions in Britain have been slower to recognise these same atrocities. In 2003, Brown University followed a mandate from its then president to ‘investigate and issue a public report on the University’s historical relationship to slavery and the transatlantic slave trade’.¹¹ Following the initiative set by Brown, other US universities and colleges began investigating their ties to slavery, including William and Mary (2009), Georgetown (2016) and more recently Harvard (2022). In addition to investigating slavery-linked donations, these reports focus on the exploitation of enslaved Black labourers who physically built the campuses and were used to fund the salaries of staff members.¹²

¹⁰ In June 2020, the student-led BlackEd Movement lobbied Principal Mathieson to address issues relating to University of Edinburgh’s racially/ethnically minoritised students and staff by ‘Making a Statement; Promoting and Establishing Anti-Racist Culture within the University; Developing a Comprehensive Zero-Tolerance Policy; and Creating and Supporting Representation Initiatives’. Parts of this letter are quoted in Elizabeth Lund, ‘Petition to Rename David Hume Tower at UoE’, 29 June 2020, <https://www.change.org/p/university-of-edinburgh-rename-david-hume-tower-at-uo-e>.

¹¹ University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice, *Slavery and Justice: Report of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice*, Brown University (2006), p. 3.

¹² See Craig Wilder, *Ebony and Ivy: Race, Slavery, and the Troubled History of America’s Universities* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2013).

To pull these initiatives together, in 2016, the University of Virginia created the Universities Studying Slavery (USS) consortium, which is dedicated to sharing ‘best practices and guiding principles in truth-telling educational projects focused on human bondage and the legacies of racism in their histories’.¹³ Today, this consortium comprises ‘more than 100 institutions of higher learning in the United States, Canada, Colombia, Scotland, Ireland, and England’.¹⁴ Of its members, the University of Glasgow was the first UK university to begin investigating its historical links to slavery, releasing its report in 2018.¹⁵ This followed in the wake of growing institutional interest in the history of slavery in the UK, such as work at the University of Liverpool (from 2006 onwards) and University College London (from 2012 onwards).¹⁶ Glasgow was followed by the University of Oxford, which created its working group on colonialism in 2016 to explore ‘the University’s historic ties with Great Britain’s colonial past and the ways in which the University’s colonial legacies reflect on the present, and our vision of the University’s future’.¹⁷ By 2020, nine UK HEIs had joined the USS consortium, including Liverpool John Moores, Bristol, Cambridge, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester, Warwick, Nottingham and Edinburgh. This rise in interest has been mirrored in other sectors, with museums, galleries, heritage properties, churches, health trusts, banks and local councils/authorities throughout the UK undertaking projects to understand their relationship to slavery and racism today.¹⁸ The murder of George Floyd and the growing awareness of racial inequality across higher education and all sectors of Western democratic society has similarly added impetus to the importance of conducting this work, with multiple Russell Group universities commissioning inquiries and/or published results.¹⁹

Many of these inquiries focus on the enrichment and financial benefits that institutions gained from the trans-oceanic trafficking and enslavement of African peoples. In

¹³ University of Virginia, ‘President’s Commission on Slavery and the University’, <https://slavery.virginia.edu/universities-studying-slavery/>.

¹⁴ University of Virginia, ‘President’s Commission’.

¹⁵ University of Glasgow, ‘University of Glasgow Publishes Report Into Historical Slavery’, 16 September 2018, https://www.gla.ac.uk/news/archiveofnews/2018/september/headline_607154_en.html.

¹⁶ University of Liverpool, ‘Centre for the Study of International Slavery’, <https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/csis/about-us/>; University of London, ‘Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery’, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/>.

¹⁷ Kalyso Nicolaidis and Laura van Broekhoven, *The Working Group on Oxford University and Colonialism*, University of Oxford (2017), p. 5. See also King’s College Cambridge, ‘King’s College Research into Slavery, Past, and Present’, 28 May 2019, <https://www.kings.cam.ac.uk/news/2019/kings-college-research-slavery-past-and-present>.

¹⁸ To take a few examples, see the National Trust, the Guardian newspaper, the Fitzwilliam Museum, National Museums Scotland, churches of England and Scotland and Edinburgh City Council.

¹⁹ Michael D. Bennett and R. J. Knight, ‘Report on Sheffield, Slavery and its Legacies’, University of Sheffield, 2021, <https://sheffieldandslavery.wordpress.com/report/>; University of Nottingham, ‘Nottingham’s Universities and Historical Slavery’, November 2024, <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/edi/documents/nottinghams-universities-and-historical-slavery-report.pdf>; University of Durham, ‘Exploring the University’s Past to Inform our Present’, <https://www.durham.ac.uk/about-us/professional-services/equality-diversity-inclusion/strategy/race-equality/library-and-collections/>; Nilay Shah, ‘Community Report from the History Group’, Imperial College London, November 2021, <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/equality/activities/history-group/>; Olivette Otele and Richard Stone, ‘The University of Bristol: Our History and the Legacies of Slavery’ (2022), <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/university/documents/university-of-bristol-legacies-of-slavery-report.pdf>.

Scotland, for example, the Universities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Strathclyde and St Andrews have revealed how their institutions have been involved with, or financially benefitted from, African enslavement.²⁰ In some cases, reports have been accompanied by parallel investigations into the current state of institutional racism and recommendations to remedy the situation through consultation with staff and students and efforts to decolonise the curriculum. The University of Manchester, for example, published its 'Race Matters' report and launched a module investigating the legacies of slavery.²¹ This formed part of an effort to generate greater awareness of institutional racism in the discipline of history and address the absence of colonialism and decoloniality throughout its curriculum. The University of Strathclyde's report also includes multiple initiatives to improve the racial climate and has led to the appointment of the University's first Senior Race Equality Officer.²²

What these reports demonstrate is a widespread awareness that universities have long benefitted financially from enslavement and colonialism and that institutions need to do much more to address historical and contemporary biases, especially given their global role in educating successive generations that will shape future societies. Primarily they point to three main issues:

1. Connections of former students, alumni, professors and officers/administrators to slavery;
2. Financial contributions in the form of endowments, donations, estates or capital campaigns linked to slavery;
3. And the presence of Black, Asian or other racially/ethnically minoritised students or staff that have been ignored throughout the history of the respective university.

If these represent commonalities in the reports on the history of slavery in the UK, they also differ according to the character of the institution. The University of Glasgow, for example, has historically been praised for being home to leading abolitionist thinkers during the 18th and 19th centuries. In response, their 'Slavery, Abolition and the University of

²⁰ University of Aberdeen, 'The University of Aberdeen and the Legacies of Slavery' (2023), <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/about/strategy-and-governance/legacies-of-slavery/>; Cassandra Goopla, 'University of Dundee Founders Project: Final Report', University of Dundee, October 2022, <https://www.dundee.ac.uk/corporate-information/founders-project-final-report>; University of Strathclyde, 'University of Strathclyde and Historical Links to Slavery', October 2023, <https://www.strath.ac.uk/media/1newwebsite/documents/Historical Links to Slavery Report-FINAL.pdf>; Aileen Fyfe, 'Chancellors and the Legacies of Empire at St Andrews, 1700–1900', University of St. Andrews, March 2023, <https://research-portal.st-andrews.ac.uk/en/publications/chancellors-and-the-legacies-of-empire-at-st-andrews-1700-1900>.

²¹ Nalin Thakkar, 'Race Matters at Manchester: Supporting the Representation and Inclusion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Staff and Students', University of Manchester, October 2020, <https://documents.manchester.ac.uk/display.aspx?DocID=51691>; Mary Chioti, 'Exploring the Legacies of Slavery and Colonialism at The University of Manchester', 18 August 2021, <https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/salc-making-a-difference/2021/08/18/exploring-the-legacies-of-slavery-and-colonialism-at-the-university-of-manchester/>.

²² University of Strathclyde, 'Report Sheds Light on Historical Links to Transatlantic Slavery of University of Strathclyde's Forerunners', 9 October 2023, <https://www.strath.ac.uk/whystrathclyde/news/2023/reportshedslightonhistoricallylinkstotransatlanticslavery/#:~:text=The%20University%20of%20Strathclyde%20has,from%20money%20derived%20from%20slavery>.

Glasgow’ report shows how bursaries and financial contributions from pro-slavery associations ran contrary to the much-celebrated abolitionism of the institution.²³ The University of Oxford has followed a more college-based approach, with individual colleges conducting their own research. The ‘Exeter College and Legacies of Slavery’ report, for example, focuses on financial enrichment and pro-slavery alumni, and documents 41 persons (undergraduates or fellows) who owned enslaved people or held some substantial relationship to slavery throughout its history.²⁴ But despite these nuances, all of the reports conclude that their respective university was tied to the transoceanic trafficking and enslavement of African peoples and benefited from the system and economy of enslavement in significant ways.

The University of Edinburgh’s Approach and Focus

The Decolonised Transformation Project at the University of Edinburgh echoes some of the focus and methodologies of these other reports but also diverges from them in three ways. First, the scope of the Decolonised Transformation Project is wider than many of the reports listed above. Like other universities, there is plenty archival evidence attesting to financial contributions, capital campaigns and donations linked to enslavement. However, this report and its underlying research also recognises that the University of Edinburgh was the centre of the Scottish Enlightenment and played a significant role in the development of racial theory and ethnological sciences.²⁵ In addition to tracing the financial gains and associations of staff and alumni involved in the enslavement of African peoples, we have therefore sought to look into University of Edinburgh’s historical links to colonialism and development of racial thought, as well as its present-day investments, notably in terms of the human rights and international law violations in Gaza.²⁶

²³ Stephen Mullen and Simon Newman, *Slavery, Abolition, and the University of Glasgow*, University of Glasgow (2018), https://www.gla.ac.uk/media/Media_607547_smx.pdf.

²⁴ Exeter College Oxford, *Exeter College and Legacies of Slavery* (2023), <https://www.exeter.ox.ac.uk/documents/Exeter-College-and-the-Legacies-of-Slavery-Report.pdf>. See also the Balliol College report: Sebastian Raj Pender, *Balliol and the Proceeds of Slavery Project Report* (2021), https://www.balliol.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/balliol_and_the_proceeds_of_slavery_-_project_report.pdf.

²⁵ This is mentioned in passing in other reports. For example, in section 4.2.6 of the Cambridge report, labelled the ‘Role in intellectual underpinning of racism’, the authors write: ‘Throughout the period under discussion individuals at Cambridge were writing about race, and presenting ideas that were used to justify the enslavement and colonisation of other people. Our research has not focused on this in depth, but it is potentially very significant and deserves further research’; Advisory Group, ‘Legacies of Enslavement: Final Report’, University of Cambridge (2022), <https://www.cam.ac.uk/about-the-university/advisory-group-on-legacies-of-enslavement-final-report>. Harvard University also has a chapter on ‘Legacies of Slavery in Scholarship: Race Science’, in *Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery* (2022), <https://legacyofslavery.harvard.edu/report/legacies-of-slavery-in-scholarship-race-science>.

²⁶ There are some examples of other UK institutions that have looked more into colonialism, including: Lioba Hirsch, ‘LSHTM and Colonialism: A Report on the Colonial History of the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (1899–c.1960)’, London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (2022), <https://researchonline.lshtm.ac.uk/id/eprint/4666958/>. See also Historic Environment Scotland, ‘Surveying and Analysing Connections between Properties in Care and the British Empire, c.1600–1997’, 19 February 2024, <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=e192ea9f-0d7e-4745-b499-b0fb010a167a>.

A second point of difference is that the University of Edinburgh report includes the consideration of racial and ethnic disaggregated data, seeing these as part of its methodology and explanatory force. Previous research at the University of Edinburgh has called for a more nuanced picture of racism by analysing the histories and experiences of different racial and ethnic groups. For example, the University of Edinburgh Race Equality and Anti-Racist Plan for 2020/21 notes the problematic use of the terms Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) and People of Colour (PoC) precisely because ‘not all ethnic minorities have similar lived experiences and these experiences cannot be fully captured by such umbrella terms’.²⁷ Instead, they called for the need to identify ‘areas of common experience’ while also addressing ‘the specificities of each’, including ‘the concept and practice of anti-Blackness which is when racism and racial prejudice are specifically directed towards Black people’.²⁸

The REWG’s work builds on the Thematic Review of Black and Minority Ethnic Students commissioned by the University of Edinburgh in 2018. Authored by Professor Rowena Arshad, this review sought to investigate and document the experiences of Black and other ethnic minority students at the University of Edinburgh. It found that the negative experiences of Black, Asian and other ethnic minority students within the University were due to the lack of racial literacy among white staff and students alike. It defined racial literacy as ‘having the understanding and practice to recognise, respond and counter forms of everyday racism or racial micro-aggressions at all levels, personal, cultural and institutional’.²⁹ The lack of racial literacy was found to have created an environment where racial and ethnic minorities experience social isolation and a negative racial climate. It noted issues facing racially/ethnically minoritised students who experience negative comments about their heritage alongside denial that their experiences of racism constitute a problem.³⁰ The REWG’s report seeks to deepen this analysis by looking at both staff and students across multiple racial/ethnic populations. These findings, however, are nonetheless only the beginning of this process. Further research is needed to explore how anti-Blackness, Islamophobia and other forms of racism and xenophobia operate throughout institutional culture.

Finally, the University of Edinburgh’s report differs in the sense that its recommendations are the result of an extensive community engagement programme centred on the need for reparatory justice as both an ongoing process and a goal. The REWG has been shaped by the involvement of ethnically/racially minoritised communities from within the institution, as well as individuals and groups from local, national, UK and international communities. The term ‘reparatory justice’ is used here to underscore the fact that slavery was and remains a recognised crime against humanity, while colonialism has involved multiple human abuses, including genocide and epistemicide (or the killing of

²⁷ REAR, ‘Action Plan for 2020/21’.

²⁸ REAR, ‘Action Plan for 2020/21’.

²⁹ Rowena Arshad, ‘Thematic Review 2018–19: Black and Minority Ethnic Students. Final Report’, University of Edinburgh (2019), <https://edwebcontent.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/atoms/files/thematicreview2018-19-bme-students-finalreport.pdf>, p. 1.

³⁰ Arshad, ‘Thematic Review’, pp. 8–10.

Indigenous knowledges), that demand recognition, atonement and reparation.³¹ While reparations are often envisaged through a financial lens as monetary compensation (which is often negatively portrayed by the media and political elites), our understanding relies on the UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation (2005).³² These Principles represent an aspirational process that includes: 1. *restitution*, or restoring, as far as possible, people to the original situation before their rights were violated; 2. *compensation* for any economically assessable damage that has negatively impacted a person's physical, psychological or material circumstances; 3. *rehabilitation* to return people and societies to full health and functioning; and 4. *satisfaction* and *guarantees of non-repetition*, including stopping the harm, truth telling processes, official apologies, commemorations and educational programmes.³³ To understand what this means in practice, where the University of Edinburgh and its legacies are concerned, our work has actively sought to include and empower communities of reparatory justice interest by including them in decision-making processes and ensuring that that these voices are central to our processes and outcomes.

³¹ Budd L. Hall and Rajesh Tandon, 'Decolonization of Knowledge, Epistemicide, Participatory Research and Higher Education', *Research for All*, 1 (2017), 6–19.

³² United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), 'Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law', 15 December 2005, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/basic-principles-and-guidelines-right-remedy-and-reparation>.

³³ OHCHR, 'Basic Principles'.

PART 2: HISTORICAL LINKS TO ENSLAVEMENT, COLONIALISM AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF RACIAL THOUGHT

The following section summarises the findings of the historical research into the links between the University of Edinburgh and the interconnected histories of enslavement, colonialism and the development of racial pseudo-sciences, as well as the imperial and colonial links between the University of Edinburgh and the Middle East, notably Palestine. It shows: the ways that the University benefitted financially from the profits of African enslavement; the use and abuse of enslaved Africans to generate, extract and circulate knowledge, notably for the benefit of Western medicine; the central role played by scholars at the University of Edinburgh in developing and disseminating deeply problematic concepts about 'race', particularly during the Scottish Enlightenment; and the role played by one of Edinburgh's former Chancellors, Arthur James Balfour, in instituting a new settler-colonial order in the Middle East through the promulgation of the 1917 Balfour Declaration.³⁴ While a substantial amount of history has been looked at during this two-year project, it has not been possible to uncover every possible link between the University of Edinburgh, enslavement and colonialism; a period that covers more than 400 years of history. What is clear is that the University of Edinburgh had extensive connections to colonial and enslaving activities across all areas of the colonised world, including Africa, Asia, the Americas and Australasia. Not only did the University of Edinburgh benefit materially from the profits derived from enslavement and colonialism, but it also came to play an outsized role in the production of racialised forms of knowledge that continue to adversely affect ethnically and/or racially marginalised communities today.

Research Strand 1: The University of Edinburgh's Ties to Enslavement and Colonialism

Introduction

The first research strand focused on the University of Edinburgh's financial links to enslavement and colonialism through endowments and capital campaigns, the full results of which can be read in a separate report entitled *Slavery, Colonialism and Philanthropy at the University of Edinburgh* (2024) (Appendix 1). Additional research was conducted on other topics relating to the University of Edinburgh's connections to enslavement and empire, including student debates on slavery and abolition, Edinburgh's links to the Darien scheme and a closer look at the links between some of the University's professors and colonial medical networks. These smaller projects are in the process of being transformed into

³⁴ The work for research strand 1 was conducted by research fellow, Simon Buck. The work for research strand 2 was conducted by research fellow, Ian Stewart. The work for research strand 3 was conducted by two University of Edinburgh academics, Shaira Vadasaria and Nicola Perugini.

academic publications.³⁵ The research into the Darien Scheme has been used to support an online exhibition called '[Dreams of Darien](#)'. The intention is that the findings will be used to support other publicly accessible exhibitions and educational materials that will not only inform students, staff and the public about the University of Edinburgh's historical links, but will also encourage further academic and community research into this long and complex history.

All outputs are based on archival and desk-based research using a variety of literatures and primary sources, including, but not limited to, the University of Edinburgh's own institutional records, professors' correspondence, student society records and medical publications. Beyond an extensive use of the University's own archival collections, in-person research has been conducted at National Records of Scotland, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh City Archives, Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh Archives, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh Archives, University of Glasgow Special Collections, National Archives (Kew), the British Library and University of Bristol Archives and Special Collections.

Key Research Findings

Research Finding 1: Slavery, Colonialism and Philanthropy at the University of Edinburgh

The research findings are divided into two areas: 'Endowments: Bursaries, Scholarship, Chairs and Fellowships'; and 'Capital Campaigns: Old College (1789–94) and the Old Medical School (1873–83)'. For the first area, an investigation was conducted into benefactors to identify whether they held links to slavery, or whether their wealth can be said to have derived in some direct or meaningful way from British colonial rule or imperialism. For the second area, published and private papers were used to compile lists of endowers and 'subscribers' (donors) to two capital campaigns, one to finance the building of what is now called Old College and another to finance the construction of the Old Medical School.³⁶

In presenting these findings, it is important to note some of the methodological issues involved in identifying benefactors with links to slavery and colonialism, and in estimating the present-day values of historical sums of money. The results of this research are intended to be indicative rather than conclusive. As other projects have shown, identifying funds which a university or college received from individuals whose wealth was entangled to some degree from the enslavement of African-descended people — let alone to British or European colonialism more generally — is a mammoth task. The accessibility

³⁵ Many of these sections have been or are being transformed into chapters and journal articles. A chapter on the Darien scheme (research finding 2) has been accepted for publication and will be coming out in the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities' second volume on decoloniality. Two journal articles have been submitted and are under review: one on botany (research finding 3) with the *Archives of Natural History*; another on medical philanthropy (research finding 4) with *Social History of Medicine* (journal).

³⁶ Several sources have been used to compile the list of endowers, including *List of Deeds of Foundation of Bursaries, Scholarships, Fellowships, etc., in the University of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Neil and Company, 1891). For the Old College capital campaign, lists of subscribers were published in the *Caledonian Mercury*. Surviving 'contribution lists' exist for the Old Medical School capital campaign within the University of Edinburgh's archive: University Buildings Extension Contribution List, 1873–1881, and University Buildings Extension Contribution List, 1883–1887, EUA IN1/COM/B2/4/1-2, Records of the University Buildings Extension Scheme, University of Edinburgh Library Archives (hereafter EUL).

and reliability of extant sources necessitates interpretation, contextualisation and, at times, informed speculation and revision in the face of new sources. Given what recent historiography tells us about the embeddedness of empire, slavery and the profits accrued in 17th-, 18th- and 19th-Century Scottish and British society, the search for a total ‘sum’ of any British institution’s receipt of slavery-linked wealth is an elusive and arguably impossible goal. The archival and conceptual difficulties in identifying and quantifying the impact of slavery-associated and colonially-derived wealth back in Britain should not, however, automatically prohibit an attempt to study some of the more *identifiable* ways in which British colonialism and systems of enslavement generated discrete sums of wealth for British institutions. These questions are particularly relevant for universities that generated the knowledge, as well as the academics and graduates, necessary for the administration, expansion and justification of enslavement and other colonial enterprises. For a more detailed explanation of the methodology used, see Appendix 1.

Importantly, this report and accompanying appendix offer a new perspective on the history of philanthropy at the University of Edinburgh. The work constitutes the first methodical assessment of the slavery- and empire-connected origins of gifts received by the University of Edinburgh over its history. It shows how some of the gifts, which provided members of the University of Edinburgh both tangible and intangible benefits, derived, at least in part, from the enslavement, conquest and subjugation of non-European peoples. That the University of Edinburgh’s history of philanthropy (a charitable act of *giving*) was in different ways connected to slavery and colonialism (the violent *taking* of bodies, labour, rights, resources, land and knowledge) is deeply jarring, not least for an institution so closely associated with the humanistic and liberal values of the Scottish Enlightenment.

Endowments: Bursaries, Scholarship, Chairs and Fellowships

Overall, the research revealed that 15 of the University of Edinburgh’s historic endowments have direct or indirect links to African enslavement. A further 12 endowments have been identified as having connections to British colonialism in India, Singapore and South Africa.

Table 1: Endowments with Links to Enslavement

BENEFACTION	BENEFACITOR	DATE	LINK
McLurg Bursary	Sir James McLurg	1714	Company of Scotland investor
William Wardrop Bursary	William Wardrop	1725	Company of Scotland investor
Chair of Agriculture	Sir William (Johnstone) Pulteney	1790	Owner of estate and likely enslaved people in Caribbean
Stuart Bursaries	Rev. James Stuart	1809	Owner of an enslaved person in North America
Chair of Music	General John Reid	1839	Inherited slavery-linked wealth

Baxter Mathematical and Philosophical Scholarships and	Sir David Baxter	1863	Slavery-associated Atlantic trade (linen)
Baxter Natural and Physical Science Scholarships	Sir David Baxter	1865	Slavery-associated Atlantic trade (linen)
Horsliehill Scott Bursaries	Francis James Scott	1865	Investment in Caribbean estate that likely included enslaved people
Chair of Engineering	Sir David Baxter	1868	Slavery-associated Atlantic trade (linen)
Misses Baxter of Balavies Scholarship	Mary Ann Baxter	1869	Inherited wealth from slavery-associated Atlantic trade (linen)
Baxter Salary Fund	Sir David Baxter	1872	Slavery-associated Atlantic trade (linen)
John Edward Baxter Scholarships	John Edward Baxter	1876	Slavery-associated Atlantic trade (linen)
Steven of Bellahouston Scholarship	Elizabeth and Grace Steven	1882	Inherited wealth from slavery-associated Atlantic trade (sugar)
Buchanan Scholarship	Jane Buchanan	1883	Inherited wealth from slavery-associated Atlantic trade (sugar)
Gunning Victoria Jubilee Medical and Divinity Prizes	Robert Halliday Gunning	1890	Slavery-associated Atlantic trade (gold) and owner of enslaved people in Brazil

Table 2: Endowments with Links to Colonialism

BENEFACTION	BENEFACTOR	DATE	PLACE
Macpherson Bursary	Sir John Macpherson	1817	India
Sanskrit Chair	John Muir	1863	India
Abercrombie Bursary	Dr James Abercrombie Sr	1864	South Africa
Bruce of Grangehill and Falkland Scholarships and Bursaries	Margaret Stuart Tyndall Bruce	1865	India
Guthrie Fellowship	James Guthrie	1865	Singapore
Falconer Memorial Fellowship	Multiple subscribers	1869	India
Neil Arnott Prize for Experimental Physics	Dr Neil Arnott	1869	India
Shaw Philosophical Fellowship	Multiple subscribers	1869	India
Shaw Macfie Lang Fellowship	General William Lang	1870	India

Vans-Dunlop Scholarships	Dr Andrew Vans Dunlop	1880	India
Mouat Scholarships in Practice of Physic	Dr John Mouat	1883	India
Robert Mackenzie Campbell Scholarship	Isabel William Campbell	1915	South Africa

It has not been possible to ascertain the accrued financial impact of these endowments over time, though they undoubtedly generated significant dividends for the University of Edinburgh in the years following their investment and, in some cases (e.g. the Gunning Victoria Jubilee Divinity Prizes and Lectures), continue to do so. In other words, profits derived in part from British colonialism and the enslavement of African people continue to financially benefit the institution today. Most of the endowments discussed here seem to have still been active within the University of Edinburgh's accounts by at least 1971, when they were recorded under the University of Edinburgh (Fellowships, Scholarships and Bursaries) Scheme (1971).³⁷ Those identified as 'active' or 'live' at the time of writing can be seen in the table below. There are possibly more that have not yet been identified. The Finances team in the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences has returned an information request on the present-day value of some of these active endowments. The available figures are provided below. Information on the present-day value of other endowments is still pending. Each fund holds a certain number of Capital Units, which derive from the original endowment; the value of these units is regularly updated and the economic value (£) of the sum of a fund's Units is referred to as Capital Investment. Funds which have underspent over several years against the dividends received have additionally acquired what is known as Accumulated Income Assets. Adding together these two figures (i.e. Capital Investment plus Accumulated Income Assets) provides the total present-day (i.e. 2024) worth of the funds.

NAME	SCHOOL	VALUE IN 2024
Horsliehill-Scott Bursaries (Classics)	History, Classics and Archaeology	No exact figure available as amalgamated into two schools' funds (Classics and Philosophy)
Horsliehill-Scott Bursaries (Philosophy)	Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences	No exact figure available as amalgamated into two schools' funds (Classics and Philosophy)
Horsliehill-Scott Bursaries (Mathematics)	Mathematics	-
Neil Arnott Scholarship for Experimental Physics	Physics and Astronomy	-
Vans Dunlop Scholarship	Law	-
Misses Baxter of Balgavies Bursary Fund	n/a (external)	-

³⁷ University of Edinburgh (Fellowships, Scholarships and Bursaries) Scheme (1971), No. 1849, UK Statutory Instruments, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSI/1971/1849/contents/made>.

Bruce of Grangehill Prizes	Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences	Capital Units: 18,600 Capital Investment: £904,863 Accumulated Income Assets: £695,515 Total value: £1,600,378
Shaw Philosophical Fellowship	Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences	Capital Units: 20,303 Capital Investment: £987,712 Accumulated Income Assets: £893,136 Total value: £1,880,847
Gunning Lectures	Divinity	Capital Units: 10,308 Capital Investment: £501,469 Accumulated Income Assets: £320,122 Total value: £821,592
Gunning Victoria Jubilee Divinity Prizes	Divinity	Capital Units: 67,646 Capital Investment: £3,290,881 Accumulated Income Assets: £1,203,734 Total value: £4,494,615
Reid Orchestra Endowment	Music	Capital Units: 10,030 Capital Investment: £487,969 Accumulated Income Assets: £116,726 Total value: £604,695

Capital Campaigns: Old College (1789–94) and the Old Medical School (1873–83)

Capital campaigns to finance the construction of two purpose-built campus buildings — Old College (1789–94) and the Old Medical School (1873–85) — collectively drew in hundreds of subscriptions (i.e. donations) from individuals either based in Britain’s colonies or whose wealth was connected in some way to slavery and/or colonialism. In both campaigns, the University’s fundraising committees, officers, professors and supporters actively sought out subscriptions from Britain’s colonies, especially from alumni based in the Caribbean and Asia. Examples of lists of Old College subscribers based in Jamaica and India published in the *Caledonian Mercury* newspaper can be seen below. Lists of subscribers to these campaigns with links to slavery and colonialism are provided in Appendix 1, and datasets of all known subscribers are shared as Open Access resources via Edinburgh’s DataShare.³⁸

³⁸ Simon Buck, ‘Subscriptions towards the University of Edinburgh’s Old College (1789–1794) and Old Medical School (1873–1887), 1789–1887’, dataset, Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh, 2024, <https://doi.org/10.7488/ds/7844>.

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY.		SUBSCRIBERS NAMES, transmitted in a letter from Jamaica.	
LIST OF SUBSCRIBERS to the UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH, transmitted to the Right Hon. the Lord Provost, Magistrates, and Council, by Colonel John Murray, Thomas Graham, Esq. John Fleming, Esq. Colonel Peter Murray, Alexander Reid, and W. Farquharson, Esqs. a Committee to solicit contributions, appointed at a meeting of Gentlemen in Calcutta.		Jamaica Currency.	
Lord Cornwallis, -	5000	James Walker, M. D. -	5 5 0
The Hon. C. Stuart, -	1000	David Grant, M. D. -	5 5 0
Colonel John Murray, -	1000	Thomas Langlas, M. D. -	5 5 0
Colonel Alexander Reid, -	1000	Thomas Neufville, M. D. -	5 5 0
Colonel Peter Murray, -	1000	Caleb Dickenson, M. D. -	5 5 0
Thomas Graham, Esq. -	1000	Thomas Steakes Harris, Esq. -	5 5 0
John Fleming, Esq. -	1000	William Lambie, Esq. -	5 5 0
Sir Robert Chalmers, -	500	Hinton Hall, Esq. -	5 5 0
James Campbell, Esq. -	500	John Allan, Esq. -	5 5 0
James Hare Esq. -	500	Archibald Galbraith, Esq. -	5 5 0
William Dick, Esq. -	500	John Neufville, Esq. -	5 5 0
William Steele, Esq. -	500	F. Christie, Esq. -	5 5 0
Anthony Lambert, Esq. -	500	John Dick, Esq. -	5 5 0
William Fiddle, Esq. -	500	James Stewart, Esq. -	5 5 0
Alexander Colvill, Esq. -	500	William Fortescue Harris, Esq. -	5 5 0
David Reid, Esq. -	500	Alexander Forbes, Esq. -	5 5 0
John Reid, Esq. -	500	William Holgate, Esq. -	5 5 0
Major William Duncan, -	500	James Rochford, Esq. -	5 5 0
Captain James Willandson, -	500	Robert Bong, Esq. -	5 5 0
Captain A. Pringle, -	500	James Cleghorn, Esq. -	5 5 0
Ensign James Wright, -	500	Hamilton Lithgow, Esq. -	5 5 0
John Wood, Esq. -	500	Thomas McKimlay, Esq. -	5 5 0
William Inglis, Esq. -	500	William Lumfden, Esq. -	5 5 0
T. Calcutt, Esq. -	500	Ambrose Carter, Esq. -	5 5 0
George Boyd, Esq. -	500	William Paterson, Esq. -	5 5 0
William Anderson, Esq. -	500	William Ross, Esq. -	5 5 0
Edmund Morris, Esq. -	500	David Baillie, Esq. -	5 5 0
W. N. W. Hewitt, Esq. -	500	Alexander Aikman, Esq. -	5 5 0
Major Charles Maitland, -	500	James Dickson, junior, Esq. -	5 5 0
Mr James Reid, -	500	Dr William Fife, -	5 5 0
Mr J. Watts, -	500	Dr John Harris, -	5 5 0
Hugh Muir, Esq. -	500	Dr John Todd, -	5 5 0
S. S. Taylor, Esq. -	500	Dr Donald Cameron, -	5 5 0
James Grant, Esq. -	500	Dr McMillan Jamieson, Royal Artillery, -	5 5 0
William Douglas, Esq. -	500	Dr Archibald Menzies, 10th Regiment, -	5 5 0
Robert Ireland, Esq. -	500	Dr James McVicar, -	5 5 0
Capt. W. Macdonald of the Ann and Ellis, -	500	Dr Alexander Maitland, -	5 5 0
R. Crisp, Esq. -	500	Dr Edward Richards, -	5 5 0
William Ruff Munro, Esq. -	500	Dr William Flanagan, -	5 5 0
John Mackenzie, Esq. jun. -	500	Dr McKinnon, -	5 5 0
Mr Thomas Watt, -	500	Dr Morely, -	5 5 0
Alex. Ruffell, Esq. -	500	Mr James Waddell, merchant, -	5 5 0
Edgih Burton, Esq. -	500	Mr James Walker, do. -	5 5 0
Mr Davies, -	500	Mr James Morely, do. -	5 5 0
Lieut. Col. V. W. Stanley, -	500	Mr Thomas Branton, do. -	5 5 0
Mr Gibson, Esq. -	500	Mr Simon Gibbs, do. -	5 5 0
Capt. J. C. Sims, -	500	Mr Robert Kirkwood, surveyor, -	5 5 0
Mr R. Stewart, -	500	Captain Robert Liddel, Ship Refella, -	5 5 0
J. L. Cluett, Esq. -	500	Dr James Shaw, -	5 5 0
G. Rankin, Esq. -	500	Dr William Johnston, -	5 5 0
B. Fitzgibbon, Esq. -	500	Dr James Gordon, -	5 5 0
Lieut. John Macgregor, -	500		
Robert Graham, Esq. -	500		
James Stark, Esq. -	500		
John Henderson, Esq. of Jeffere, -	500		
Mr William Stewart, -	500		
The Rev. Mr D. Mackay, 72d regiment, -	500		
Lieut. Robt. Murray, 10th Cavalry, -	500		
Lieut. John Macgregor, 10th Cavalry, -	500		
Lieut. Michael Macgregor, 10th Cavalry, -	500		
Lieut. Donald Macgregor, 10th Cavalry, -	500		
Cornet V. Macgregor, 10th Cavalry, -	500		
Ensign David Macgregor, 10th Cavalry, -	500		
Lieut. Robt. Macgregor, 10th Cavalry, -	500		
Lieut. John Macgregor, 10th Cavalry, -	500		
Major Robert Wilson, -	500		
Capt. Alex. Orme, Major of Brigade, -	500		
Ensign William Graham, -	500		
Archibald Montgomery, Esq. -	500		
Capt. John Macgregor, -	500		
Judge Kirk Kilgus, Esq. -	500		
Dr Alex. Campbell, Physician, -	500		
Capt. Thomas Hoggan, -	500		
Mr G. C. -	500		
Robert Grant, Esq. -	500		
Capt. Lachlan Grant, -	500		
Capt. Thomas Grant, -	500		
Capt. John Broadly, -	500		
Capt. William Murray, -	500		
Mr W. Cairns, Assistant Surgeon, -	500		
Mr George Fraser, ditto, -	500		
Major W. Fraser, -	500		
Major James Dickson, -	500		
Ensign J. Bellamy, -	500		
Lieut. Peter Black, -	500		
Lieut. B. Kelly, -	500		
Jonathan Duncan, Esq. -	500		
Alexander Duncan, Esq. -	500		
Ensign J. H. Alexander, -	500		
Ensign Adam -	500		
Captain John Wilson, of the Ship Mary, -	500		
Total, Sixty Sixpence, -	500		

Left: Subscriptions from a 'Committee to solicit contributions [towards Old College], appointed at a meeting of Gentlemen in Calcutta': *Caledonian Mercury*, 6 August 1792, p. 1.

Right: Subscriptions [towards Old College] 'transmitted in a letter from Jamaica': *Caledonian Mercury*, 21 August 1790, p. 1.

Total Sums

The total amounts of slavery- and empire-linked money received through these two income streams (endowments plus capital campaigns), as identified by this research, are summarised below (all figures given to nearest £). Given the lack of information about the accrued wealth of endowments over time, and the difficulties in identifying benefactors' backgrounds or links to slavery or colonialism, these figures are almost certainly underestimates. Adopting a method used by other comparable institutions, such as the University of Glasgow, three modern-day equivalences for each of these historical sums have been calculated using calculators provided by the website Measuring Worth.³⁹ These

³⁹ Measuring Worth, <https://www.measuringworth.com/calculators/ukcompare>. For more on this approach, see Newman and Mullen, *Slavery, Abolition*, pp. 12–21.

equivalences are calculated through analysis of the historical sums' relative price worth (RPW), relative wage or income worth (RWIW) and relative output worth (ROW) in present-day terms; in other words, their value in relation to retail prices, earnings or gross domestic product (GPD) in the year 2023. These three equivalences are approximations that provide a range of possible present-day values for historical sums of money. The Methodology section of Appendix 1 provides more detail on how to interpret these figures.

Table 3: Total Sums in Present-Day Terms

	Amount (historical)	Value in 2023 (RPW)	Value in 2023 (RWIW)	Value in 2023 (ROW)
Slavery-linked endowments	£125,984	£14,621,500	£112,831,000	£484,940,000
Slavery-linked Old College subscriptions	£3,405	£481,840	£5,603,800	£40,536,000
Slavery-linked Old Medical School subscriptions	£22,636	£2,850,000	£13,900,000	£49,200,000
<i>Slavery-linked wealth (subtotal)</i>	<i>£152,025</i>	<i>£17,953,340</i>	<i>£132,334,800</i>	<i>£574,676,000</i>
Empire-linked endowments	£91,478	£11,223,600	£63,059,000	£226,352,000
Empire-linked Old College subscriptions	£2,860	£440,000	£5,010,000	£36,200,000
Empire-linked Old Medical School subscriptions	£3,364	£423,000	£2,070,000	£7,310,000
<i>Empire-linked wealth (subtotal)</i>	<i>£97,702</i>	<i>£12,086,600</i>	<i>£70,139,000</i>	<i>£269,862,000</i>
Slavery- and empire-linked wealth (total)	£249,727	£30,039,940	£202,473,800	£844,538,000

Research Finding 2. The University of Edinburgh's Links to the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies

This study looked at the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies (1695–1707), a joint-stock company that was established by an Act of Scottish Parliament and is most well-known for trying (and failing) to establish the Scottish colony of New Caledonia on the Isthmus of Darien (modern-day Panama). Commonly referred to as ‘the Darien Scheme’, New Caledonia has often been characterised in Scottish historiography as a ‘tragic disaster for Scotland rather than a failed attempt at settler-colonisation intent on the exploitation of enslaved labour’.⁴⁰ Although the Company’s links to slavery require a deeper investigation, it is clear that the Company not only planned to integrate Scotland into the transatlantic slavery economy, but did in fact engage in the trafficking of some captive Africans in an Indian Ocean context.⁴¹

In 1696, members of the University of Edinburgh financially invested in the Company of Scotland, including three professors (Alexander Rule, Professor of the Oriental Languages; James Gregory, Professor of Mathematics; and William Scott, Professor of Philosophy); the Lord Provost and ex officio Rector (Robert Cheislie); and one student (James Gregory, ‘Student of Medicine’).⁴² Others used their powers as academics to promote the Company of Scotland’s cause: Professor of Philosophy William Scott (1672–1735) spoke positively about ‘the Darien Scheme’ at the University of Edinburgh’s graduation ceremony in 1699 and inserted an intellectual argument for Scotland’s claim to the territory (which was contested by the Spanish Crown) into the theses which students were expected to defend as part of their degree.⁴³

Why did these University of Edinburgh professors invest capital in the Company of Scotland? While the obvious answer might be the pursuit of profit, it is important to recognise that the Company also held the potential to stimulate scholarly concerns. Professor of Mathematics James Gregory (1666–1742) was likely mindful that the maritime needs of Scottish settler-colonisation would require the aid of mathematicians. In 1696, James’s brother David Gregory (1659–1708), who had preceded him as Edinburgh’s Professor of Mathematics (a role that their uncle had earlier held) before moving to Oxford, proposed that the Company of Scotland should fund a ‘Navigation and Writing School’ in Edinburgh to train students in mathematics, navigation skills and related disciplines. The idea was for University of Edinburgh professors to examine the school’s pupils and for their

⁴⁰ Stephen Mullen, ‘Centring Transatlantic Slavery in Scottish Historiography’, *History Compass*, 20 (2022), p. 67.

⁴¹ A Company of Scotland ship, the *African Merchant*, sailed to Africa in 1699, bringing back gold, ivory and rice (though no human cargo) from the Gold Coast. In 1698, another Company vessel, the *Nasseu*, purchased enslaved people in Madagascar, and in 1701 and 1708 the Company ‘initiated or licensed’ slaving vessels in the Indian Ocean: George Insh, *Papers Relating to the Ships and Voyages of the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies, 1696–1707* (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1924), xxi–xxii, p. 260; Mark Duffill, ‘The Africa Trade from the Ports of Scotland, 1706–66’, *Slavery & Abolition* 25 (2004), p. 115, fn2 and fn3.

⁴² Edinburgh Subscription Book, 1696, Adv. MS 83.1.1, Subscription Books of the Darien Company, Accounts and Papers of the Company of Scotland Trading to Africa and the Indies (Darien Company), National Library of Scotland.

⁴³ ‘Theses hasce philosophicas, Unpaginated’, 1699, Edinburgh, EUA CA3/41, EUL, <https://images.is.ed.ac.uk/luna/servlet/s/x9tmc2>.

students to provide tuition to prepare them to be bound as apprentices on Company of Scotland ships.⁴⁴

As well as a chapter on this research in an edited collection on decoloniality (The Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, forthcoming, 2025), a visual narrative of this research can be found through an online exhibition, [Dreams of Darien](#), that was produced for the University of Edinburgh's Library using rare and newly-digitised materials from the archives in collaboration with other academics, institutions and community groups, including representatives of the Gunadule, Indigenous people of Panama and Colombia.⁴⁵

Research Finding 3. James Sutherland's 'Foreign Correspondence': Empire, Enslavement and the University of Edinburgh's First Professor of Botany, 1676–1706

This study looked at James Sutherland (c.1639–1715), the University of Edinburgh's first Professor of Botany and Superintendent of Edinburgh's Botanic Gardens. Several records, including his published writing and private correspondence with the London-based natural historian and apothecary James Petiver at the turn of the 18th century, detail how Sutherland integrated Edinburgh's botanical environment into a global network of botanisers: from those in the Scots-run colonies of East New Jersey and New Caledonia, to those operating in England's North American, Caribbean and South Asian colonies. In his own words, Sutherland's 'Forraign Correspondence' allowed him to 'Acquire both Seeds and Plants from the Levant, Italy, Spain, France, Holland, England, east and west Indies', as well as native species to England and Scotland.⁴⁶ Importantly, Sutherland helped his former students and apprentices to secure posts as surgeons on ships bound for the East and West Indies on the explicit understanding that his protégés would collect foreign plants and botanical knowledge on his behalf. Sutherland explained his approach to Petiver as follows:

All the Surgeons and Apothecaries apprentices in this place are usually my Schollars at the Physick Garden and after they have served in a Shop five years they seek Occasions of going Surgeons in Ships to the East or West Indies, or other forrain place that Offers, and so spend their time abroad for the space of six or seven years before they return and set up a shop of their own. And I assure you I shall not be wanting for the future to oblige every one of them to do you all the Service they are capable.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ David Gregory, 'A project for a Navigation school presented to the E: India company of Scotland', 10 April 1696, Coll-33/Folio C [217], Papers of David Gregory, Coll-33, EUL, <https://images.is.ed.ac.uk/luna/servlet/s/4edxm8>.

⁴⁵ Simon Buck, 'Dreams of Darien at the University of Edinburgh', in *Essays on Decoloniality: Volume 2*, ed. by Ben Fletcher-Watson, Lesley McAra and Désa Osborne (Edinburgh: IASH, The University of Edinburgh, forthcoming 2025); *Dreams of Darien*, online exhibition, University of Edinburgh Library, <https://exhibitions.ed.ac.uk/exhibitions/dreams-of-darien/>.

⁴⁶ James Sutherland, *Hortus Medicus Edinburgensis, or, A catalogue of the plants in the Physical Garden at Edinburgh: containing their most proper Latin and English names; with an English alphabetical index* (Edinburgh: printed by the heir of Andrew Anderson, and to be sold by Mr. Henry Ferguson seed-merchant, at the head of Black Friar-Wynd, and at the Physical Garden by the author, 1683), i.

⁴⁷ James Sutherland to James Petiver, Edinburgh, 25 March 1700, Sloane MSS 4063, folios 9-10, British Library.

Sutherland's contacts included medical professionals active in the transatlantic trafficking in enslaved Africans: in a 1700 letter to Petiver, Sutherland referred to their 'good friend Mr William Watt' who had 'now gone Surgeon in a Ship bound for Guinea and to return by Jamaica for London'.⁴⁸ A forthcoming study details these and other examples of Sutherland's global and imperial networks, and how they presaged those nurtured by subsequent Professors of Botany at Edinburgh over the 18th century, including Professors Charles Preston (1660–1711), George Preston (1665–1749), Charles Alston (1683–1760), John Hope (1725–1786) and Daniel Rutherford (1748–1819).

Research Finding 4. Slavery, Medical Philanthropy and the University of Edinburgh's Colonial Networks, 1789–1795

Complementing the findings outlined in Appendix 1, this study looked further into the campaign in the 1790s to finance the construction of the University of Edinburgh's Old College through private philanthropy. It focused on the medical dimensions of the project, both in terms of how a 'new college' was seen as necessary to accommodate the growing Edinburgh Medical School, and how Trustees sought out and secured funds from medical professionals in Britain and its colonies. Using lists of subscribers, alongside medical journals, private correspondence and the University of Edinburgh's institutional records, it constructed a prosopography of Old College's colonial-medical subscribers, specifically those who were resident or previously based in Jamaica and Antigua. Through analysis of subscribers' wide-ranging and lifelong connections to the University as former students and correspondents with professors, alongside their activities in the Caribbean as plantation physicians, botanists and scientists, this reconsideration of the records of philanthropy and records of empire provides snapshots of the University's colonial networks, and thus demonstrates the overlap between the institution's financial, social and intellectual links to slavery.⁴⁹

Research Finding 5. Debating Slavery and Abolition in Student Debating Societies at the University of Edinburgh, 1765–1870

This study looked at two student debating societies at the University of Edinburgh — the Dialectic Society (est. 1787, now the Diagnostic Society) and the Speculative Society (est. 1764) — and their moral, legal, theological and political debates on slavery and abolition in British imperial and US contexts and in relation to independent Saint-Domingue (Haiti). Using the published histories of the two Societies and the administrative records of the

⁴⁸ James Sutherland to James Petiver, Edinburgh, 17 September 1700, Sloane MSS 4063, folio 43, British Library.

⁴⁹ In April 2024, Simon Buck and Ian Stewart (IASH Fellows for the REWG) co-organised an international conference called 'Race, Empire and the Edinburgh Medical School' at the University of Edinburgh Library that brought together scholars and heritage workers based within and beyond the UK. A review of the conference has been published in [The Polyphony](https://thepolyphony.org/2024/08/27/race-empire-uee-conference-review/), an online forum for the medical humanities: Simon Buck and Ian Stewart, 'Race, Empire, and the Edinburgh Medical School: Conference Review', *The Polyphony*, <https://thepolyphony.org/2024/08/27/race-empire-uee-conference-review/>. They are now working with participants to produce an edited collection of essays on the topic.

Dialectic Society (equivalent records for the Speculative Society have not been found), data for slavery and abolition debates have been tabulated and uploaded to DataShare.⁵⁰ This includes debate titles and dates and, where information exists, the outcomes of votes and speakers' and attendees' names, positions taken in debates, backgrounds and post-university careers.

Topics relating to slavery and abolition were debated at 27 meetings of the Dialectic Society from 1792–1870, and at 20 meetings of the Speculative Society over 1765–1838. As early as 1764, students in the Speculative Society debated whether 'slavery and the slave trade [were] consistent with the natural rights of mankind?' (However, neither the arguments made, nor the verdict were recorded). Students in the Dialectic Society, meanwhile, voted overwhelmingly against the 'slave trade' in the 1790s. In 1792, members concluded unanimously that 'use of the produce of slavery involve[d] [them] in its guilt' and agreed to abstain from consuming sugar.⁵¹ A prominent future abolitionist in Scotland, Andrew Mitchell Thomson, wrote and read an essay for the Society entitled 'Slavery'.⁵² Significant numbers of students in both societies, however, either argued or voted against the 'immediate' abolition of slavery in the 1820s and the early 1830s; in favour of 'gradual' abolition (in contexts where such positions served to defang growing demands for immediate emancipation); in favour of the British government providing financial compensation to enslavers following emancipation; and in support of Britain's formal recognition of the Confederacy during the American Civil War. In 1832, a year before the British Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act, a majority of Speculative Society members voted that 'slaves in the West Indies' should not be 'immediately emancipated'. Some members of the two societies had come from Britain's colonies to study at Edinburgh. For example, the Barbados-born medical student Thomas Skeete spoke at a Speculative Society debate, likely sometime in the 1780s, in defence of the 'slave trade'.⁵³ The records of these two debating societies thus chart traces of both pro- and anti-slavery sentiment among Edinburgh's student body in the age of abolition.

Research Finding 6. Skulls of Two Students of African Descent in the University of Edinburgh's Anatomical Museum

This study investigated two catalogue entries that were found in the Anatomical Museum's Anthropology (the so-called 'Skull Room') collection records relating to two students (likely at the University of Edinburgh) of mixed African and European heritage who died in

⁵⁰ *History of the Dialectic Society* (Edinburgh: T. & A. Constable, 1887); *History of the Speculative Society of Edinburgh from its Institution in 1764* (Edinburgh: Printed for the Society, 1845); Records of University of Edinburgh Dialectic Society, EUA GD9, EUL; Simon Buck, 'Debates on Slavery and Abolition held by Student Debating Societies at the University of Edinburgh, 1765–1870' (2024), dataset, University of Edinburgh. Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, <https://doi.org/10.7488/ds/7841>.

⁵¹ University of Edinburgh Dialectic Society Minute book, Vol 2, 12 May and 29 May 1792, EUA-A-150, Records of Members, Records of University of Edinburgh Dialectic Society, EUL.

⁵² *History of the Dialectic Society*, p. 145.

⁵³ *History of the Speculative Society of Edinburgh*, pp. 24–25.

Edinburgh in 1832 and 1833, respectively.⁵⁴ The Anatomical Museum holds a large collection of ancestral remains, notably skulls, that ‘were taken, without consent, from prisons, asylums, hospitals, archaeological sites and battlefields’, with many having been stolen and exported from ‘the British empire’s colonies or through their global networks’.⁵⁵ These ancestral remains, which originally included around 1,800 skulls, are currently housed in a purpose-built ‘skull room’. Some of these skulls were acquired from the Edinburgh Phrenological Society in 1887 by Sir William Turner, Professor of Anatomy and Principal of the University of Edinburgh from 1903 to 1916, who then added to the ‘collection’.⁵⁶ Many of these remains were used to study anatomy, comparative craniology and physical anthropology, as well as the now discredited idea of phrenology. As a ‘collection’, they testify to the central role that Edinburgh played in the development of racial pseudo-sciences which sought to assert the existence of a hierarchy of human ‘races’.

The ancestral remains referred to in this study are described in the catalogue as having belonged to a ‘Negro Mulatto’ from Barbados and a student of divinity, and a ‘Negro Mulatto’ from Barbados and a student of medicine. Their remains are recorded as being part of the Museum of the Phrenological Society of Edinburgh (est. 1820) in 1858.⁵⁷ Although some inconsistencies exist between records, a process of deduction using the catalogue entries, the University of Edinburgh’s matriculation albums and burial records in the Old Parish Registers for South Leith would appear to indicate the identities of these two individuals as George Richards, a 21-year-old Barbadian medical student who died from small pox, and his brother, the 18-year-old Robert Bruce Richards, who died of typhoid fever. Their father, George Richards, M.D., practiced medicine on Barbados’s sugar plantations and owned enslaved people.⁵⁸ At the moment, little is known about the exact circumstances by which the skulls of these two deceased students of African descent were separated from their bodies (interned in South Leith Parish Church cemetery), or how they entered the Phrenological Society’s Museum. Given the preoccupations of phrenologists with identifying racial difference through cranial analysis, it can be assumed that the racialisation of these two individuals as ‘mulatto’ — a hybrid racial category that both fascinated and bewildered phrenologists — is what aroused interest among members of the Society in the skulls of these two students.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ Phrenological Society of Edinburgh, ‘Catalogue of the Phrenological Museum’, 1858, Records of the Phrenological Society of Edinburgh, Coll-227, EUL. For more, see Simon Buck, ‘The skulls of two students of African descent in the University of Edinburgh’s Anatomical Museum’, *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh*, 55 (2025), 114-22. Our thanks to Ruth Pollitt at the Anatomical Museum for discussions about this case.

⁵⁵ ‘A Skull Collection Revisited: From Colonial Resistance to Repatriation’, <https://exhibitions.ed.ac.uk/exhibitions/mind-shift/colonial-resistance-to-repatriation>.

⁵⁶ For more information, see Cressida Fforde, *Collecting the Dead: Archaeology and the Reburial Issue* (London: Duckworth, 2004), pp.180-181.

⁵⁷ ‘A Skull Collection Revisited’.

⁵⁸ For reference to the family, including notices of the death of the children in Edinburgh, see *The Barbadian*, 8 August, 1828, p. 2, 15 February 1832, p. 3 and 11 May 1833, p. 2.

⁵⁹ For a study of the global ‘science’ of phrenology, of which Edinburgh was an epicentre, see James Poskett, *Materials of the Mind: Phrenology, Race, and the Global History of Science, 1815–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

Research Finding 7. Dr Robert Halliday Gunning: Scottish Medicine, Brazilian Slavery and Philanthropy in Late Victorian Britain

This study looked at the slavery connections and philanthropy of Dr Robert Halliday Gunning (1818–1900) which are explored in more detail in Appendix 1. As a University of Edinburgh-trained medical professional, Gunning earned considerable wealth in Brazil through his time as a medical officer and then Chief Commissioner of a British gold-mining company in the State of Minas Gerais that used enslaved labour. Gunning also held enslaved labourers on his private estate near Rio de Janeiro. His slavery-derived wealth formed the foundations for the philanthropic gifts he left to an array of religious, charitable, educational, scientific, medical and heritage-related organisations, including the University of Edinburgh's Schools of Medicine and Divinity, in both Brazil and Britain. This includes endowments that are still in effect at the University of Edinburgh today, such as the Gunning Victoria Jubilee Divinity Prizes and the Gunning Lectures.⁶⁰

Conclusions from Research Strand 1

Research into the University of Edinburgh's receipt of slavery- and empire-linked wealth situates the University of Edinburgh within the complex web of Scotland's and Britain's global and imperial trade from the 17th to the 20th centuries, revealing how it has been entangled in the logics of a system often described as racial capitalism.⁶¹ Some of the philanthropic gifts which the University of Edinburgh received during the last few centuries can be traced to the profits that arise from the cultivation, production and sale of colonial commodities — tobacco, sugar, cotton, gold, silk, indigo, linen, iron, opium, to name a few — and the financial, legal, military, medical and administrative services that relied on, benefited from or were in some way linked to the ownership and trafficking of enslaved people of African descent, or the colonisation, exploitation and subjugation of peoples across Asia, Oceania, Africa and the Americas.

Identifying the University of Edinburgh as a financial beneficiary of enslavement and colonialism is an important, if not unusual finding. Understanding the scale of this investment is a difficult, but nonetheless important task. Records of philanthropy, importantly, help us to map out the University of Edinburgh's colonial networks, especially in cases where University representatives proactively *sought out* colonial wealth (i.e. during the two capital campaigns). That it was often alumni who gave generously to their *alma mater*, in many cases as thanks for providing them with the skills, knowledge and social capital necessary to thrive in their post-university careers in Britain and its colonies, says a great deal about the University of Edinburgh's significant role in the making and remaking of British imperial power and the institution of slavery in colonial societies.

⁶⁰ On 5 November 2024, an event was held with the School of Divinity regarding Gunning's endowment called 'Enslavement, Brazil and the Gunning Lectures', <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/enslavement-brazil-and-the-gunning-lectures-tickets-1044925649747?aff=oddtcreator>.

⁶¹ There is an extensive literature on the multiple possible meanings of the term 'racial capitalism'. For a historiographic overview, see Catherine Hall, 'Racial Capitalism: What's in a Name?', *History Workshop Journal*, 94 (2022), 5–21.

Slavery- and empire-linked endowments identified as still financially ‘active’ are remarkably tangible reminders of how the University of Edinburgh’s historic connections to enslavement and colonialism remain threaded throughout the modern, 21st-century institution. It should be remembered, however, that these are only the most visible remnants of a wider history of financial entanglement.

Finally, as the other research avenues explored during this Fellowship indicate, the transfer of financial capital to the University of Edinburgh from slavery-linked sources and colonial contexts was complemented and often enabled by the institution’s exceptionally well-nested position within the circuits of human capital, resources and knowledge that stretched across and beyond the British Empire. Better understanding the University of Edinburgh’s place within those imperial networks is a key next step for research in this field.

Research Strand 2: Theories of Race and Civilisation at the University of Edinburgh, c.1750–c.1850

Introduction

The second research strand focused on the intellectual movement known as the ‘Scottish Enlightenment’, which witnessed the systematisation of hierarchical theories of human difference based on ‘race’ and ‘civilisation’, with professors, students and alumni of the University of Edinburgh playing a central role in this process. The full results of this research can be read in a separate report entitled ‘The University of Edinburgh, Theories of Race and Civilisation, and British Imperialism’ (Appendix 2).⁶² While ‘the Enlightenment’ across its various geographical locations and spheres of intellectual activity has often been celebrated as having generated the ideas that underpin modern liberal democracy, it has increasingly been recognised that Enlightenment thinkers were also responsible for nurturing some of the most damaging ideas in human history.⁶³ As this summary and Appendix 2 show, among the thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, ‘civilisation’ became systematised as a hierarchical progression through which all societies passed from ‘savage’ to ‘barbarous’ to

⁶² The main findings of this section have been, or are being, written up for publication. Two journal articles have been submitted and are under review: one on Dugald Stewart’s racial theory with the *Journal of the History of Ideas*; another article on James Mackintosh and the attempts of other University alumni to survey the languages of India with the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. Another article, co-authored by Ian Stewart and Tommy Curry, is being prepared for publication and is looking into the origins of ethnology at the University of Edinburgh. This will be submitted to the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*. Finally, a short essay co-authored by Ian Stewart and Simon Buck on the legacies of slavery and race at the University of Edinburgh will appear in an edited collection published by Edinburgh University Press titled *European University Legacies: Problematic Heritage and Contemporary Practice*, edited by Peter Bille Larsen and Markéta Křižová.

⁶³ For defences, see Anthony Pagden, *The Enlightenment and Why it Still Matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Steven Pinker, *Enlightenment Now: The Case for Reason, Science, Humanism, and Progress* (London: Viking, 2018). For critical interpretations, see Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. by John Cumming (London: Verso, 2016; first publ. in 1944); Richard H. Popkin, ‘The Philosophical Basis of Modern Racism’, in *Racism in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Harold E. Pagliaro (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1973), pp. 245–62; Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

‘civilised’.⁶⁴ Europeans invariably placed themselves at the pinnacle of civilisation, viewing themselves as the standard according to which the various cultures and societies around the world should be measured. It was within related Enlightenment currents of thought that the idea of ‘race’ emerged in its modern form in which the physical features of individuals and populations became linked to their supposed intellectual aptitude and moral characters, all of which were tied to their genealogy. Races were arranged along the civilisational ladder, and it was hypothesised by some European thinkers that some races might be incapable of ascending further than the ‘savage’ or ‘barbarous’ stage; in other words, they were seen as naturally inferior to ‘civilised’ Europeans. As this research shows, civilisational hierarchies and racial theories provided powerful intellectual justifications for enslavement and colonialism and would underpin the rapid expansion of European empire around the world in the 19th century.⁶⁵

This summary and accompanying Appendix is based on extensive primary and secondary research in various libraries and archives across the UK, making use of such primary material as professorial lecture notes, student lecture notes, student dissertations and letters. The main archival repositories included the University of Edinburgh Library, the British Library, the National Library of Scotland, the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, the Royal Medical Society of Edinburgh and the Wellcome Collection.

Key Research Findings

One of the most famous applications of the civilisational scheme was by the historian William Robertson, Principal of University of Edinburgh between 1762 and 1793. In his *History of America* (1777), Robertson noted differences in the manners and cultures of different Native American peoples, but declared that, by and large, they were ‘so extremely rude that the denomination of *savage* may be applied to them all’.⁶⁶ This was also the period in which ‘race’ emerged in its modern form — i.e. one in which the physical features of individuals and populations became linked to their supposed intellectual aptitude and moral characters — and races were ranged across the civilisational ladder. One of the clearest examples of this can be found in University of Edinburgh alumnus David Hume’s ‘notorious footnote’ of 1753.⁶⁷ In this footnote, he condemned non-white races ‘to be naturally inferior to the whites’, before revising the note, just before his death, to refer to ‘the Negroes’, rendering the comment explicitly anti-African.⁶⁸ This generated debate within Scotland, and especially at the University of Edinburgh, throughout the rest of the century.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Ronald Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); J.G.A. Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion*, 6 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999–2015), esp. vols. II and IV.

⁶⁵ Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago, 1999); Onni Gust, *Unhomely Empire: Whiteness and Belonging, c.1760–1830* (London, 2021).

⁶⁶ William Robertson, *The History of America*, 2 vols. (London, 1777), I, p. 283.

⁶⁷ David Hume, ‘Of National Characters’, in *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects* 4 vols. (London, 1753), I, 291n.

⁶⁸ Hume, ‘Of National Characters’, 291n.

⁶⁹ For a recent summary, see Aaron Garrett and Silvia Sebastiani, ‘David Hume on Race’, in *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Race*, ed. by Naomi Zack (Oxford, 2017), pp. 31–43.

As Hume's example suggests, civilisational hierarchies and racial theories provided powerful intellectual justifications for the systems of inequality that already existed, notably the transatlantic trafficking and enslavement of African peoples, and would underpin the rapid expansion of European empires during the 19th century.⁷⁰ As this research strand shows, the University of Edinburgh was conspicuous for the contributions that its professors, students and alumni made to these modes of thought and their proliferation.

Racial theories were taught across the various colleges at the University of Edinburgh from about the 1760s onwards. Adam Ferguson incorporated racial theory into his moral philosophy lectures as early as the 1760s, well before contemporary philosophers in Germany, such as Kant and Blumenbach, developed their own theories on the subject.⁷¹ The theory of race that Ferguson began lecturing about in the 1760s, and continued to teach until his retirement in 1785, derived from the French philosophers Buffon and Montesquieu.⁷² From Buffon, Ferguson took the notion that there were six different races — 'European, Laplander, Tartar, Hindoo, Negro, American' — and from Montesquieu he took the idea that it was 'the air, and climates [that] change the complexions [of man]'.⁷³ Although he therefore believed that all humans belonged to the same species — in contrast to other Scottish philosophers like David Hume or Lord Kames — Ferguson portrayed Europeans 'as the standard to which we must refer in describing the other Races'.⁷⁴

Dugald Stewart continued to teach 'race' when he took over the Chair of Moral Philosophy from Ferguson. The University of Edinburgh Library's collections show that, in his lectures spanning the late 1770s to 1810, Stewart retained Ferguson's six-fold racial division but greatly expanded this section of the lectures by adducing observations on different races gleaned from his wide reading. Stewart held to the same monogenist position as Ferguson, and was outspoken in his condemnation of slavery as a moral abomination.⁷⁵ He repeatedly criticised David Hume's 'inhuman opinion that the negroes being inferior to the Whites ought to be Slaves', as well as Thomas Jefferson's opinion that Africans 'are not capable of much Reflection & their intellectual powers are very blunt [...] much inferior [to us] in Judgement'.⁷⁶ However, it is vital to note that Stewart agreed with Hume and Jefferson that non-European races were indeed inferior, but thought that they were not *naturally so*, and could be improved over time with European tutelage. To take one example, Stewart asserted that, 'The bodily constitution undergoes some change, in the progress of civil society. The bodily constitution of a savage hinders him from refined speculation; but in time the

⁷⁰ Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire*; Gust, *Unhomely Empire*.

⁷¹ [Adam Ferguson], 'Heads of Lectures', EUL Coll-1848/20-0060. Note that the use of square brackets around the name here and elsewhere in this section indicates that the ideas belong to the author, in this case Adam Ferguson, but were recorded by someone else.

⁷² Bruce Buchan and Silvia Sebastiani, "'No distinction of Black or Fair": The Natural History of Race in Adam Ferguson's Lectures on Moral Philosophy', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 82 (2021), 207–29.

⁷³ [Ferguson], 'Heads of Lectures'.

⁷⁴ [Adam Ferguson] 'Lectures on Moral Philosophy', EUL, Dc.1.84, Vol. 1, 30 November 1780, F. 127v. It is possible this is another idea borrowed from Buffon, viz. the primeval humans were white skinned but had 'degenerated' into darker shades.

⁷⁵ Monogenism refers to the theory of human origins which posit a common descent for all human races.

⁷⁶ [Dugald Stewart], 'Abbreviation's from Lectures on Moral Philosophy' [1778–79], EUL, Gen 2023, p. 360; [Dugald Stewart], EUL Gen 1987, 'Lectures on Moral Philosophy', (1789), EUL Gen 1987, np.

Negroes may be as refin'd as we are'.⁷⁷ The crucial point here is that, in Stewart's view, Africans were inferior to Europeans because they were less civilised, or 'savage', but that this could be altered with time and assistance. Elsewhere, Stewart referred to the College of New Jersey (Princeton) philosopher, Samuel Stanhope Smith, and his idea that 'field slaves' in America retained their native customs and character longer, while 'Domestic Slaves [...] see more of polish[ed] life & are better informed' and therefore became civilised and even started to more closely resemble Europeans.⁷⁸ Essentially, Stewart would repeat some of the harshest verdicts of his contemporaries on non-European races, and especially Africans, by propagating their ideas about racial inferiority, while noting that they could eventually rise to the level of Europeans through 'civilisation'. It is well-recognised that Dugald Stewart was the most popular lecturer in Edinburgh at the time. Through his pedagogy, he exerted great, if somewhat indirect, influence on the intellectual landscape of early 19th-century Britain. Together he and Ferguson taught more than four decades' worth of students — many of whom would go on to have elite careers in politics and imperial administration — that humanity was divided into a racial hierarchy, at the top of which sat white Europeans.

The professors of natural history and medicine also elaborated racial theories during this period. Rev. Dr. John Walker, Regius Professor of Natural History from 1779 until 1803, developed theories on differences between Europeans and Africans ('I know not of any two varieties in the human race more widely different than the fair-haired European and the Angola Negro'), on the effects of race-mixing in colonial societies and on the differences between Celtic Highlanders and Saxon Lowlanders, among other things.⁷⁹ When he took over from Walker, the Professor of Natural History Robert Jameson gave a wide-ranging course on natural history, in which he drew a racial pyramid depicting the 'Caucasian' (European) race at the top, with the 'Mongol' and 'Malay' races forming an intermediate step and the 'American' and 'Negro' at the bottom level.⁸⁰ These distinctions were seen as being directly related to intelligence: 'The Differences existing between these various races are very great. For example, the Brain is most developed in the Caucasian and in the Negro least of all.'⁸¹ In a later set of lectures by Jameson, a student also noted explicit assumptions of white aesthetic superiority (bearing a resemblance to the theories of the Dutch Physician Petrus Camper): 'At one extremity of the scale of Form is the Grecian, the most perfect. & at the other extremity some of the Negro Race, the least perfect. Europeans are the strongest. Savages the weakest Race.'⁸² Jameson therefore taught that race was directly correlated to intelligence and beauty. The Professors of Surgery, Alexander Monro Secundus and Alexander Munro Tertius also lectured on racial theories, illustrating their points with human

⁷⁷ [Stewart], 'Abbreviations', p. 360.

⁷⁸ [Stewart], 'Lectures on Moral Philosophy'.

⁷⁹ Walker to Lord Kames, 18 February 1773, in Alexander Fraser-Tytler, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of the Honourable Henry Home of Kames* (Edinburgh, 1807), p. 33. John Walker, 'Mixture of the Different Races of Mankind', EUL, Dc.2.39, f. 155r. John Walker, *Essays on Natural History and Rural Economy* (London and Edinburgh, 1812), pp. 93–110; John Walker, 'Natural history of the inhabitants of the Highlands', Walker Papers, Dc.1.18 EUL.

⁸⁰ [Robert Jameson], 'Sketches of Lectures on Natural History', EUL MS Dc.10.32.

⁸¹ [Jameson], 'Sketches of Lectures'.

⁸² [Robert Jameson], 'Notes from Lectures on Natural History delivered in the Edinburgh University by Professor James during the winter of 1830–31', Wellcome Collection, MS. 3358.

skulls. Like Jameson, Tertius later wrote that he had lectured 'that the Negro skull, and consequently the brain, is smaller than that of the European, an opinion still held by different medical gentlemen who have resided in the West Indies, or our different settlements on the coast of Africa.'⁸³ Lecture notes from 1801–02, show that they also lectured according to the facial angle established by Petrus Camper, in which the 'gradation' was supposed to accord with beauty and intelligence: 'I set before you in the order of Gradation the skulls of different countries; European or Grecian, Asiatic; Negro.'⁸⁴ Walker, Jameson and the Monros also contributed to the University's Natural History Museum, and Jameson wrote a set of instructions to travellers in which he encouraged them to collect skulls, especially from Indigenous peoples: 'Of man, the skull is the most interesting part, as it varies in the different races of the human species, and is also frequently singularly altered by the practices of savage tribes.'⁸⁵

Students at the University of Edinburgh during this period were intensely interested in ideas of race.⁸⁶ They hosted debates about the subject in various clubs and devised their own racial theories in essays and dissertations. The most famous of the student societies was the Royal Medical Society (RMS). Each year, dissertations were read on the subject at least once, and often twice or more, over this period. Intelligence was again a noticeable topic of consideration. In the academic year 1790–91, James Buchan wrote,

who would not, at first, suppose the Negroe & European to be of different species? [...] An author of great acuteness has brought several arguments to prove that the blacks are naturally of an inferior capacity to white people. These are well founded on the supposition that there never appeared any individuals of great learning, or nations in a highly civilized state.⁸⁷

Nicholas Pitta argued that dark skin colour was 'corrected by a state of civilization', and in the book he later published on the subject he argued that, 'The small progress of negroes in the study of the sciences and in civilization [...] the form of their head, which is in a medium between the European and Orang-outang' were among the 'proofs of physical and mental inferiority' but did not justify their enslavement.⁸⁸ Even those who defended the natural

⁸³ Alexander Monro, 'Memoir of Alexander Monro Secundus', in Alexander Munro, *Essays and Heads of Lectures on Anatomy, Physiology, Pathology, and Surgery* (Edinburgh, 1840), c-ci.

⁸⁴ An Edinburgh Students Notebook, Lectures on Anatomy and Surgery by Alex Munro (Secundus) and possibly by Alexander Tertius (Edinburgh: Royal College of Surgeons Edinburgh), p. 31.

⁸⁵ Jessie M. Sweet, 'Instructions to Collectors: John Walker (1793) and Robert Jameson (1817); with Biographical Notes on James Anderson (LL.D.) and James Anderson (M.D.)', *Annals of Science*, 29 (1972), 397–414 (p. 403).

⁸⁶ Bill Jenkins, 'Race before Darwin: Variation, Adaptation and the Natural History of Man in Post-Enlightenment Edinburgh, 1790–1835', *British Journal for the History of Science*, 53 (2020), 333–50; Colin Kidd, 'Medicine, Race, and Radicalism in the Later Scottish Enlightenment', in *The Practice of Reform in Health, Medicine, and Science, 1500–2000*, ed. by Margaret Pelling and Scott Mandelbrote (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Colin Kidd, *The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600–2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 100–05.

⁸⁷ James Buchan, 'Whether are Moral and Physical causes sufficient to account for the varieties which occur in the Human Species?', Royal Medical Society Dissertations, Vol. 26 (1790–91), pp. 310–11, p. 317.

⁸⁸ Nicholas Pitta, 'What is the influence of climate on the human species? And what are the varieties of men which result from it?', RMS Dissertations, Vol. 66 (1811–12), pp. 283–307; Nicholas Pitta, *Treatise on the Influence of Climate on the Human Species* (London: [N.pub], 1812), p. 32.

equality of Africans, such as Richard Dyett (an enslaver on the island of Montserrat), wrote that, 'We well know that it is morally impossible, that Africa should be at present a civilized nation.'⁸⁹ In another group, the Royal Physical Society, the student Samuel Cramer argued that other races had degenerated from an ideal white type: 'these changes which the African, the Asiatic, or the American undergo are but accidental deformities, which a kinder climate, better nourishment, or more civilized manners would in due course of time very probably remove.'⁹⁰ However, an American student named John Taylor, whose family owned a plantation with over 100 enslaved people in Virginia, argued that the differences between races were so great that they constituted separate species.⁹¹

The emphasis on civilisation and its effects on supposedly inferior races underpinned justifications for British imperialism over the 19th century. A former student of Stewart's, Francis Irvine, attempted to write the first political economy of India, averring that its lessons should be applied through British governance: 'I have not the smallest doubt [...] that any country whatsoever (even Negroland), may be civilized without colonization.'⁹² Another University of Edinburgh alumnus, who became the Resident (governor) of Singapore, wrote a history of the East Indian Archipelago, which divided it into two races akin to those drawn between Europe and Africa:

The *brown* and *negro* races of the Archipelago may be considered to present, in their physical and moral character a complete parallel with the white and negro races of the western world. The first have always displayed as eminent a relative superiority over the second as the race of white men have done over the negroes of the west. All the indigenous civilization of the Archipelago has sprung from them, and the negro race is constantly found in the most savage state.⁹³

Perhaps the most famous advocate of the civilising mission in India was James Mill, a University of Edinburgh alumnus who had taken Stewart's lectures. He wrote that the 'Hindu character' was nowhere 'far removed from that of the savage state', and that British government should root out what he considered this 'superstitious' system and civilise the country.⁹⁴ In an early essay arguing for British colonisation and civilisation of India, Mill suggested that the alternative was the rise of a mixed-race class that would be of far more doubtful promise, than [colonisation] by natives from Europe.'⁹⁵

University of Edinburgh alumni of this period went on to found some of the 'sciences of race', built on the supposition of racial and civilisational inequality. The founder of 'ethnology' in Britain, James Cowles Prichard, studied at the University between 1805 and 1808 and was stimulated to take up the subject by Dugald Stewart's lectures. He wrote in

⁸⁹ Richard H. Dyett, 'Is there any original difference of Intellectual Ability amongst Mankind?', RMS Dissertations, Vol. 58 (1807–07), p. 228.

⁹⁰ Samuel Cramer, 'What Influence has Climate on the Human Constitution?', Royal Physical Society Dissertations, EUL DA.67 Phys, Vol. 19 (1798–1800), p. 488.

⁹¹ John Taylor, 'Are all Men originally descended from the same Stock?', Royal Physical Society Dissertations, EUL DA.67 Phys, Vol. 24 (1804–06), pp. 464–71.

⁹² Francis Irvine Papers, NLS, MS 11727, 18r.

⁹³ John Crawford, *History of the Indian Archipelago*, 3 vols. (London, 1820), I, p. 18.

⁹⁴ James Mill, *The History of British India*, 3 vols. (London: [N.pub], 1817), I, p. 460.

⁹⁵ [James Mill], 'On the Affairs of India', *Edinburgh Review*, 6 (1810), pp. 127–57.

the first edition of his *Physical Researches into the History of Man* (1813) that ‘the process of Nature in the human species is the transmutation of the characters of the Negro into that of the European, or the evolution of white varieties in black races of men’; meaning that he thought that dark-skinned peoples would turn white as they became more civilised.⁹⁶ Samuel George Morton, a student of Jameson and an admirer of Prichard, founded the American school of craniology, in which he measured the capacity of his massive collection of crania and claimed that ‘Caucasians’ had the largest skulls. The Caucasian race was therefore deemed to be ‘distinguished for the facility with which it attains the highest intellectual endowments’, while the ‘Ethiopian’ (Black African) race ‘present a singular diversity of intellectual character, of which the far extreme is the lowest grade of humanity.’⁹⁷ In his magnum opus, Morton included a letter by the leader of the phrenological movement (and University of Edinburgh alumnus), George Combe, on the principles of phrenology, and agreed about ‘the [lower] mental character of the Indian, and his cranial developments as explained by Phrenology’.⁹⁸ Some University of Edinburgh professors supported the movement, such as Robert Verity, who thought it could be combined with physiology, and investigated the proportion of white to grey matter ‘throughout the different regions of the brain, in the savage, in the negro, and other inferior varieties of the race’.⁹⁹

The University of Edinburgh also benefitted financially from its relationship to phrenology. For example, the Combe Trust — set up by the George Combe estate, and therefore the money he made from his books and lecture tours promoting phrenology — endowed the first Professorship in Psychology in 1906, which was known as the Combe Professorship. The Combe Trust continues to fund a Combe Trust fellowship in the University’s Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities. The most notorious racial theorist associated with University of Edinburgh, Robert Knox, inspired the foundation of what became anthropology in Britain and argued that the differences between Africans and Europeans would lead to a global race war:

Look at the Negro, so well known to you, and say, need I describe him? Is he shaped like any white person? Is the anatomy of his frame, of his muscles, or organs like ours? Does he walk like us, think like us, act like us? Not in the least [...] Can the black races become civilized? I should say not; their future history, then must resemble the past. The Saxon race will never tolerate them—never amalgamate—never be at peace. The hottest actual war ever carried on [...] is not equal to that now waging between our descendants in America and the dark races; it is a war of extermination — inscribed on each banner is a death’s head and no surrender; one or other must fall.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ J.C. Prichard, *Researches into the Physical History of Man* (London: [N.pub], 1813), pp. 232–33.

⁹⁷ Samuel George Morton, *Crania Americana: or a Comparative View of the Skulls of Various Aboriginal Nations of North and South America* (1839), pp. 5–7.

⁹⁸ Morton, *Crania Americana*, np ‘Letter to John Phillips’.

⁹⁹ Robert Verity, *Changes produced in the Nervous System by Civilization*, 2nd ed. (London, 1839), p. 128.

¹⁰⁰ Robert Knox, *The Races of Man: A Fragment* (Philadelphia: Lea & Blanchard, 1850), pp. 161–62.

Conclusions from Research Strand 2

As this overview of some of the key professors, alumni and senior leadership figures reveals, the University of Edinburgh formed a central point in a network of knowledge about 'civilisation' and 'race' from the period of the Enlightenment onwards. These assumed a normative framework in which the white, educated and often wealthy male was positioned as the ideal type. Other races were either depicted as inherently inferior and so different that they constituted a separate species (as held by the polygenists), as 'degenerated' versions of humans whose complexions and other physical features had changed as they fell down the civilisational ladder, or as 'savages' or 'barbarians' who had yet to ascend it. Civilisational and racial theories were adopted, developed and deployed at an early stage by the Moral Philosophy Professors Adam Ferguson and Dugald Stewart. The University Principal and historian William Robertson also examined the histories of the Americas and India through the stadial model, characterising Native Americans writ large as 'savages'. These theories were also taught by the Professors of Natural History John Walker and Robert Jameson, who drew on their collections of ancestral remains. This included using the skulls in their teaching that were frequently stolen from Indigenous populations and sent to them from around the world often by former students. Student societies debated different racial questions over this period and many medical students chose to write dissertations on the subject. When they fanned out across the world, securing positions with the help of their University of Edinburgh credentials, these alumni applied racial theories and the stadial theories of civilisation in their own works on these subjects. When published back in Britain, their findings strengthened these systems of knowledge. As the 19th century progressed, University of Edinburgh alumni were some of the most important figures in the development of pseudo-sciences that placed racial and civilisational ideas at their centres. While the history of ideas of civilisation and race has tended to focus on major intellectual figures and their influence, future historiography will have to take greater account of institutions and the networks of individuals and ideas that connected them. All the foregoing evidence suggests that the University of Edinburgh was one of the institutional centres for the development of ideas about civilisation and race, and their crystallisation within the 'race sciences' that developed in the 19th century. In different ways, all of these played into intellectual justifications for slavery and colonialism over the period examined and explored further in Appendix 2. The same systems of knowledge retained a central place in Western thought through much of the 20th century. Even though 'race' has been debunked as a scientifically legitimate idea, its cultural and social legacies continue to shape the world in which we live.

Research Strand 3: The University of Edinburgh and the Question of Palestine: Balfour's Imperial Legacy and its Afterlife

Introduction

The third research strand focused on the colonial links between the University of Edinburgh and Palestine. Specifically, it looked at the unique role played by one of the University's longest serving Chancellors, Arthur James Balfour (1891–1930), in establishing and

maintaining a century-long process of imperial and settler-colonial rule in Palestine, resulting today in one of the longest standing colonial occupations and apartheid regimes in modern history. As this section shows, the territorial realisation of modern political Zionism as a settler-colonial nation-state inside of Palestine was first instituted through material, discursive and military support of the British empire leading up to and during the period of the British Mandate in Palestine (1922–1948) and in coordination with leading figures of the Zionist movement. The transition from the Mandate era to Israel’s state declaration in 1948 was accomplished through the start of the *Nakba* (meaning the ‘catastrophe’ in Arabic). This was an aggressive ethnic cleansing campaign of systematic elimination by means of massacre, dispossession and the forced expulsion of approximately 750,000 of Palestine’s Indigenous people under the leadership of Zionist militia groups, namely the Haganah (which would be the future army of the state of Israel) and the Irgun. The historical and ongoing processes of Palestinian dispossession, including ongoing Israeli human rights and international law violations in Gaza that are tantamount to what the International Court of Justice has described as ‘plausible’ violation of the 1948 Genocide Convention, has resulted in one of the largest and most protracted refugee crises in the world today.¹⁰¹ As historians of the modern Arab world have commented — including scholars of Palestine Studies and the new wave of Israeli historians — settler colonialism in Palestine did not begin in 1948 at the time of Israel’s state declaration, but in 1917 through the signing of the Balfour Declaration.¹⁰²

Between 1891 and 1930, the University of Edinburgh appointed Arthur James Balfour to preside as University Chancellor. During Balfour’s nomination speech, Vice-Chancellor Professor Campbell Fraser defined this role as ‘the supreme head of the university’.¹⁰³ Today, it still represents the highest position in the institution and aims to enhance ‘the profile and reputation of the University on national and global levels’.¹⁰⁴ At the time of his appointment, Balfour was one of the most influential imperial political figures of the 20th century and served both the British empire and the University of Edinburgh in a dual role: as an imperial statesman and as a Chancellor. A closer examination of Balfour’s biography, at the threshold between his political and academic affairs, reveals that Balfour-the-imperial-statesman and Balfour-the-University-Chancellor are difficult to separate. Indeed, it was this duality that

¹⁰¹ International Court of Justice, *South Africa v Israel*, Provisional Measures, 26 January 2024, <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf>. See also Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (London: Zed Books, 1979); Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992); Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of ‘Transfer’ in Zionist Political Thought, 1882–1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992); Ahmad Sa’di and Lila Abu-Lughod, *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the Claims of Memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

¹⁰² As historians Rashid Khalidi and Sherene Seikaly have argued, ‘To begin the story in 1917 is to name the struggle for what it is: settler colonialism. We know that Zionism was a response to centuries of Judeophobia in Europe and, more immediately, the consolidation of state-led anti-Semitism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. However, Zionism was not the most popular response to the oppression of Jewish people in Europe, nor was it the only one’; Rashid I. Khalidi and Sherene Seikaly, ‘From the Editors’, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 50 (2021), 1–4.

¹⁰³ Alexander Campbell Fraser, ‘Professor Campbell Fraser’s speech on the occasion of the University of Edinburgh’s election of Balfour’, *The Scotsman*, Edinburgh University General Council, 31 October 1891.

¹⁰⁴ University of Edinburgh, ‘The Chancellor’, <https://www.ed.ac.uk/about/people/officials/chancellor>.

made him an ideal candidate, being at once an eminent scholar and a well-positioned man of public affairs.¹⁰⁵ The tenure of his very appointment as Chancellor coincided with the years in which Balfour played a decisive role in Britain's imperial foreign policy. In this twofold role, he inaugurated the beginning of a settler-colonial formation in Palestine through the signing of a declaration on Palestine, which would come to be named after him as the Balfour Declaration.

The following section of the Review is organised into three parts or research findings. First, it analyses the Declaration and its repercussions on Palestine, historically and in the present-day. Second, it examines the development of Balfour's racial thinking and his policies as a statesman that systematically targeted Palestinians, South Africans and Jewish immigrants in Britain at the very time that he was serving and representing the University of Edinburgh. Third, it looks at Balfour's trip to Palestine in 1925, eight years after the signing of the Declaration and the military conquest of the region by General Edmund Allenby (then Honorary Doctor in Law and Rector at the University of Edinburgh), where he inaugurated the Hebrew University in Jerusalem as part of his broader commitment to the development of imperial education. And finally, in the conclusion, it analyses the imperial afterlife of Balfour, notably in terms of the University of Edinburgh's ongoing entanglement with the contemporary dispossession of Palestinians. This is through direct and indirect institutional investments that are supporting the Israeli occupation of Palestine and ongoing human rights and international law violations in Gaza. It also looks at the implications of having adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) definition of antisemitism.

This summary and accompanying Appendix 3 are based on both primary sources and secondary literature (for example, relating to the history of the Zionist colonisation of Palestine and the British Empire, the history and theory of racial thinking and the history of British imperial knowledge production). Primary sources include, but are not limited to, the University of Edinburgh's institutional records (Court, Senatus Academicus, Accounts), student societies journals, and archival records on Arthur James Balfour, Edmund Allenby and the Patrick Geddes collection. In person and remote research in archives beyond the University of Edinburgh records included National Records of Scotland, National Library of Scotland, Library of the Congress and British Pathé. The research on contemporary University investments supporting settler-colonial dispossession and 'plausible genocide' in Palestine is based on: International Court of Justice and International Criminal Court records of investigations on the events in Gaza after October 2023, media, the United Nations, advocacy and human rights organisations, as well as staff/students reports on companies that are complicit with human rights, international law and Genocide Convention violations in the occupied Palestinian territories; the University of Edinburgh's official institutional communications on the process of the reform of responsible investments, as well as the

¹⁰⁵ See Fraser's speech in *The Scotsman* (1891). Balfour was succeeded by two other imperial Chancellors who similarly spanned the worlds of academia and public affairs: John Buchan, Baron Tweedsmuir of Elsfield, was Chancellor from 1937–40, and was a well-known Scottish novelist, Governor General of Canada (1935–40) and an imperial administrator with Balfour in South Africa, and played a prominent intelligence role in the Middle East; Victor Alexander John Hope, 2nd Marquess of Linlithgow, was Chancellor from 1946–52, and was both the General-Governor in India (1936–43) and a politician.

archives of the community mobilisation preserved by different groups and divestment campaign participants.

Key Research Findings

Research Finding 1: The Balfour Declaration — An Explanation

The Balfour Declaration was a 67-word letter of intent addressed to Lord Rothschild, the figurehead of the British Jewish community. In this promise, with no legal basis, Balfour endorsed the idea of a territorial-based, national Jewish home inside Palestine while simultaneously denying Palestine's Indigenous community from recognition as a people with *national* rights to self-determination. While there were several drafts of this Declaration, the final version was issued on 2 November 1917 and declared the following:

His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.

As noted by historian Sherene Seikaly, the Declaration defined Palestinians 'by who they were not', as non-Jewish communities entitled only to minority civil and religious rights — but not political or national rights — while rendering Palestine a 'national home' for an incoming Jewish settler society.¹⁰⁶ In leaving the status of Palestinian political rights unprotected, this Declaration would continue to deny the rights of Palestinian personhood and install a new racial order by means of negation. Though the basis of this Declaration was categorically challenged by Palestinian society and leadership, it became juridically enshrined verbatim as a result of Balfour's political role as representative of Britain at the League of Nations Council.¹⁰⁷

As a British imperial statesman, and in coordination with the Zionist movement, Balfour issued this political statement 'of dubious legal standing', since Britain had no authority over the land of Palestine.¹⁰⁸ However, the juridical framework he architected put in motion a process of partitioning the land based upon naturalised racialised categories that treated Palestinians as political infants unfit for national self-determination. Despite Palestinian resistance against Balfour's imperial imposition, the Declaration set in motion the processes leading up to the adoption of the UN General Assembly's Resolution 181, the doctrine which proposed the partition of Palestine and the splintering of the land in a way that disproportionately favoured an incoming new settler community at the expense of an

¹⁰⁶Sherene Seikaly, *Men of Capital: Scarcity and Economy in Mandate Palestine* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), pp. 5–6.

¹⁰⁷ Susan Pedersen, 'Writing the Balfour Declaration into the Mandate for Palestine', *The International History Review*, 45 (2023), 279–91.

¹⁰⁸ Shawan Jabarin and Ralph Wilde, 'How Britain broke International Law to stop Palestinian independence 100 years ago', *Mondoweiss*, 29 September 2023 <https://mondoweiss.net/2023/09/how-britain-broke-international-law-to-stop-palestinian-independence-100-years-ago/>.

Indigenous people firmly rooted in the land and engaged in an ongoing struggle for sovereignty. Jewish newcomers (settlers and refugees from Europe) who made up roughly one-third of the total population were offered closer to 56% of the most fertile land in Palestine, including the large cities on the coastal plain. Conversely, Palestinians who were in the majority were expected to settle for approximately 40% of the inland area. By the start of the 1947–1948 *Nakba*, 531 villages were destroyed by Zionist militias and approximately 750,000 Palestinians were forced to leave.¹⁰⁹ They were displaced to different areas of Palestine — in particular the Gaza Strip where the ‘catastrophe’ survivors and their descendants have been subjected to a war of annihilation by Israel between October 2023 and January 2025 — and different countries throughout the Middle East, in a long condition of permanent exile that continues into the present. The 67-word Declaration triggered what Palestinian historian Rashid Khalidi has defined as the ‘one-hundred-year war’ on Palestine.¹¹⁰

Research Finding 2: The Imperial Chancellor’s Racial Thinking and Racist Policy

Arthur James Balfour was the second Scot to become a Prime Minister after John Stuart and was also among the wealthiest men in Great Britain when he entered politics in 1874.¹¹¹ Besides their personal fortunes, Scottish aristocrats also benefitted from university loans. Before becoming Chancellor at University of Edinburgh, Balfour received a £12,000 loan from the University of Edinburgh — the equivalent of £1.5m today — which he repaid immediately after his election in October 1891.¹¹² Wealth was certainly one of the important factors in Balfour’s election, but in terms of reputation, the University of Edinburgh was looking also for somebody who ‘united [the] knowledge of the world and world affairs [... a] great public career, high scholarship and philosophic thought’.¹¹³ Balfour had both a continental and American honorary Doctor of Law degree and, according to Emeritus Professor Campbell Fraser who officiated his election, ‘Balfour exhibited, like Burke and Sir James Mackintosh and John Stuart Mill, that remarkable combination of intellectual power and high academic sympathies, that practical statesmanship, which was too rare in the annals of our English history.’¹¹⁴

The first traces of Balfour’s imperial statesmanship can be found before he was elected Chancellor at University of Edinburgh. In 1886, when he was Secretary for Scotland, Balfour initiated a colonisation scheme for the crofters of the Scottish Highlands, encouraging them to settle in Canada.¹¹⁵ Immediately after this position, Balfour was

¹⁰⁹ Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: One World, 2011); Sa’di and Abu-Lughod, *Nakba*; Nahla Abdo-Zubi and Nur Masalha (editors), *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

¹¹⁰ Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years’ War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2020), pp. 17–54.

¹¹¹ Jock Gallagher, *Scotland’s Global Empire: A Chronicle of Great Scots* (Dunbeath: Whittles Publishing, 2013), pp. 140–41. See also Sydney Zebel, *Balfour. A Political Biography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

¹¹² University Court Finance Committee Agenda Book. Minutes of meeting on 9 July 1891.

¹¹³ Campbell Fraser, ‘Speech’.

¹¹⁴ Campbell Fraser, ‘Speech’.

¹¹⁵ National Records of Scotland, AF51/1 Secretary of State for Scotland: Emigration Files.

nominated Chief Secretary for Ireland and administered Britain's oldest settler colony until 1891. Like his disregard of the Palestinians' right to self-determination as an Indigenous society, Balfour also opposed self-determination for the Irish people. He introduced repressive emergency laws and quelled the political agitations caused by economic depression and anti-British sentiments, earning him the epithet 'bloody Balfour'.¹¹⁶

Balfour's Chancellorship (1891–1930) coincided with what historian Jason Tomes has called 'the zenith of the British Empire', meaning the period at which the empire was at its largest.¹¹⁷ This role also coincided with a series of domestic and imperial decisions influenced by Balfour that would come to have a seismic impact on the racial and colonial configurations of the 20th and 21st centuries at both national and imperial scales. In 1902, he became the UK Prime Minister, and, in this position, continued to play a decisive role in imperial affairs. He was already directing the Foreign Office during the Second Anglo-Boer-War (1899–1902), but it was only later that he articulated his vision for the British dominion of South Africa. The Imperial Chancellor assumed race to be a social and biological fact, upholding the racial logic that 'one European race' had to govern and dominate. He also explicitly claimed that,

All men are from some point of view, equal; but to suppose that the races of Africa are in any sense the equals of men of European descent, so far as government, as society, as the higher interests of civilisation is concerned is really, I think, an absurdity.¹¹⁸

While the South African apartheid regime was in the making, Balfour viewed racial segregation as a crucial means to preserve the racial purity of white supremacist democracies. As he explained in one of his reflections on imperial political reforms:

Where racial differences are clear cut and profound [...] where a [white] race obviously superior is mixed with a race obviously inferior, the superior race may be constituted as a democracy, but into that democracy the inferior race will never be admitted. It may be kept out by law, as in South Africa, or it may be kept out by practice, as in the Southern States of America; but kept out it will be.¹¹⁹

In Balfour's writings on the fate of Palestine's Indigenous people, he further exposed his racist viewpoints in a 1919 memo to Lord Curzon for circulation to cabinet ministers two years following the signing of the Declaration. In his words:

In Palestine [...] we do not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country [...]. The Four Great Powers are committed to Zionism. And Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in present

¹¹⁶ Jason Tomes, *Balfour and Foreign Policy: The International Thought of a Conservative Statesman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 78–81.

¹¹⁷ Tomes, *Balfour*, p. 2.

¹¹⁸ UK Parliament, South Africa Bill of Lords, remarks by Arthur James Balfour, 16 August 1909, House of Commons, *Hansards*, ix.

¹¹⁹ Cited in Tomes, *Balfour*, p. 65.

needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land.¹²⁰

The casualness upon which the fate of a people and the dispossession of an entire nation was declared reveals just how little the people and history of Palestine mattered to British imperial and Zionist leaders alike. The results of Balfour's racist logic and policy, as presented in statements such as the one above and more substantively in the Balfour Declaration, would come to sow death and destruction in Palestine first from the British during the Mandate era, and second from Zionist militia groups through the means of ethnic cleansing and depopulation.

It should be noted, however, that Balfour's disdain for Palestinians and his allegiance to Zionism did not mean that he held favourable views towards Jewish people. On the contrary, his domestic policies would ensure restricted Jewish immigration into Britain under the 1905 Alien Act, which passed 12 years before promulgating the Declaration on Palestine when Balfour was Prime Minister. This legislation constituted the first modern UK anti-immigration law. Its principal aim was to prevent Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe after anti-Jewish hatred and religious persecution had exploded in the Russian Empire, forcing one million Jews to flee towards Western Europe and the Americas between 1880 and 1905.¹²¹ Within this period of mass Jewish migration, 'aliens' meant Jewish people. In Balfour's racially charged opinion:

It would not be to the advantage of the civilization of this country that there should be an immense body of [Jewish] persons who, however patriotic, able and industrious [...] remained a people apart.¹²²

In 1907, two years after the end of Balfour's mandate as Prime Minister (though still in post as Chancellor), the Eugenics Education Society was established in the UK.¹²³ Its creation was also a response to the social unrest resulting from capitalist development. The focus of the Society, which expressed a Conservative agenda of social reform and control of the proletariat (while including also Socialist members), was predominantly on the prevention of the 'degeneration of race' at a national level.¹²⁴ In spite of his reluctance to embrace its most radical biological ideas, Balfour endorsed scientific racism. He considered eugenics a 'splendid applied science' and directly supported the Eugenics Education Society.¹²⁵ In 1912, Balfour as Chancellor was the principal guest at the Eugenics International Congress in London, and in 1913, he became Honorary Vice President of the

¹²⁰ United Nations, 'The Question of Palestine: The International Status of the Palestinian People' (1981), <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/auto-insert-204352/>. See also Michael Adams, 'What Went Wrong in Palestine?', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 18 (1988), 71–82. For the original source, see Mr. Balfour to Lord Curzon, 11 August 1919, Public Records Office, FO.371/4183.

¹²¹ David Englander (editor), *A Documentary History of Jewish Immigrants in Britain 1840–1920* (London: Leicester University Press, 1994), p. 10.

¹²² UK Parliament, Aliens Bill, remarks by Arthur James Balfour, 10 July 1905, *Hansards*, CXLIX, cc. 110–62.

¹²³ L. S. Jaycna, 'Science and Social Order in the Thought of A. J. Balfour', *Isis*, 71 (1980), 11–34 (p. 31).

¹²⁴ Stefan Kuhl, *For the Betterment of the Race: The Rise and Fall of the International Movement for Eugenics and Racial Hygiene* (New York: Macmillan, 2013), pp. 12–20.

¹²⁵ Cited in Kuhl, *For the Betterment*, p. 26; Jaycna, 'Science and Social Order', p. 31.

British Eugenics Education Society, reiterating the special place that racial reason played in his understanding of the world.

These details of his intellectual and public life are neither an aberration from his political views as an imperial statesman, nor a deviation from his involvement in global affairs, such as on the Question of Palestine. On the contrary, the continuity of his race-thinking can be traced in the establishment of a settler colony in the Middle East. What the 1917 Balfour Declaration on Palestine demonstrates most explicitly are the ways in which his forms of race-thinking had matured into an explicitly racist policy. As Balfour himself commented, 'the deep underlying principle of self-determination really points to a Zionist policy' which excluded Palestinians from becoming part of the family of nations.¹²⁶ Indeed, as Balfour later admitted, his ultimate goal with the Declaration was to create the conditions for 'a [Jewish settler] numerical majority in the future' that was entitled to exclusive national sovereignty in virtue of their alleged superior civilisation and capacity to govern themselves.¹²⁷

According to Balfour, in the best of cases, Palestinians could aspire to civil and religious rights, but not to national ones. There are two interconnected elements of the Balfour Declaration that mark its contribution to what scholars such as Edward Said have called a settler-colonial order in Palestine. First, as Said succinctly described in *The Question of Palestine*, Balfour took 'for granted the higher right of a colonial power to dispose of a territory as it saw fit'.¹²⁸ Second, he gave credence to the rights of an incoming settler society that gradually but forcefully secured their settlement through colonial dispossession, theft and expulsion. The Balfour Declaration was therefore the *sine qua non* for the constitution of a settler-colonial order in Palestine that endures into the present.

Research Finding 3: Balfour in Palestine and Imperial Education

On 8 July 1903, the first Allied Colonial University Conference took place in London. The development of a colonial space for knowledge production through the development of university networks was intended to support British imperial rule.¹²⁹ As both Prime Minister and Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh, Balfour was one of the main architects of this imperial turn to academia.

At the Hotel Cecil, Balfour presided over the conference dinner attended by colonial university delegates, heads of colleges and 'men prominent in educational and scientific work'.¹³⁰ After the customary toasts, Balfour held a speech in which he celebrated the foundation of a new British colonial-academic alliance and explained why this was a remarkable political achievement:

¹²⁶ Arthur James Balfour, *Speeches on Zionism* (London: Arrowsmith, 1928), p. 25.

¹²⁷ Tomes, *Balfour*, p. 212.

¹²⁸ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, 1980), p. 16.

¹²⁹ Tamson Pietsch, *Empire of Scholars: Universities, Networks and the British Academic World, 1850–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

¹³⁰ 'Official Report of the Allied Colonial Universities', in *The Empire Review*, VI (London, 1904), p. 121

We are here representing what will turn out to be, I believe, a great alliance of the greatest educational instruments in the Empire — an alliance of all the universities that, in an increasing measure, are feeling their responsibilities, not merely for training the youth which is destined to carry on the traditions of the British Empire, but also to further those great interests of knowledge, scientific research, and culture without which no Empire, however materially magnificent, can really say that it is doing its share in the progress of the world.¹³¹

In Balfour's mind, the new colonial academic alliance was a crucial tool for cementing the same British global domination to which he was contributing as a statesman. But it was also a key instrument for affirming a sense of racial white Anglo-Saxon unity, since 'we boast a community of blood, of language, of laws, of literature'.¹³²

A couple of years later, after terminating his mandate as Prime Minister in 1905, Balfour withdrew for almost a decade from the centre-stage of imperial foreign policy, before making his return in 1916 as Foreign Secretary, one year before the Balfour Declaration. But in those ten years preceding World War I, the University of Edinburgh's Chancellor continued to provide his contribution to the construction of the British imperial academic space. In 1912, perhaps due to his growing interest in 'the Orient', Balfour was asked to chair a session of the Second Congress of the Universities of the Empire on *The Problem of Universities in the East in Regard to their Influence on Character and Moral Ideals*. In his opening speech, he underscored what he saw as the inherent incompatibility between Eastern traditions and Western science. He commented that, if there has been 'mutual adjustment' between scientific knowledge and socio-cultural traditions Western universities, science and social customs are in a relationship of 'collision' in Eastern universities.¹³³

This idea of incompatibility was grounded in a concept of 'natural' racial inequalities that Balfour had articulated a few years earlier in a philosophical essay called 'Decadence'. In this essay, Balfour explained how the history of the 'unchanging East' is dominated by a monotony of 'Oriental despotism', which pointed towards its inability to self-govern. He wrote that:

I at least find it quite impossible to believe that any attempt to provide widely different races with an identical [...] educational [environment] can ever make them alike. They have been different and unequal since history began; different and unequal they are destined to remain.¹³⁴

While Balfour was developing his theories on racial difference, the Zionist movement was planning the establishment of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, as a move of high 'practical and symbolic significance' towards the consolidation of Zionist colonial settlement in Palestine. To quote its chairman, Chaim Weizmann, who also played a prominent role in convincing Balfour to issue the Declaration, the University was conceived as the 'fulfilment

¹³¹ 'Official Report', p. 121.

¹³² 'Official Report', p. 122.

¹³³ 'Congress of the Universities of the British Empire, Report of Proceedings' (London: University of London Press, Hodder & Stoughton, 1912), p. 125.

¹³⁴ Arthur Balfour, *Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1908), pp. 46–47.

of [the] particular dream of the early days of the movement'.¹³⁵ In 1923, Weizmann invited Patrick Geddes — a former lecturer in Zoology at the University of Edinburgh (1880–1888) and a renowned Scottish sociologist and urbanist — to assist the British Mandate in replanning the city, as well as the Zionist movement in the 'design and layout of the university buildings'.¹³⁶ The plans for this are preserved at University of Edinburgh's Centre for Research Collections.¹³⁷ Later, Geddes was asked to help the Zionist movement develop plans for Tel Aviv, the first Zionist urban colony, as well as the cities of Tiberias and Haifa.¹³⁸

Two years later, Balfour visited Palestine for the first time. He was invited by the Zionist movement to inaugurate the Hebrew University and lay the foundation stone for the Balfour-Einstein Institute of Mathematics and Physics on a site selected by Geddes.¹³⁹ As the city's Palestinian inhabitants took to the streets to protest his visit, Balfour, dressed in his University of Edinburgh robes, delivered his inauguration speech on Mount Scopus and celebrated the Hebrew University as an experiment of adapting 'Western methods' developed by the 'Jewish race' to an Asiatic site and as an institution capable of regenerating a stagnant Palestine.¹⁴⁰ In this way, Balfour espoused the Zionist narrative about the need to regenerate an arid Palestine. Significantly, following this inauguration in 1925, the University was included in the network of allied imperial universities to which Balfour had contributed.¹⁴¹ The land and buildings of the University were registered in the name of the Jewish National Fund, this being the main organisation leading 'Jewish colonisation in Palestine', through the acquisition of land under British imperial protection that resulted in the dispossession of Indigenous Palestinian communities.¹⁴²

After inaugurating the Hebrew University, Balfour also toured the first Jewish settlements established in Palestine and Tel Aviv. In Balfouria, a colony of mainly American settlers dedicated to him by the Zionist movement, Balfour celebrated the 'great industrial and agricultural efforts' of the settlers and their colonial enterprise as a 'triumph of civilisation'.¹⁴³

A year after Balfour's return from the Middle East, the University of Edinburgh conferred an Honorary Doctorate in Law to General Edmund Allenby, in 1926, and would

¹³⁵ Chaim Weizmann, *Trial and Error* (Hamilton: London, 1949), p. 390.

¹³⁶ Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, p. 391.

¹³⁷ See Appendix 3. Note that the University of Edinburgh's Centre for Research Collections holds the largest existing archival collection on Geddes. Moreover, the University of Edinburgh has a Patrick Geddes Hall, which includes a dedicated Geddes plaque at the entrance: 'Sir Patrick Geddes', <https://www.ed.ac.uk/about/people/plaques/geddes>.

¹³⁸ Nazmi Jubeh, 'Patrick Geddes: Luminary or Prophet of Demonic Planning', *Jerusalem Quarterly*, 80 (2019), 23–40 (p. 26 and p. 38).

¹³⁹ 'Hebrew University. Distinguished Visitors to Jerusalem', *The Scotsman*, 18 March 1925, p. 10. Note that the Balfour-Einstein Institute of Mathematics and Physics was the initial name given to this institute, which can also be found in the American Jewish Yearbook of 1926 and 1927.

¹⁴⁰ Roy Macleod, 'Balfour's Mission to Palestine: Science, Strategy, and the Inauguration of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem', *Minerva (London)*, 46 (2008), 53–76 (p. 75). Balfour (1928), p. 78 and p. 83.

¹⁴¹ *The Yearbook of the Universities of the Empire* (Bell and Sons: London, 1925), p. 497.

¹⁴² *The Yearbook of the Universities of the Empire* (Bell and Sons: London, 1930), p. 528. Moïse Berenstein, 'Jewish Colonisation in Palestine: II', *International Labour Review*, 30 (1934), 797–819. For a history of the JNF and its role in Palestinian dispossession, see Walter Lehn, 'The Jewish National Fund', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 3 (1974), 74–96.

¹⁴³ Balfour, *Speeches*, p. 110 and p. 112.

later elect him as Rector, in 1935.¹⁴⁴ Around the same time that the Balfour Declaration was signed, General Allenby was put in charge of Britain's 1917 Palestine campaign that led to the occupation of Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip, and to the British military destroying the majority of housing units and urban spaces.¹⁴⁵ When the University of Edinburgh presented General Allenby with an Honorary Law Degree in 1926, the Dean of the Faculty celebrated his contribution to imperial conquest and the dispossession of Palestinians, explaining that the degree was a way for the University of Edinburgh 'to pay homage to the leader of the latest and most thrilling of the Crusades [and] the capture of Jerusalem out of the infidels hands'.¹⁴⁶

Conclusions from Research Strand 3

Balfour's legacy as the most prominent imperial Chancellor of the University of Edinburgh who irreversibly triggered a process of settler-colonial dispossession and de-humanisation in Palestine, is not merely a matter of *historical* harm. Indeed, harm to Palestinians today can be seen as an extension of Balfour's legacy in the present. While this violence may have begun with Balfour's Declaration, it remains through ongoing policies that continue the trajectory of imperialism, settler colonialism and the dispossession of Palestinian land and life.

Following the Hamas attacks of 7 October 2023 and Israel's war of annihilation in Gaza, an unprecedented community mobilisation at the University of Edinburgh has revealed how the historical harms that Balfour instigated are being continued today, in this case through conspicuous direct and indirect investments in Israel's occupation. Within the University of Edinburgh, there has been widespread support among staff and students for immediate divestment from any interests supporting Israel's dispossession, the campaign being supported by student societies, the Student Council, the Academic Senate, the University of Edinburgh's anti-oppressive networks, hundreds of members of staff and the union UCU. Collectively, these groups, which included both Jewish and Palestinian staff and students, have asked the University of Edinburgh's senior leadership team to immediately disentangle the institution and its profits from what the International Court of Justice has defined as a 'plausible violation' of the Genocide Convention by Israel, and from crimes against humanity for which the International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for Israel's Prime Minister and former Defence Minister.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁴ University of Edinburgh, 'Senate Minutes', 6 May 1926, in *Centre for Research Collections* (University of Edinburgh). See Appendix 3.

¹⁴⁵ *Military Operations: Egypt & Palestine from the Outbreak of War with Germany to June 1917*. Official History of the Great War Based on Official Documents by Direction of the Historical Section of the Committee of Imperial Defence (London: HM Stationery Office), I, p. 75.

¹⁴⁶ University of Edinburgh, 'Senate Minutes', 20 July 1926, in *Centre for Research Collections* (University of Edinburgh).

¹⁴⁷ International Court of Justice, 'Situation in the State of Palestine: ICC Pre-Trial Chamber I rejects the State of Israel's challenges to jurisdiction and issues warrants of arrest for Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant', *International Criminal Court*, 21 November 2024, <https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/situation-state-palestine-icc-pre-trial-chamber-i-rejects-state-israels-challenges>.

To date, the University of Edinburgh’s senior leadership team and Court have not demonstrated sufficient *direct* engagement with the requests emerging from one of the most well-supported community mobilisations in the history of the University. Importantly, this mobilisation is comparable to the successful divestment campaign that took place in the 1970s from another apartheid state, South Africa. In 1971, the University of Edinburgh listened to students and staff, and after intense protests it sold all its investments complicit with apartheid.¹⁴⁸ But in the case of Palestine, the senior leadership team has deployed a ‘conflict agnostic’ approach, a term that denies the *Nakba* and its settler-colonial afterlife.¹⁴⁹ This approach has the effect of de-limiting the outcomes of the working groups that are informing Court decisions on responsible investments, and preventing precautionary divestment from companies involved with the Israeli military in Gaza. This approach also means that the University of Edinburgh runs the risk of eluding due diligence and exposing itself to complicity with genocide, crimes against humanity and an illegal occupation. The Court’s application of a ‘Palestine exception’ to dealing with Israeli colonial violence and Palestinian dispossession is grounded in the idea that this represents an ‘intractable question’ to which basic standards of justice and responsibility are not applicable.¹⁵⁰ These decisions are set within the context of the University of Edinburgh’s adoption of the IHRA’s definition of antisemitism in 2020, which took place without broad consultation with students and staff, notably those involved in the Question of Palestine. The IHRA definition violates academic freedom and freedom of speech by framing any criticism of Israel’s policies of settler-colonial dispossession driven by state racism as a form of antisemitism. This has created an academic space in which any criticism of a regime of colonial dispossession to which University of Edinburgh has contributed is highly limited.¹⁵¹ This, alongside the University of Edinburgh’s direct and indirect investments in companies accused of enabling Israel’s occupation and human rights violations, represent a clear repetition of the colonial and imperial harms which the Balfour Declaration institutionalised more than a century ago.

¹⁴⁸ See Appendix 3.

¹⁴⁹ The notion of the University’s “conflict agnostic” approach to Palestine was used on June 10th 2024 in private correspondence between a member of the University’s senior leadership team in charge of the responsible investment working group, and other members of the working group, including the staff representative nominated by the Gaza Encampment. This was in response to the Gaza Encampment staff representative’s request to include among the materials for the Court meeting of June 16 (as agreed in the negotiations between Senior Leadership Team and Gaza Encampment) the dossier that the staff representative had prepared on two companies in which the University invests—Alphabet and Amazon—directly involved in war crimes and genocide in Gaza, so as to allow Court to vote on those two companies. See Appendix 3 for more details on the process.”

¹⁵⁰ Wala Alqaisyaa and Nicola Perugini, ‘The Academic Question of Palestine’, *Middle East Critique*, 33 (2024), 299–311.

¹⁵¹ British Society for Middle Eastern Studies and the European Legal Support Centre, ‘Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom in UK Higher Education: The Adverse Impact of the IHRA Definition of Antisemitism’ (September 2023).

PART 3: CURRENT INSTITUTIONAL PICTURE FROM STATISTICAL PERSPECTIVES

In addition to looking into the links between the University of Edinburgh and histories of enslavement and colonialism, this report also considers how racial disparity within our institution represents an important legacy of these histories.¹⁵² In this section, we aim to understand the current institutional picture of racial and ethnic minority populations at the University of Edinburgh in statistical terms. To achieve this goal, this report utilises institutional data from the past five years, disaggregated by racial and ethnic minority groups, to understand the finer details of the under-representation of racially/ethnically minoritised staff and students, seeing this as a significant indicator of institutional climate. This section provides further evidence to support the University's Race Equality & Anti-Racist Subcommittee's Action Plan and, specifically, its focus on addressing the unequal experiences and under-representation of racially/ethnically minoritised staff, both in academic roles and in professional services, as well as tackling student under-representation.

Understanding staff under-representation and issues with career progression are of central importance to any attempts to decolonise an institution's culture. Previous studies conclude that an important way to address the negative experiences of Black, Asian and other ethnically/racially minoritised staff and students is to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of academic and professional services staff.¹⁵³ Studies have also found that hiring racially/ethnically minoritised staff is important to the ability of UK higher education institutions to decrease the academic assessment gap and improve student satisfaction.¹⁵⁴

This report utilises racial and ethnic classifications that are consistent with the Higher Education Statistics Agency and previous reports authored by the Equality Diversity Monitoring and Research Committee (EDMARC) at the University of Edinburgh that classify groups into Whites, Blacks, Asians, Mixed and Others. It was comprised and analysed from institutional staff and student data from 2018/19 to 2022/23 and aimed to arrive at the most accurate and real number of racial/ethnic minority groups at the University of Edinburgh over the past five years. It will show that, while there has been an increased trend towards diversification, the small increases in Black, Asian and other ethnic minority groups do not benefit all groups equally. The goal of this study is to pinpoint which groups are increasing, which are remaining the same and which are decreasing within the larger BAME designation. Importantly, this study excluded staff and student data that did not include racial or ethnic identifiers, i.e. those that chose not to disclose their ethnic identity when collecting data. This necessarily effects the overall number of staff and student data that could be utilised for analysis as well as the overall numbers presented. However, the

¹⁵² This work was conducted in collaboration with research assistant, Obasanjo Bolarinwa.

¹⁵³ Valerie Amos and Amatey Doku, *Black, Asian and minority ethnic student attainment at UK Universities: Closing the Gap* (London: National Union of Students, 2019); Paul Ian Campbell, *Race and Assessment in Higher Education: From Conceptualising Barriers to Making Measurable Change* (Leeds: Emerald Publishing Company, 2024); Louise Cramer, 'Alternative Strategies for Closing the Award Gap between White and Minority Ethnic Students', *Elife*, 10 (2021).

¹⁵⁴ Campbell, *Race and Assessment*; Cramer, 'Alternative Strategies'.

reported proportion of Black, Asian and other racial/ethnic minorities in terms of under-representation supports the findings of previous research by EDMARC staff and student reports.

Justifying a Disaggregation of Racial and Ethnic Minority Groups in Data Analysis

Over the past few years, racial and ethnic minority under-representation in the UK higher education sector has increasingly become an area of research and institutional interest. Yet data collection practices and institutional racial and ethnic data availability make national and comparative studies between institutions somewhat difficult. Qualitative studies have increased our knowledge of how Black, Asian and other racially/ethnically minoritised populations experience racism within UK higher education, but this research is still new and tends towards smaller qualitative studies that seek to capture the experiences of specific groups. In contrast, broad based analyses of shifts in staff and student demographics over time have not generally been undertaken and are not well represented within UK higher education research on race and diversity.

Recent studies have increased our understanding of anti-Blackness within the UK higher education system as a particular form of racism requiring further study and investigation. The experiences of Black academics are marked by seemingly contradictory phenomena of invisibility and hypervisibility. If their experiences of racial discrimination, harassment and institutional powerlessness remain unseen, Black people's bodies and presence are used by institutions to represent diversity and inclusion within committees and universities comprised almost exclusively of white academics and senior leadership teams.¹⁵⁵ Compared with their white counterparts, Black staff report unfair workloads and unequal pay, a lack of institutional investment in their presence as teachers and researchers, and abandonment by line managers, colleges and institutional members concerning promotion and career advancement.¹⁵⁶ More work is still needed to understand the experiences of racism among other minoritised groups in order to generate a more robust understanding of institutional racism across UK higher education sector.¹⁵⁷

The lack of institutional analyses could be due to several factors. The first relates to data collection practices that do not emphasize the accurate collection and storage of racial and ethnic identification among staff and students. Despite many Russell Group universities having centuries long legacies, racial and ethnic data has only recently become a relevant institutional marker. Russell Group universities tend to frame racial diversity and inclusion as a goal of their institutions, but one that is ambiguous and undefined. For example, policies specifically targeting populations and metrics for accomplishing diversification are rarely

¹⁵⁵ Becca Franssen, *Unblocking the Pipeline: Supporting the Retention, Progression and Promotion of Black Early-Career Academics* (Oxford: Higher Education Policy Institute, 2024).

¹⁵⁶ Franssen, *Unblocking the Pipeline*.

¹⁵⁷ Carole Leathwood, Uvanney Maylor and Marie-Pierre Moreau, *The Experience of Black and Minority Ethnic Staff Working in Higher Education: Literature Review 2009* (York: Equality Challenge Unit, 2009); Cecily Jones, 'Falling between the Cracks: What Diversity Means for Black Women in Higher Education', *Policy Futures in Education*, 4 (2006), 145–59.

fully divulged.¹⁵⁸ Consequently, there are often few metrics or measures one can use to understand if racial and ethnic diversification has actually been achieved. Moreover, the alleged willingness of institutions and departments to address racial/ethnic under-representation tends to be undergirded by a colourblind ideology that asserting that racial disparities may be a product of individual biases rather than institutional practices. As such, this colourblind approach emphasises treating individuals equally within the institution, instead of addressing institutional practices of racism. Colourblind practices downplay and/or ignore the existence of racism and white racial privilege, and thus actively thwart progress in addressing racial discrimination against under-represented racial and ethnic minorities and anti-Black racism.¹⁵⁹

The second factor is that visible racial ethnic minority groups can be difficult to measure and track within UK higher education institutions given the tendency to group racial and ethnic minority groups under aggregate term such as BAME or BME. The UK government has stated that it will not utilise the ‘terms BAME (Black, Asian and minority ethnic) and BME (Black and minority ethnic) because they emphasise certain ethnic minority groups (Asian and Black) and exclude others (Mixed, Other and White ethnic minority groups)’, as well as masking ‘disparities between different ethnic groups’ and creating ‘misleading interpretations of data’.¹⁶⁰ Yet many UK higher education institutions have not yet developed uniformed institutional data collection practices or ways of presenting institutional data results that make this disaggregated racial and ethnic identification easily accessible. Black, Asian and other ethnic minority groups are often simply clustered as BAME or BME within university reports. In instances where universities do disaggregate racial and ethnic groups, they are often represented by percentages rather than concrete numbers. Yet numbers, rather than ratios or percentages, would better allow researchers to understand how many non-white research and teaching staff and students are currently at an institution. Another effect of clustering non-white populations without differentiation is that little attention is paid to the ways that institutional racism and racial stereotypes operate on specific groups.¹⁶¹ For example, the association of threat and criminality may differ between Black populations and Asian populations. The BAME/BME clustering of racial and ethnic minorities not only obscures the historical and sociological differences between groups but also gives the illusion that all white populations can be understood from the perspective of whites who hold positions of power (numerically, culturally and institutionally) and non-whites who do not. This distinction not only dictates interpretations of data; it also perpetuates the idea that racial and ethnic difference should not be defined from the perspectives of Black, Asian and other non-white populations, but rather from the way

¹⁵⁸ George Koutsouris, Lauren Stentiford and Brahm Norwich, ‘A Critical Exploration of Inclusion Policies of Elite UK Universities’, *British Educational Research Journal*, 48 (2022), 878–95.

¹⁵⁹ Tommy J. Curry and Gwenetta Curry, ‘On the Perils of Race Neutrality and Anti-Blackness: Philosophy as an Irreconcilable Obstacle to (Black) Thought’, *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 77 (2018), 657–87. See also Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in America* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017; first publ. 2003).

¹⁶⁰ UK Government, ‘Writing about Ethnicity’, <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/writing-about-ethnicity/#bame-and-bme>.

¹⁶¹ Terri Kim and Wilson Ng, ‘Ticking the “Other” Box: Positional Identities of East Asian Academics in UK Universities, Internationalisation and Diversification’, *Policy Reviews in Higher Education*, 3 (2019), 94–119.

that white majority staff and administrators perceive *those others* who are not white. In other words, BAME/BME designates all racial and ethnic minorities as different in a similar way, i.e. not being white. Making these groups known solely through their difference with the white majority numbs our ability to see how racism operates beyond these groupings.

This report aims to achieve more concrete understandings of racial and ethnic minority under-representation at the University of Edinburgh. As an institution that prides itself on its international reputation, the staff and student populations are indicators of how well the University of Edinburgh is progressing towards its vision as a global institution. This section uses staff and student data to reflect on the progress made and obstacles towards achieving a racially and ethnically diverse staff and student population.

Baseline of Comparisons

National racial and ethnic under-representation throughout higher education is a concerning problem for the sector. According to 2021/22 census data for England and Wales, Black, Asian, Mixed or Other Non-White ethnic groups account for 18% of the population.¹⁶² The British population is comprised of 4% of Black people, 9.3% of Asian people and 2.9% of Mixed ethnic groups.¹⁶³ The 2021/22 census data from Scotland indicates that roughly 7.1% of the population identify as Black, Asian or other ethnic minorities.¹⁶⁴ Scotland's 2021/22 census data has not been fully integrated with the England and Wales 2021/22 census data, so the respective percentages are used as guidelines of proportional representation for these groups. However, it is important to emphasise that the University of Edinburgh is also a global institution with staff and student populations who come from all corners of the globe. While there is a dominant White racial majority in the UK, and especially in Scotland, the basis of comparison must not presume that small numbers of Non-White racial and ethnic minorities in Scotland offer an appropriate baseline for comparison.

Staff Frequency Distribution and Cross-Tabulation

Figure 1 and Table 1 show that the total number of staff members has steadily increased over the years, growing from 14,900 (7,970 female staff and 6,930 male staff) in 2018/19 to 17,270 (9,530 female staff and 7,740 male staff) in 2022/23. Each year, there have been more female staff members than male staff members. The percentage of female staff has

¹⁶² UK Government, 'Population of England and Wales', <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/population-of-england-and-wales/latest/>.

¹⁶³ UK Government, 'Population of England and Wales by Ethnicity', <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/population-of-england-and-wales/latest/#by-ethnicity-5-groups>.

¹⁶⁴ The non-white racial and minority and mixed ethnic groups are comprised of multiple populations. Asian populations are roughly 4%, Black populations are approximately 1.2% and Mixed ethnicities are 1.1% of the BME grouping. See Lucien Staddon Foster, 'Scotland's Census 2022: What do the latest statistics tell us about minority ethnic groups in Scotland?', *Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights*, 17 June 2024, [https://www.crer.org.uk/blog/census-2022-bme-population#:~:text=Scotland's%20Population:%20An%20overview,Scotland's%20last%20census%20in%202011](https://www.crer.org.uk/blog/census-2022-bme-population#:~:text=Scotland's%20Population:%20An%20overview,Scotland's%20last%20census%20in%202011.).

risen slightly, going from 53% in 2018/19 to 55% in 2022/23. While the number of male staff members has also grown each year, it has done so at a slower pace than the increase in female staff. As a result, the percentage of male staff decreased from 47% in 2018/19 to 45% in 2022/23.

Academic Year & Gender				
Academic year	Female	%	Male	%
2018/19	7970	53%	6930	47%
2019/20	8305	54%	7135	46%
2020/21	7840	53%	6940	47%
2021/22	8540	54%	7185	46%
2022/23	9530	55%	7740	45%

Table 1: University of Edinburgh staff gender by academic year

**Guaranteed and not guaranteed hours merged

**40 “unknown” for headcount was dropped

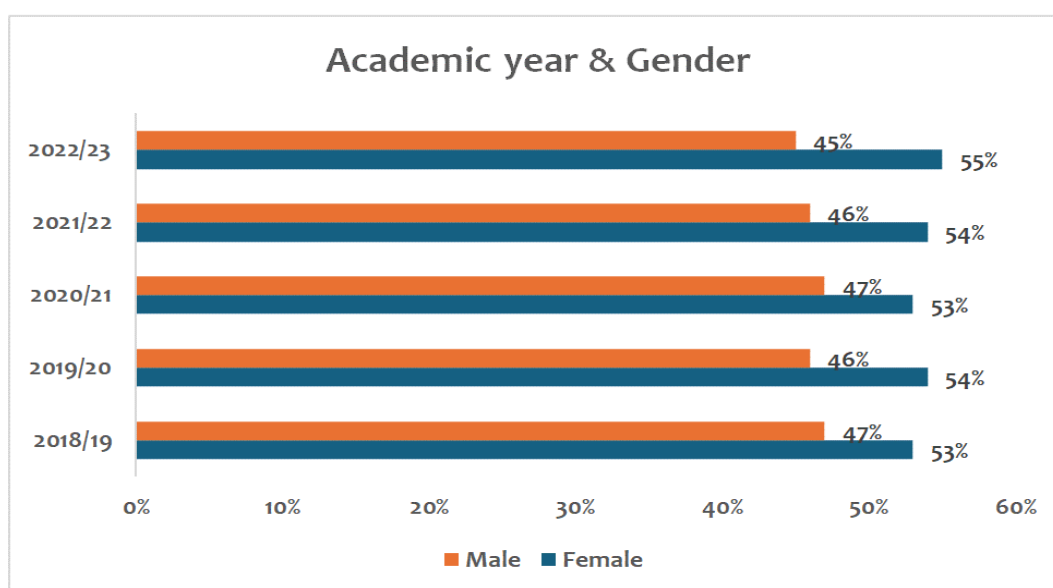


Figure 1: Staff academic year & gender

Figure 2 shows that the White ethnic group consistently makes up the majority across all academic years, with a slight decline from 87% in 2018/19 to 84% in 2022/23. There is a modest increase in Asian representation, rising from 7% to 9% in recent years. Other ethnic groups, including Black, Mixed, and Other, remain low and relatively stable.

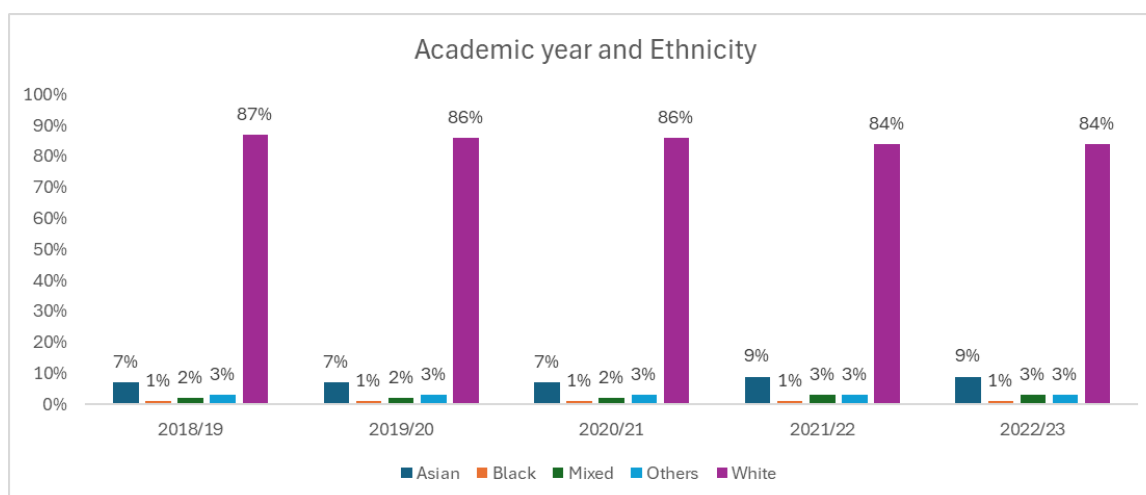


Figure 2: Staff academic year & ethnicity

This information is also available in Table 2 in Appendix 4.

Figure 3 shows that White staff hold the highest numbers across all assignment types and grades, peaking at 4,275 in open-ended UE07–UE10 roles. Asian staff numbers increase with grade and contract type, from 75 in fixed-term roles to 280 in open-ended UE07–UE10 positions. Other ethnic groups, including Black (ranging from 10 to 40), Mixed (10 to 90), and Other (5 to 135), remain consistently lower across categories. Overall, staff numbers tend to rise with seniority and open-ended contracts, with the highest representation observed among White and Asian groups.

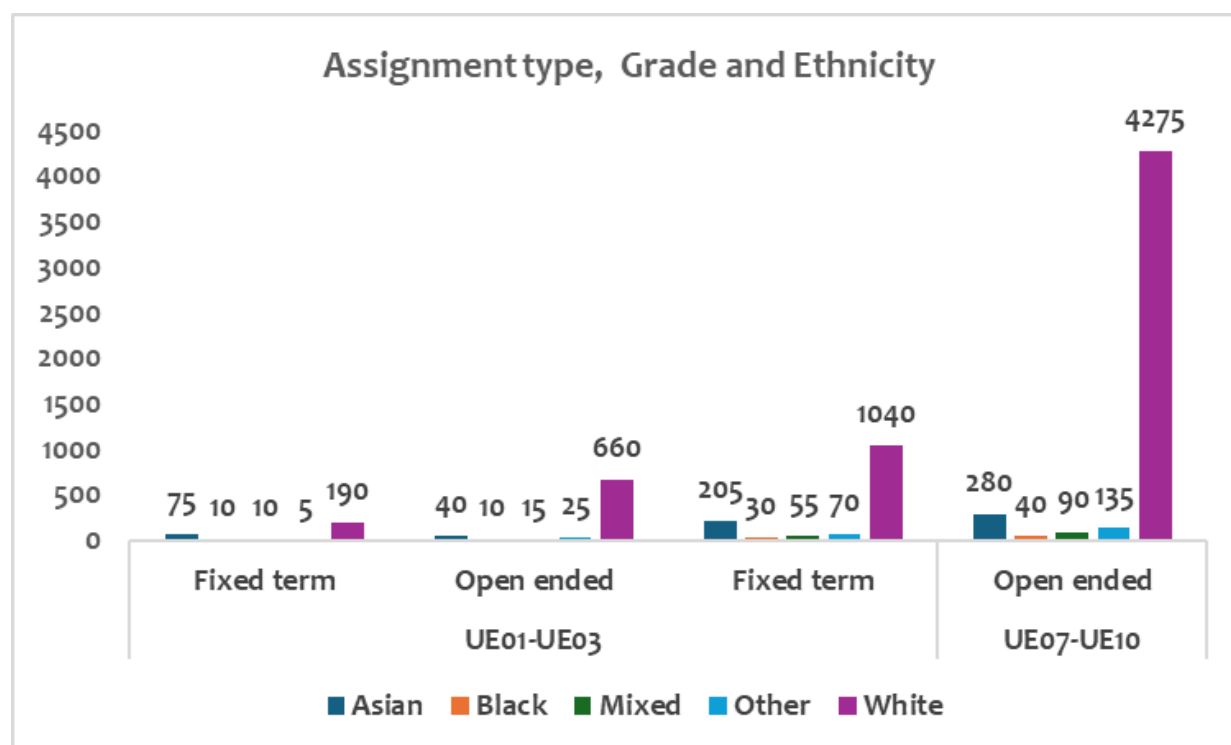


Figure 3: Staff assignment type, grade, and ethnicity for 2022/23

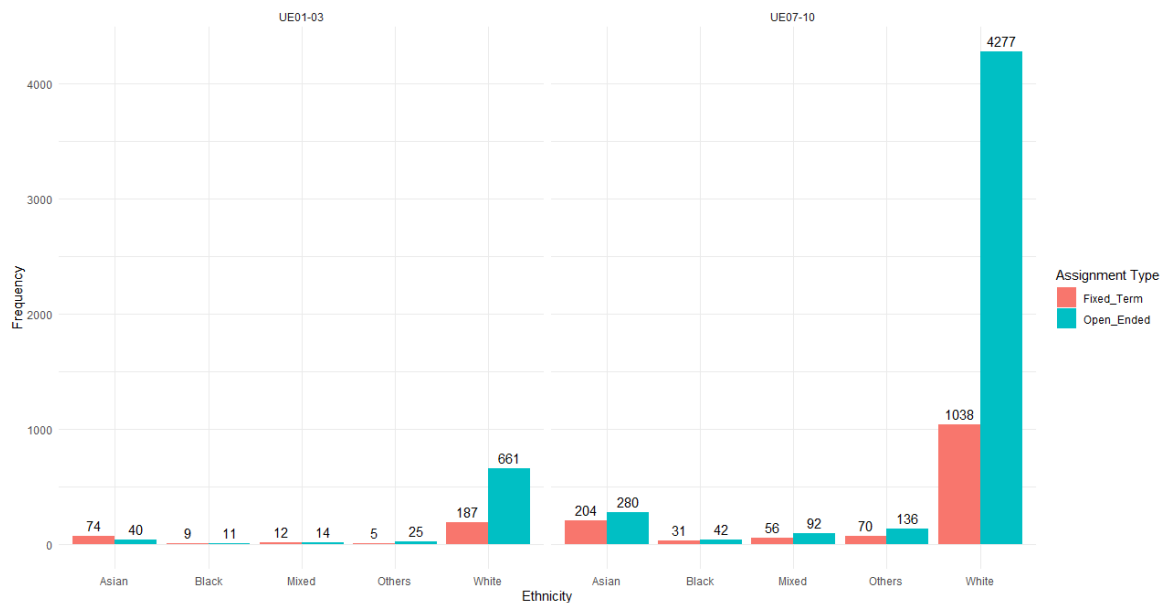


Figure 4 shows the distribution of staff by gender, grade and ethnicity in 2022/2023. In every grade level, for both male and female staff, White employees make up the largest group, accounting for over 80% in most categories. Asian and Mixed ethnic groups have smaller but visible proportions, while Black and Other ethnicities are present in very low percentages, usually below 5%, though Asian staff have slightly higher representation in some male categories. Non-White groups are somewhat more represented in the lower grades (UE01-03), especially among male staff. Despite this, the overall staff composition across all grades remains predominantly White.

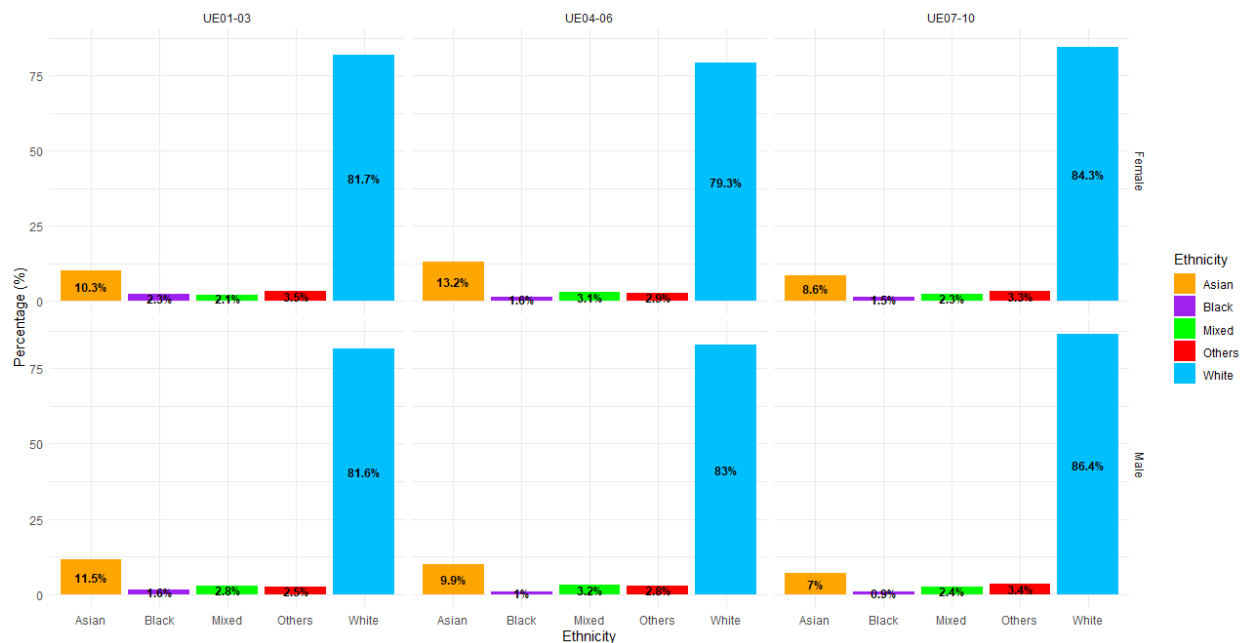


Figure 4: Staff grades recategorised by gender and ethnicity for 2022/2023

This information is also available in Table 17 in Appendix 4.

The 2022/23 staff demographics reveal that the workforce is still mainly White, making up 84%. Asian staff account for 9%, while Black staff remain under-represented at just 1%. Diversity continues to drop at higher grade levels, with White staff being more common in these roles (Table 8).

Year/Grade code	Asian	%	Black	%	Mixed	%	Other	%	White	%
2022/23		9%		1%		3%		3%		84%
UE01	25	7%	10	3%	10	2%	15	4%	285	83%
UE02	40	12%	< 5	1%	10	4%	5	2%	285	81%
UE03	50	14%	5	2%	5	2%	10	3%	290	80%
UE04	20	3%	5	1%	10	2%	10	2%	570	92%
UE05	85	7%	15	1%	30	3%	30	3%	1000	86%
UE06	380	15%	30	1%	100	4%	80	3%	2000	77%
UE07	240	9%	40	1%	70	3%	105	4%	2210	83%
UE08	135	8%	25	1%	35	2%	65	4%	1465	85%
UE09	75	7%	5	0%	20	2%	30	3%	990	88%
UE10	35	5%	5	1%	20	3%	5	1%	715	91%

Table 8: 2022/2023 Staff ethnicity and grade code

Table 14 (Appendix 4) shows that White staff consistently make up the majority of the workforce, with numbers ranging between 7,015 and 7,600 in the UE06–10 grade levels over the past five years. Asian staff have seen some growth in these grades, rising from 690 in 2018/19 to 865 in 2022/23. Black and mixed-ethnicity staff remain under-represented, with Black staff in UE06–10 reaching a peak of 105 in 2022/23. Mixed-ethnicity staff peak at 245 in 2021/22, showing a slight decrease in 2022/23. In terms of gender, males are more common in higher grades, while females are more frequently in lower grades, with White females in UE06-10 numbering between 3,540 and 3,970 over the last five years. Although there have been some increases in diversity, most notably among Asian staff in grades UE06-10, the workforce remains predominantly White.

Table 16 in Appendix 4 shows the nationality breakdown of staff by ethnicity 2022/23. Non-UK staff make up 30% of the workforce, with most being White, followed by smaller numbers of Asian, Mixed, and Black staff. UK staff make up 62%, with a higher proportion of White staff and very few from other ethnicities. The “Unknown” category is 4% of the total, mostly White, with small percentages of Asian, Black, Mixed, and Other groups.

Staff Regression Analysis Results

The regression analysis in Table 18 (Appendix 4) looks at the connection between staff ethnicity and the likelihood of working part time, using White staff as the baseline for comparison.¹⁶⁵ The results show that Asian staff and staff from Other ethnic backgrounds

¹⁶⁵ A regression analysis is a set of statistical methods used for estimating relationships between a dependant variable and one or more independent variables. A P-value indicates the probability of one’s result to be the result of chance or directly related to an independent variable. The lower the P-value (0.01 to 0.05) indicates with some confidence that a result is related to the stated variable or set of variables. This disproves the null hypothesis that states that a chosen independent variable has no effect of an observed outcome. For readers, this will be explained as a variable being significant.

are much less likely than White staff to have part-time contracts, with odds ratios of 0.68 and 0.72. This means they have a lower chance of working part time, and the results are strong and reliable. For Black and Mixed-ethnicity staff, there is no meaningful difference compared to White staff when it comes to having a part-time contract. Their odds ratios are close to 1, indicating that ethnicity does not significantly affect the likelihood of part-time work for these groups.

The regression analysis in Table 19 below looks at the relationship between staff ethnicity and gender, using White staff as the baseline group and focusing on the likelihood of being male. The results show that Asian staff are 21% more likely than White staff to be male, and this difference is statistically significant. Similarly, Black staff are 65% more likely than White staff to be male, with this result also being statistically significant. Both findings are supported by confidence intervals that indicate a reliable association. For Mixed-ethnicity staff and those from Other ethnicities, there is no significant difference in the likelihood of being male when compared to white staff. In these groups, the odds ratio is close to 1, and the confidence interval includes 1, indicating no meaningful gender difference compared to White staff. This aligns with a general hiring trend where, if a white person is hired, they are more likely to be a female, whereas this pattern does not appear as strongly in other minority groups.

Ethnicity	Odds ratio	P-value	Confidence interval
White	Reference	Reference	Reference
Asian	1.21	0.003	1.07-1.37
Black	1.65	0.003	1.19-2.29
Mixed	0.92	0.472	0.73-1.15
Others	1.06	0.592	0.86-1.31

Table 19: Regression output of staff ethnicity & gender in 2022/23

The regression analysis in Table 20 below examines how staff ethnicity relates to grade level, specifically looking at the likelihood of being in higher grades (UE07–10) and using white staff as the baseline group. The results show that Asian staff are 33% less likely than White staff to be in these higher grades, a statistically significant difference. Similarly, Mixed-ethnicity staff are 26% less likely than White staff to reach these higher grades, and this difference is also statistically significant. In contrast, Black staff show only a slight reduction (14% less likely) in reaching higher grades compared to white staff, but this result is not statistically significant, meaning it doesn't show a clear, reliable difference. For staff from Other ethnic backgrounds, the odds ratio is close to 1, indicating no meaningful difference from White staff regarding grade level, with this finding confirmed by a lack of statistical significance.

Ethnicity	Odds ratio	P-value	Confidence interval
White	Reference	Reference	Reference
Asian	0.67	0.000	0.59-0.76
Black	0.86	0.353	0.62-1.19
Mixed	0.74	0.008	0.59-0.92
Others	1.11	0.337	0.90-1.37

Table 20: Regression output of staff ethnicity & grade in 2022/23

Note: Analysis of staff gender and grade by ethnicity could not be conducted using regression analysis due to the high variation in ethnic composition across different grades, which limited the reliability of the results.

Frequency Distribution and Cross-Tabulation for Current and Entrance Students

Figure 1s shows data on the gender of current students from 2019/20 to 2022/23. Over five academic years, student enrollment has steadily increased, with female students consistently making up the majority. Starting with 43,305 students in the 2018/19 academic year, total enrollment reached 49,430 by 2022/23. Female students represented about 61% for the first three years, rising slightly to 62% in the last two years. Male students made up 39% at first, dropping to 38% in recent years. Over the past five years, the average student population has been 46,284, with female students making up slightly more than 61% of the student population, showing a strong female presence. A small number of students fall into an “Other/Unknown” category, but this group makes up only a tiny part of the overall population. Overall, the data indicates a growing student body with a consistent gender imbalance, favouring female students.

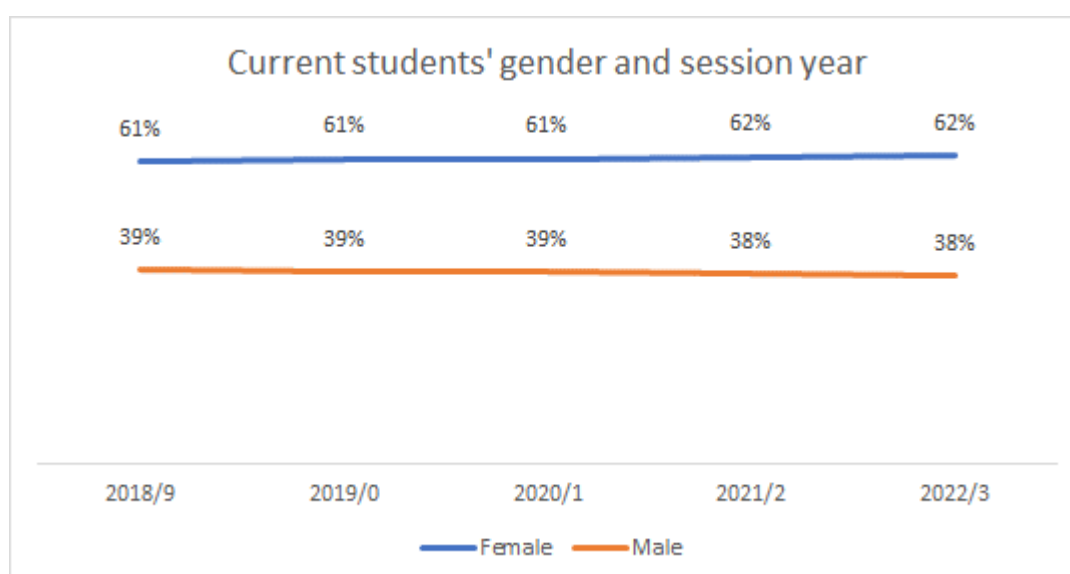


Figure 1s: Students’ gender and session year

This information is also available in Table 1s in Appendix 4

Figure 2s shows an increasing trend in diversity among the student population from 2018/19 to 2022/23. It highlights a growing diversity, especially with a noticeable rise in the proportion of Asian students, which increased from 24% in 2018/19 to 34% in 2022/23. At the same time, the percentage of White students has dropped from 66% to 57%, although they remain the largest group each year. Other ethnic groups, including Black, Mixed, and Other categories, have remained fairly steady, with only slight changes in their percentages. Black students have increased slightly, from 2% to around 2-3%, while Mixed students have consistently made up about 4-5% of the student body each year.

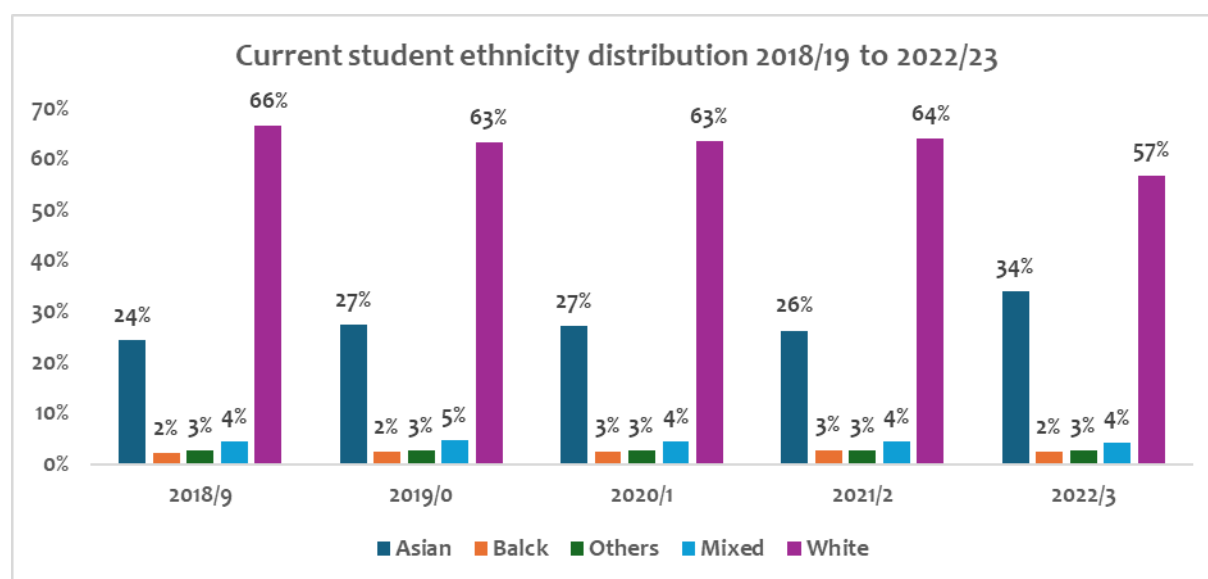


Figure 2s: Current student ethnicity distribution

This information is also available in Table 2s in Appendix 4.

Figure 3s shows a steady increase in diversity among students, broken down by gender and ethnicity over five academic years. Both male and female groups have seen a notable rise in the proportion of Asian students, especially among female students, while the proportion of White students has gradually declined. This shift indicates a trend towards a more diverse student body over time. Female students consistently outnumber male students across most ethnic groups, with both genders showing a steady increase in Asian, Black, and Mixed representation and a decline in the percentage of White students.

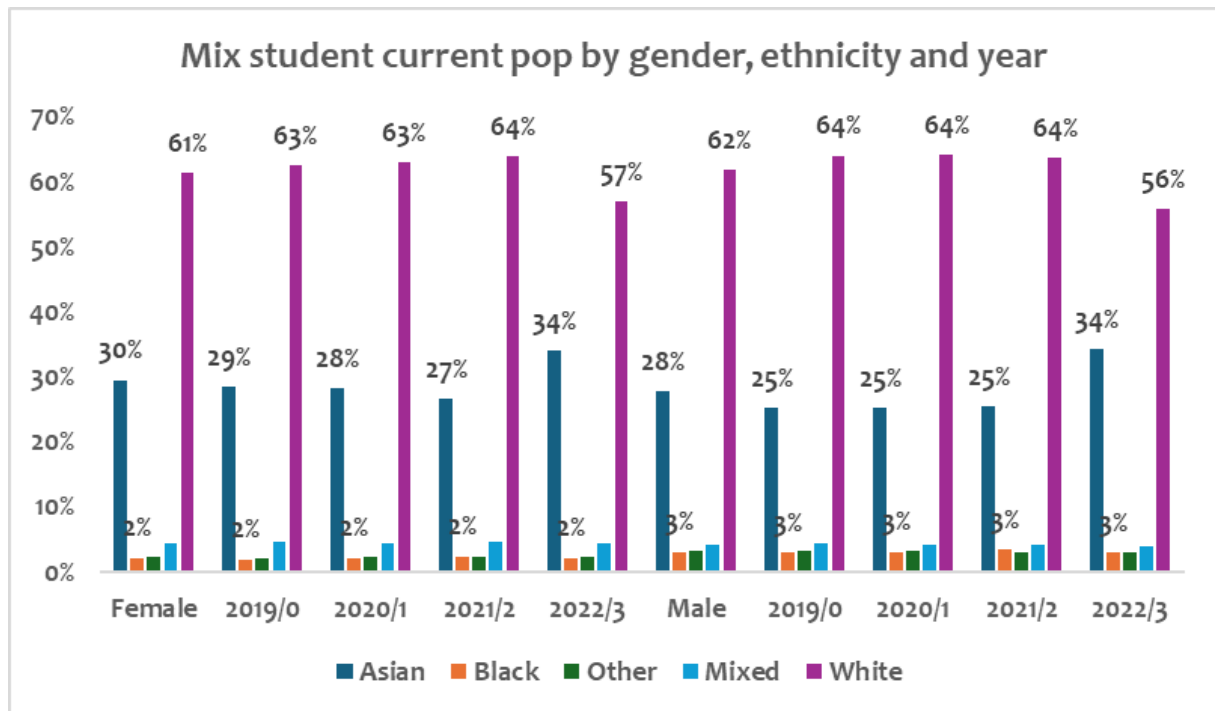


Figure 3s: Current students mix gender ethnicity by year

This information is also available in Table 3s in Appendix 4

Figure 4s shows the breakdown of undergraduate students by ethnicity across three colleges—HSS (Humanities and Social Sciences), MVM (Medicine and Veterinary Medicine), and SCE (Science and Engineering)—from 2018/19 to 2022/23. Over these years, there has been a gradual shift towards more diversity among undergraduates. The percentage of Asian students has notably increased, reaching 26% of the total by 2022/23, while the percentage of White students has declined from 76% in 2018/19 to 66% in 2022/23, though they are still the largest group each year. Diversity also differs by college. MVM consistently has a higher percentage of Asian students, increasing from 23% in 2018/19 to 33% in 2022/23. HSS, on the other hand, has the highest proportion of White students, averaging over 70% each year. SCE has also seen growth in Asian student numbers, reaching 29% by 2022/23.

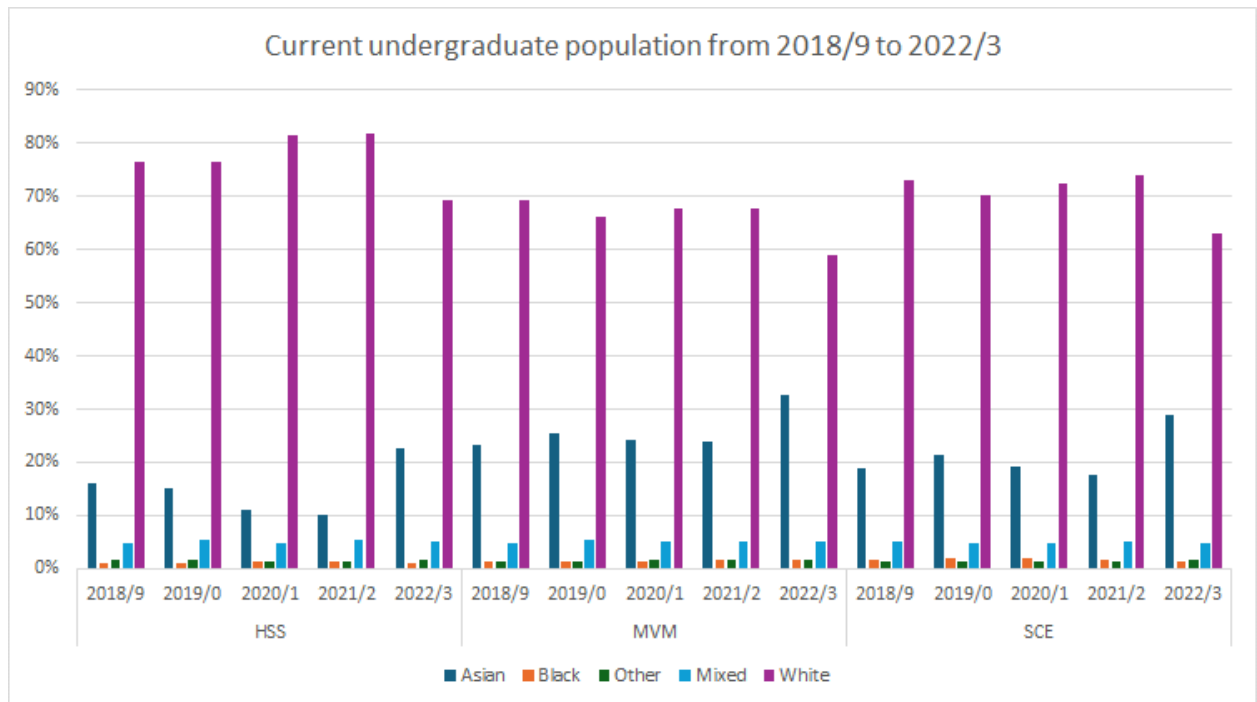


Figure 4s: Current undergraduate population distribution

This information is also available in Table 4s in Appendix 4.

Figure 5s shows the ethnic makeup of postgraduate taught students in three colleges—HSS (Humanities and Social Sciences), MVM (Medicine and Veterinary Medicine), and SCE (Science and Engineering)—from 2018/19 to 2022/23. During this period, there has been a significant increase in the percentage of Asian students, rising from 32% in 2018/19 to 44% in 2022/23. At the same time, the percentage of White students has gradually decreased, dropping from 56% to 45%. This trend suggests a growing diversity among postgraduate-taught students, with Asian students becoming more prominent and White students making up a smaller portion over time.

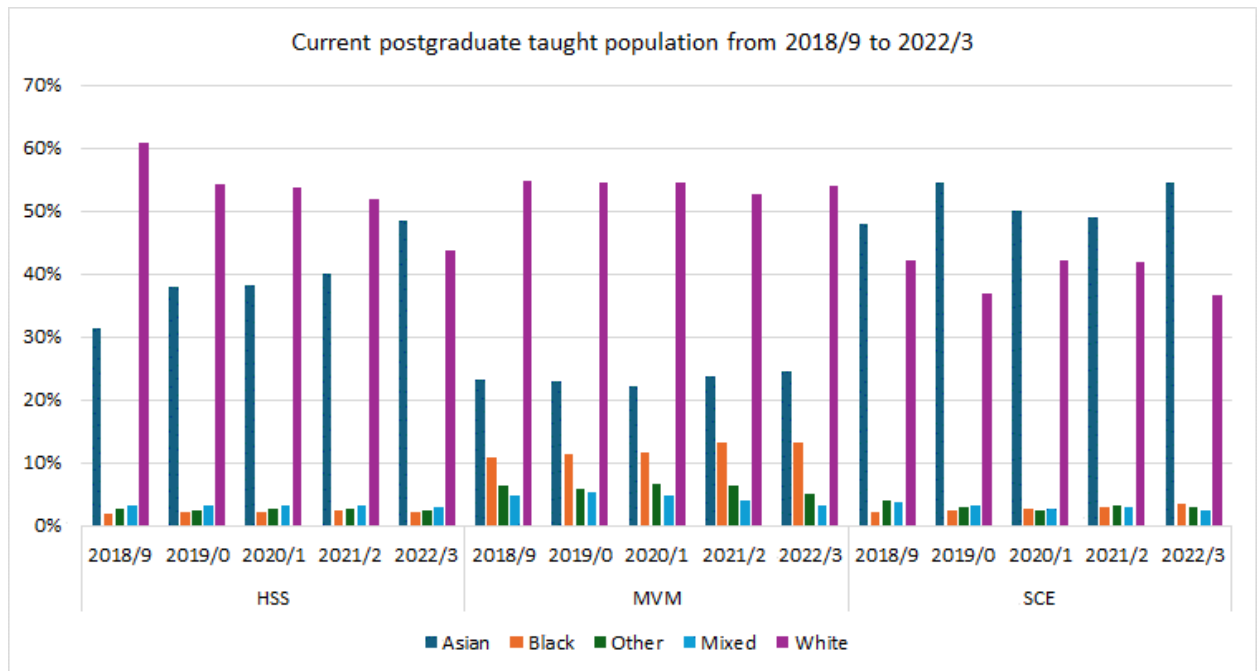


Figure 5s: Current postgraduate taught students program distributions

This information is also available in Table 5s in Appendix 4.

Entrant

Figure 7s shows the ethnic makeup of new students from 2018/19 to 2022/23. Over these years, there has been a noticeable increase in the proportion of Asian students, rising from 31% of new entrants in 2018/19 to 41% in 2022/23, indicating a trend towards greater diversity among new students. At the same time, the percentage of White students has dropped from 59% to 50%, though they still make up a significant part of the new student population. The representation of Black, Other, and Mixed ethnic groups has stayed relatively stable, each consistently forming a smaller part of the total.

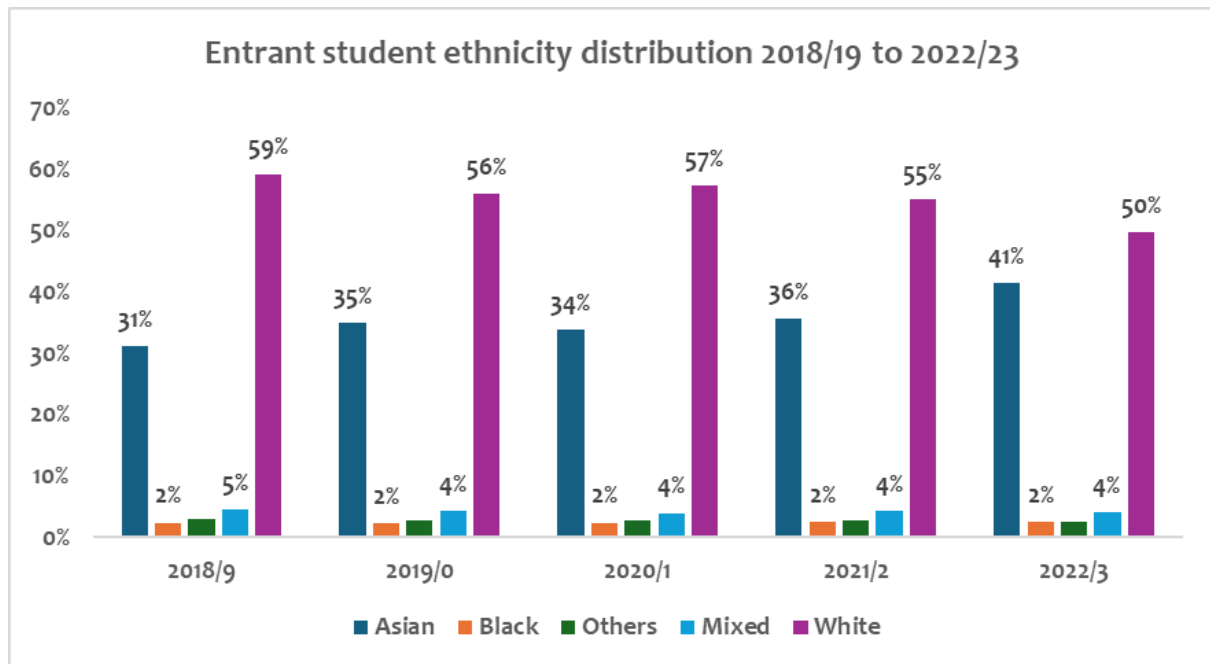


Figure 7s: Entrant student ethnicity distribution

This information is also available in Table 8s in Appendix 4.

Discussion

The University of Edinburgh staff and student profiles confirm aspects of severe under-representation for some racial/ethnic minority groups amid trends of growth among staff and student diversification, among others.

Data shows that Black staff remain the smallest population across all grades despite the general decrease among White staff between 2018/19 and 2022/23 (see Figure 1). The increase in staff diversity is primarily driven by an increase in Asian staff presence in fixed and open-ended contracts (see Figure 2). Within this trend, Black staff remain around 1% in 2022/23, at 150 individuals, while Asian staff numbers increased from 7% in 2018/19, or 875 individuals, to 9% in 2022/23, at 1,120 individuals (Appendix 4, Table 2).

The majority of University of Edinburgh staff are White (84%) (Figure 8). White staff are the majority of employees regardless of being from the UK or outside the UK. As Table 16 (appendix) shows, White UK nationals comprised 94% of UK hires in 2022/23, while White non-UK nationals comprised 68% of hires from outside the UK in that same year. Asian staff are the second largest group. Asian UK nationals are roughly 3% of those hired from the UK but are 20% of Asian non-UK nationals in 2022/23. Black staff are the least likely group to be hired, regardless of national origin. Black non-UK nationals are more likely to be represented as staff at the University of Edinburgh at 3%, while Black UK nationals comprise less than 1% of staff at the University of Edinburgh.

Despite being a global institution, the staff numbers suggest that when hiring staff from the UK, the University of Edinburgh tends to almost exclusively hire White scholars. Non-White minorities of non-UK nationality tend to fare better than their counterparts of UK nationality. This pattern is most pronounced for Asian groups at the University of Edinburgh.

University of Edinburgh student data shows similar patterns in diversification trends. There are greater numbers of Non-White racial and ethnic-minority students showing evidence of diversification of the student body, while showing a steady percentage of Black,

and to a lesser extent Mixed, student populations remaining unchanged. This pattern in student populations shows a need for closer analysis and a greater understanding of how particular student populations are driving changes in student numbers while other groups, as in the case of Black students, are increasing much more slowly.

Previous analyses of UK higher education have noted a need to focus on the particular experiences of racial or ethnic groups rather than larger aggregates such as BAME/BME generally because larger group patterns may not apply to all the groups within the aggregate.¹⁶⁶

While White students remain the largest group, their percentage has steadily declined, indicating the institution's broader appeal to students from varied ethnic backgrounds. There has been a decrease from 69% to 59% of White students at the University of Edinburgh between 2018/19 and 2022/23 (see Figure 2s). During this same period, there is an increase in Asian students at the University from 21% in 2018/19 to 31% in 2022/23. The data highlights a clear trend of increasing diversity in the student population over recent years, with Asian students consistently growing as a proportion across all academic levels and colleges. Looking specifically at Black student numbers, the student data shows the increased trend of diversification does not greatly benefit Black student numbers since they remain stable.

Postgraduate student numbers indicate higher percentages of racial or ethnic groups compared to their White counterparts than undergraduate student numbers. For example (see Table 5s), Asian postgraduate students comprised 44% throughout the University, compared to 45% of White postgraduate students in 2022/23. This is much higher than the undergraduate student population where Asian students comprised 26% compared to 66% of White undergraduate students during the 2022/23 term. There is a similar pattern in Black student representation at the postgraduate and undergraduate levels, though the changes are much smaller. Black undergraduate representation in the 2022/23 term was 1% across the University and 5% at the postgraduate level.

Female students consistently outnumber male students across most ethnic groups, further emphasising the strong female representation within the growing student body. More research is needed to understand the effect of this trend within racial/ethnic minority groups who have historically dealt with racism and deficit-based thinking around Black male underachievement. Male under-representation in student numbers among racial and ethnic groups often involves racist assumptions concerning how boys and young men are less intelligent and less capable than other groups. We need more research into both the lower levels of Black students at the University of Edinburgh and the smaller population of males among Non-White racial and ethnic populations (see Figure 1 and Table 1s).

This report has noted an increased diversification of the staff and student population over the past five years. This trend, however, does not benefit Black staff and students to the same extent as Asian staff and students. This finding highlights the need for greater disaggregation among racial and ethnic minority populations at the University of Edinburgh. Although there is positive growth in diversity, the "Unknown" category for gender and ethnicity limits the ability to fully analyse representation, underscoring the need for more comprehensive data collection.

¹⁶⁶ Franssen, *Unblocking the Pipeline*.

Under-Representation and the Cost to Institutional Progress on Diversification and Decolonisation

Racial and ethnic under-representation have dire consequences for the learning environments and academic futures of Non-White students at the undergraduate and postgraduate level. Unfortunately, UK higher education institutions remain almost predominately White. Rather than seeing racial under-representation as the natural consequence of the UK's majority White population, higher education scholars have asked for a more nuanced look into student admissions and assessments. Black and minority ethnic groups are less likely than their White counterparts to attend elite Russell Group universities. Additionally, racial disparities in undergraduate assessment by White teaching faculty produce a segregated education system making it difficult for Black students to be admitted into postgraduate programmes at elite UK universities. This creates a cycle whereby elite UK higher education institutions refuse Black, Asian and other Non-White students at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, unfairly assess their coursework compared to their White counterparts, thereby making it difficult for members of this population to obtain employment at the very institutions driving these racial disparities. Some scholars have argued that these patterns show how 'universities use mechanisms to protect and reserve places in elite universities for white students as an act of white privilege which is used to enhance their own position of elitism to maintain their power'.¹⁶⁷ Summarising her research findings concerning Black student experiences in UK Russell Group universities, Professor of Education and Social Justice, Kalwant Bhopal, found that racism and racist practices dominate the experiences of Black and minority students in higher education.¹⁶⁸

The under-representation of Black, Asian and Other ethnic minority groups perpetuates processes of socialisation and institutional culture where Non-White racial and ethnic groups remain outsiders. This spatial and institutional orientation towards Non-White populations bolsters what the renowned sociologist Eduardo Bonilla-Silva describes as white habitus, or a 'racialized, uninterrupted socialization process that conditions and creates whites' racial taste, perceptions, feelings, and emotions and their views on racial matters'.¹⁶⁹

Previous research has noted that the lack of Black, Asian and Other Non-White ethnic minority groups in senior leadership positions throughout UK higher education institutions is a consequence of more generalizable climate issues within universities.¹⁷⁰ Under-representation of Black and Non-White racial and ethnic groups are not randomly occurring demographic patterns within UK higher education. These disparities are deliberate — the product of hiring, recruitment and retention practices that operate across departments, colleges and institutional cultures as a whole. For example, Black staff under-representation has been shown to have far-reaching consequences for Black and Other Non-White students in assessment, the likelihood of racial and ethnic minority students having

¹⁶⁷ Kalwant Bhopal, *White Privilege: The Myth of a Post-Racial Society* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2018), p. 91.

¹⁶⁸ Bhopal, *White Privilege*, p. 93.

¹⁶⁹ Bonilla-Silva, *Racism without Racists*, p. 104.

¹⁷⁰ Leathwood, Maylor and Moreau, *The Experience of Black*.

positive university experiences, and learning outcomes.¹⁷¹ Across UK institutions of higher education, racial and ethnic minorities reported 'isolation and marginalisation; challenges to their status, authority and scholarship; high levels of scrutiny and surveillance of their work; and difficulties in gaining promotion'.¹⁷²

Research from American scholars in higher education report similar consequences of racial and ethnic minority under-representation. Despite their marginalisation and experiences of discrimination throughout all levels of higher education, Black academics tend to be more student-centred, more willing to create participatory curricula facilitating student engagement and more willing to mentor students than their White counterparts.¹⁷³ However, racial under-representation within higher education institutions have been found to increase numerous physiological and psychological stressors for Non-White teaching staff and students. Racial battle fatigue or the introduction of a racial stressor into the life-world of Black and racial and ethnic minorities, upsets one's allostatic balance and has significant mental and physical health consequences for racial/ethnic minority staff. In predominately White institutional environments, Non-White staff tend to experience more negative health outcomes due to predominately White classrooms and departments than their White counterparts. Black and ethnic minority staff are prone to develop various psychophysiological symptoms due to the stress of majority white institutional environments.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ Campbell, *Race and Assessment*.

¹⁷² Leathwood, Maylor and Moreau, *The Experience of Black*, p. 42.

¹⁷³ J. Luke Wood, 'Ethical Dilemmas in African American Faculty Representation', *JEP: eJournal of Education Policy*, 2 (2008), pp. 1–9.

¹⁷⁴ William A. Smith, 'Black Faculty Coping with Racial Battle Fatigue', in *A Long Way to Go: Conversations about Race by African American Faculty and Graduate Students*, ed. by Darrell Cleveland (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 171–90.

PART 4: CURRENT SITUATION OF RACE AND RACISM

Background: Racism in Higher Education

Under-representation is but one characteristic of an institution's racial (campus) climate. Racial climate, or campus climate, refers to the psycho-social environment of an institution that is experienced by staff and students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. The campus climate of higher education institutions includes the values, beliefs and, most importantly, perception of the university environment and culture to racially/ethnically minoritised others.¹⁷⁵ Studies from the United States have shown that racial and ethnic minorities generally have negative experiences on predominately white campuses.¹⁷⁶ As noted in the previous section, racism in higher education institutions is a pervasive and enduring problem that has historical roots and affects the experiences of both students and staff members from racially and ethnically minoritised backgrounds.¹⁷⁷ This section analyses how racial and ethnic difference is experienced by racial and ethnic minorities and how these differences are perceived on a predominately white campus. A fuller account of this research conducted for this part of review can be found in Appendix 5.¹⁷⁸

Researchers have identified major and lasting problems relating to racial inequality within higher education institutions. For students, admission rates are lower for students from ethnically and racially minoritised backgrounds.¹⁷⁹ Attainment rates and grades are comparatively poorer for students from racially and ethnically disadvantaged communities. Students have also reported the challenges involved in studying and living in elite (or

¹⁷⁵ Jeni Hart and Jennifer Fellabaum, 'Analyzing Campus Climate Studies: Seeking to Define and Understand', *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 1 (2008), 222–34.

¹⁷⁶ Susan R. Rankin and Robert Dean Reason, 'Differing Perceptions: How Students of Color and White Students Perceive Campus Climate for Underrepresented Groups', *Journal of College Student Development*, 46 (2005), 43–61. Arien B. Telles and Tania D. Mitchell, 'Much Discussion, Not Much Change: Perceptions of Campus Climate Continue to Differ Along Racial Lines', in *Evaluating Campus Climate at US Research Universities*, ed. by Krista M. Soria (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 395–408.

¹⁷⁷ Claire Alexander and William Shankley, 'Ethnic Inequalities in the State Education System in England', in *Ethnicity, Race and Inequality in the UK: State of the Nation*, ed. by Bridget Byrne, Claire Alexander, Omar Khan et al. (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2020), pp. 93–126; Jason Arday and Heidi Safia Mirza (editors), *Dismantling Race in Higher Education* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Equality and Human Rights Commission, *Racial Harassment in British Universities: Qualitative Research Findings*, October 2019, <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/racial-harassment-in-british-universities-qualitative-research-findings.pdf>; Equality and Human Rights Commission, *Racial Harassment Inquiry: Survey of Universities*, October 2019, <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/racial-harassment-inquiry-survey-of-university-students.pdf>; Equality and Human Rights Commission, *Tackling Racial Harassment: Universities Challenged*, October 2019, <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/tackling-racial-harassment-universities-challenged.pdf>; Universities UK, *Tackling Racial Harassment in Higher Education*, 1 October 2024, <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/what-we-do/policy-and-research/publications/tackling-racial-harassment-higher>.

¹⁷⁸ This work was conducted by research fellow, Yarong Xie.

¹⁷⁹ Diane Reay, 'Race and Elite Universities in the UK', in Jason Arday and Heidi Safia Mirza (editors), *Dismantling Race in Higher Education* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 47–66.

historically and culturally White-predominant) universities.¹⁸⁰ Students from ethically and racially minoritised backgrounds are also less likely to pursue postgraduate and doctoral studies due to lack of financial support, limited mentoring opportunities and peer support, and poorer mental health due to experiences of racial discrimination.¹⁸¹

Academic studies and resulting publications show that racial inequality also affects staff members from racially and ethnically minoritised backgrounds. Johnson and Joseph-Salisbury observe that inequality is evident at the job application and interview stages.¹⁸² The authors also contend that staff members from racially and ethnically minoritised backgrounds are not seen as ‘knowledge producers but objects of knowing’.¹⁸³ As Loke emphasises, ‘institutional racism is still endemic. This is evidenced among other things by the lack of progression for Black academics and the exclusion of students of colour from elite universities’.¹⁸⁴

These studies have conceptualised and described institutional racism in higher education institutions, captured racial discrimination experienced by members of racially and ethnically minoritised backgrounds, and unveiled the impact of racism and racial inequality on people’s overall experiences within the institution.¹⁸⁵ Despite growing research and initiatives, institutions have made little progress to tackle racial inequality and improve institutional inclusivity and diversity.¹⁸⁶

In the wake of the call to decolonise higher education institutions and enhance universities’ inclusiveness and diversity, a growing number of studies have been conducted to explore students’ perspectives and experiences of decolonisation.¹⁸⁷ The findings highlight the importance of engaging with and involving students, as their views enable us to see how colonial values are sustained in teaching and knowledge production. Nevertheless, Shain and others show that decolonisation can be met with rejection and

¹⁸⁰ Reay, ‘Race and Elite Universities’ (2018); Lateesha Osbourne, Julie Barnett and Leda Blackwood, ‘Black Students’ Experiences of “Acceptable” Racism at a UK University’, *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 33 (2023), 43–55.

¹⁸¹ Universities UK. *Tackling Racial Harassment* (2024).

¹⁸² Azeezat Johnson and Remi Joseph-Salisbury, ‘“Are You Supposed to Be in Here?” Racial Microaggressions and Knowledge Production in Higher Education’, in Jason Arday and Heidi Safia Mirza (editors), *Dismantling Race in Higher Education* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 143–60.

¹⁸³ Johnson and Joseph-Salisbury, ‘Are You Supposed’, p. 151.

¹⁸⁴ Gary Loke, ‘So What Next? A Policy Response’, in Jason Arday and Heidi Safia Mirza (editors), *Dismantling Race in Higher Education* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 383–90 (p. 19).

¹⁸⁵ Loke, ‘So What Next?’; Heidi Safia Mirza, ‘Racism in Higher Education: “What Then, Can Be Done?”’, in Jason Arday and Heidi Safia Mirza (editors), *Dismantling Race in Higher Education* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 3–23; Kalwant Bhopal, ‘Academics of Colour in Elite Universities in the UK and the USA: The “Unspoken System of Exclusion”’, *Studies in Higher Education*, 47 (2022), 2127–37; Osbourne, Barnett and Blackwood, ‘Black Students’ Experiences’; Billy Wong, Reham Elmorally, Meggie Copsey-Blake et al., ‘Is Race Still Relevant? Student Perceptions and Experiences of Racism in Higher Education’, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 51 (2021), 359–75.

¹⁸⁶ Wong, Elmorally, Copsey-Blake et al., ‘Is Race Still Relevant?’.

¹⁸⁷ Hind Elhinawy, ‘Decolonising the Curriculum: Students’ Perspectives in Criminology’, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 26 (2023), 663–79; Shaminder Takhar, ‘The Student Voice: Decolonising the Curriculum’, *Equity in Education & Society*, 3 (2024), 114–29; Nancy Tamimi, Hala Khalawi, Mariama A. Jallow et al., ‘Towards Decolonising Higher Education: A Case Study from a UK University’, *High Education*, 88 (2024), 815–37.

therefore slow progress in higher education institutions.¹⁸⁸ While these investigations are forward-looking and transformational, there remains a lack of understanding about how racial inequality persists and remains endemic as universities undergo decolonial transformations.

Following suit, the University of Edinburgh has introduced some initiatives and made some efforts to understand and address racial inequality within its institution. For instance, the '[Thematic Review 2018–19: Black and Minority Ethnic Studies](#)' was convened by Professor Rowena Arshad and, in 2019, the '[Report of the Task Group on Using the Curriculum to Promote Inclusion, Equality and Diversity](#)' was published. Building on these existing reports and initiatives, this current project aims to provide new evidence and insights into the University's racial climate. Two questionnaires (further information is provided in the next section) were implemented to capture University members' attitudes towards race and racism and the racism experienced by those who are racialised and ethnically minoritised. The findings from these questionnaires provide an important evidence base to progress the Race Equality & Anti-Racist Committee's ([REAR](#)) [Action Plan](#), for example by providing important data on staff experience, that can go on to inform and guide REAR activities at a strategic and implementational level.

Measures

Two online questionnaires were administered across the University. Ethical approval was sought and granted by the ethics committee of the University's School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences.¹⁸⁹

Questionnaire 1: Understanding the Present Racial Climate in the University of Edinburgh

Questionnaire 1 (Q1) investigated the present racial climate on campus by assessing people's attitudes towards race and racism and was intended for the whole University population (students and staff). Two scales were modified and administered: 'Colour-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale' (CoBRAS) and 'Motivation to Control Prejudiced Reactions'.¹⁹⁰ The scales were combined to create a survey with 27 questions. Rated on a seven-point Likert scale, the highest possible score was 189 and the lowest was 27. A higher score indicated higher levels of racial prejudice and a more negative attitude toward members of racialised and ethnically minoritised groups.

Questionnaire 2: Understanding People's Experiences of Racial Discrimination

Questionnaire 2 (Q2) measured people's experiences of racial discrimination and was intended for any student or staff member who self-identifies as belonging to a racially/ethnically minoritised group and whose heritage is linked to areas of the world that

¹⁸⁸ Farzana Shain, Ümit Kemal Yıldız, Veronica Poku, 'From Silence to "Strategic Advancement": Institutional Responses to "Decolonising" in Higher Education in England, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 26 (2021), 920–36.

¹⁸⁹ Application Reference Number: 270-2223/4.

¹⁹⁰ Helen A. Neville, Roderick L. Lilly, Georgia Duran et al., 'Construction and Initial Validation of the Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale (CoBRAS)', *Journal of Counselling Psychology*, 47 (2000), 59–70; Bridgit C. Dunton and Russell. H. Fazio, 'An Individual Difference Measure of Motivation to Control Prejudiced Reactions', *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 23 (1997), 316–26.

have been directly and continuously affected by European-led colonialism and enslavement. A modified version of the Perceived Racism Scale (PRS) was used.¹⁹¹ In total, participants responded to 24 items that measured their experiences of racism on a six-point Likert scale (i.e. 'Not Applicable', 'Never', 'Occasionally', 'Sometimes', 'Frequently' and 'All the Time'). The highest possible score was 144 and the lowest was 24, with higher scores indicating more frequent experiences of racism. Participants were also asked to indicate their emotional and coping responses to racial discrimination in four items.

Personal Information and Demographics

Personal information was collected. Specifically, we asked participants for their gender category, age group, ethnic category, nationality/nationalities, religion, affiliated School or Department, time spent in the University, highest educational attainment, average achievement (for students only), contract type (for staff members only) and pay range (for staff members only). This information enabled us to comprehend factors that might contribute to people's (varied) attitudes towards racially/ethnically minoritised members, and experiences of racism. Personal information was collected on a voluntary basis. 'Prefer not to say' was provided as an option.

Data collection

Questionnaires were administered on *Qualtrics*.¹⁹²

Piloting

A pilot study was conducted between May and August 2023. The feedback received from volunteers was used to revise and improve the questionnaires.

Official Data Collection

Data collection took place between 20 November 2023 and 31 May 2024. Both questionnaires were officially closed on 31 May 2024. Data collection for Q2 was resumed on 28 August 2024 after further ethical approval was sought and obtained. The extended data collection ended on 6 September 2024.

Participant Recruitment

Participant Information Sheets for both questionnaires were made available on the Project's blog site.¹⁹³ Participants were required to read the Participant Information Sheet and give

¹⁹¹ Maya Dominguez McNeilly, Norman B. Anderson, Cheryl A. Armstead et al., 'The Perceived Racism Scale: A Multidimensional Assessment of The Experience of White Racism Among African Americans', *Ethnicity & Disease*, 6 (1996), 154–66.

¹⁹² *Qualtrics* is a secure online space to run a survey and collect data. It offers self-service products via an Application Service Provider Model delivered via the Internet and using standard web browser software. It abides by the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). All user data are owned by the user and protected with sophisticated layers of security.

¹⁹³ Participant Information Sheet for Questionnaire 1 is accessible on:

<https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/decolonise/2023/11/13/questionnaire-to...iences-of-racism/>; Participant Information Sheet for Questionnaire 2 is accessible on: <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/decolonise/2023/11/13/information-shee...s-racial-climate/>.

full consent before completing the questionnaires. The first 500 participants were rewarded with a £5 e-voucher per head.

Messages to recruiting participants were distributed via:

- One University-wide email newsletter on the 28 February 2024
- Posters and flyers (see images by Yarong Xie below in Figure 11)
- Digital displays on plasma/advert screens across campus
- Screensavers on Open Access computers on campus
- Local communication and support offices at the Edinburgh College of Arts, Moray House School of Education and Sport, the Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities
- A campaign page on Report + Support service.

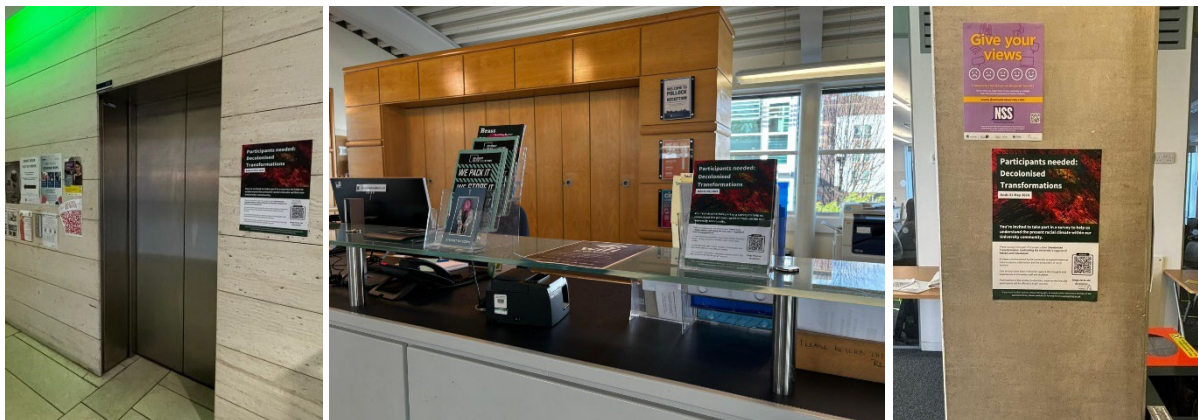


Figure 11: Examples of poster/flyer distributions

Key Research Findings

Questionnaire 1: Understanding the Present Racial Climate in the University of Edinburgh

For Q1, 585 responses were recorded, with 584 responses being included in the final statistical analyses.¹⁹⁴ The distribution of mean scores is shown below in Figure 12.

¹⁹⁴ Two responses were removed for analysis as the questionnaires were incomplete and no final scores were recorded. One response was added manually as a participant took part offline.

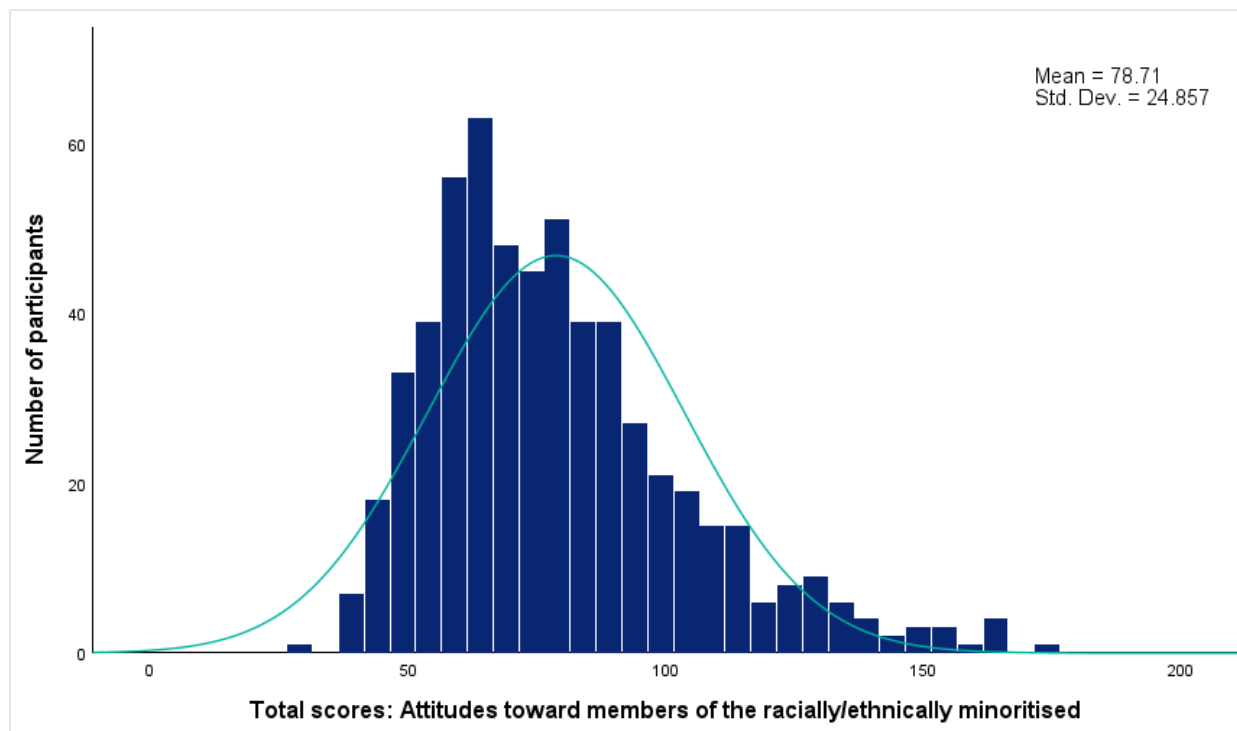


Figure 12: Distribution of the scores of Q1

Statistical analyses were performed and found a significant difference in racial attitude between participants of different ethnic groups. As illustrated in Figure 13, participants who did not disclose their ethnicity indicated a significantly higher level of prejudiced attitude toward racially/ethnically minoritised members.

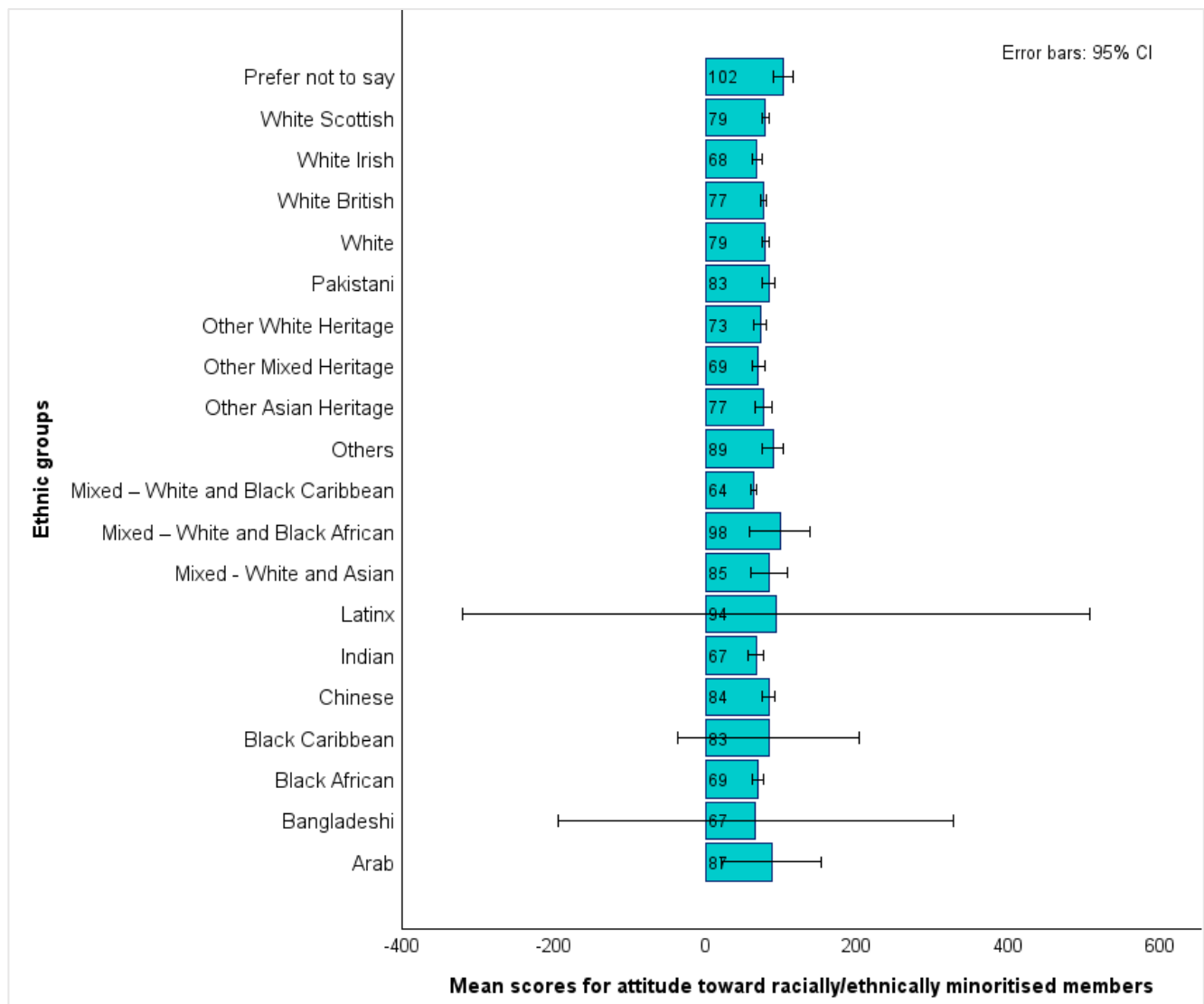


Figure 13: Difference in mean scores between ethnic groups

To align the questionnaire data with the University’s Human Resource record, ethnic categories in the questionnaire were regrouped for a further statistical analysis.¹⁹⁵ The findings also showed that participants who did not disclose their ethnic background displayed a more prejudiced attitude against members from ethnically/racially minoritised backgrounds.

¹⁹⁵ Collected and analysed by Obasanjo Bolarinwa: see Section 3 of this report and/or Appendix 4.

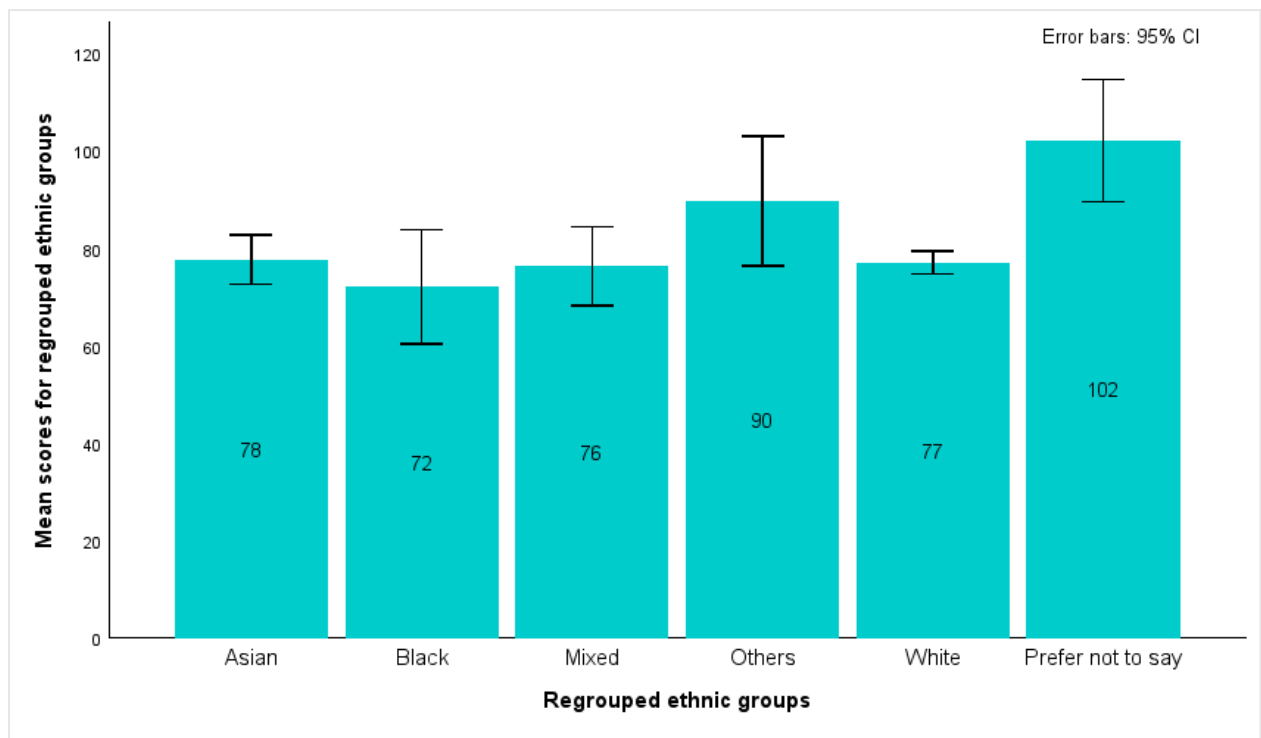


Figure 14: Difference in mean scores of attitude after regrouping ethnic groups

Further statistical analyses were conducted to explore other elements that may have accounted for the group differences in attitude. On average, students showed a more prejudiced attitude when compared with staff members.

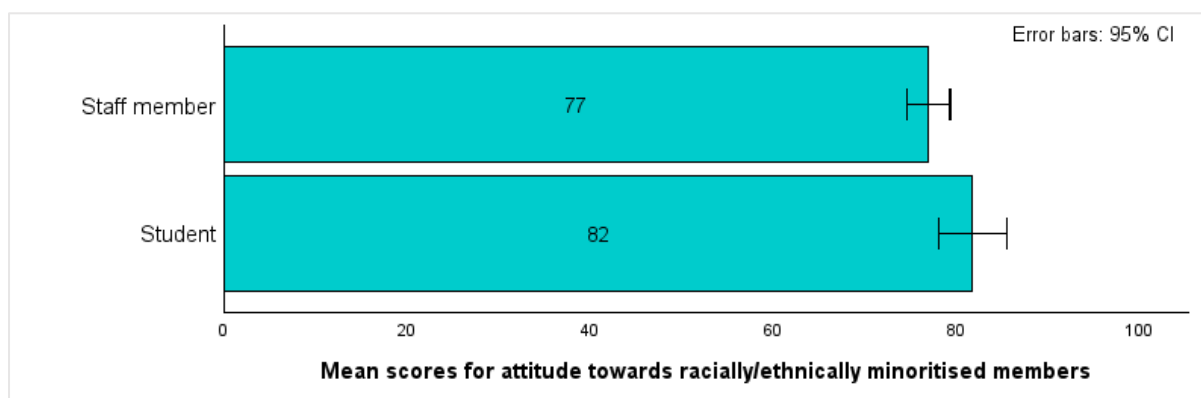


Figure 15: Difference in attitude between students and staff members

A significant difference was detected between different age groups. Participants who did not reveal their age group scored significantly higher than other age groups, except participants who self-identified as 65 and above.

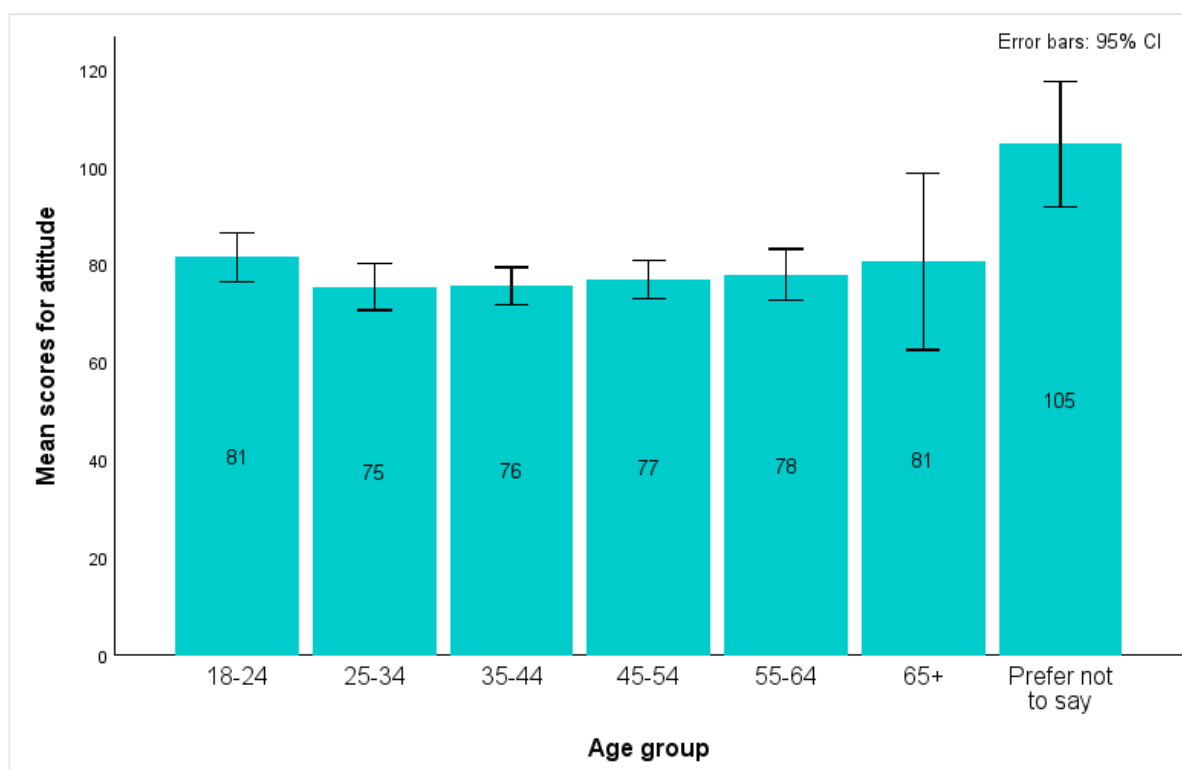


Figure 16: Difference in attitude between age groups

Participants who did not provide information about their qualifications scored significantly higher than participants who had attained A-levels, International Baccalaureate, or their equivalents, Bachelor/Undergraduate degrees, Master/Postgraduate degrees and Doctoral degrees.

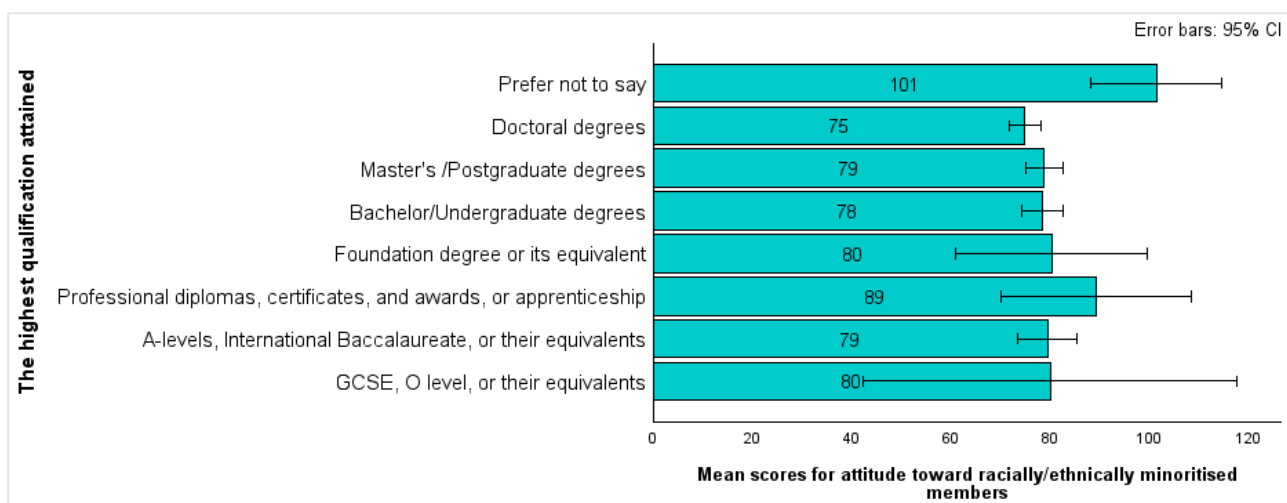


Figure 17: Differences in mean scores between different qualifications attained

Participants who identified as male displayed a more prejudiced attitude than their female counterparts (see Figure 18 below). Female participants (n = 313) provided more responses than participants from other gender categories. Future equality training and workshops on equality, diversity and inclusivity should seek to engage more with male members.

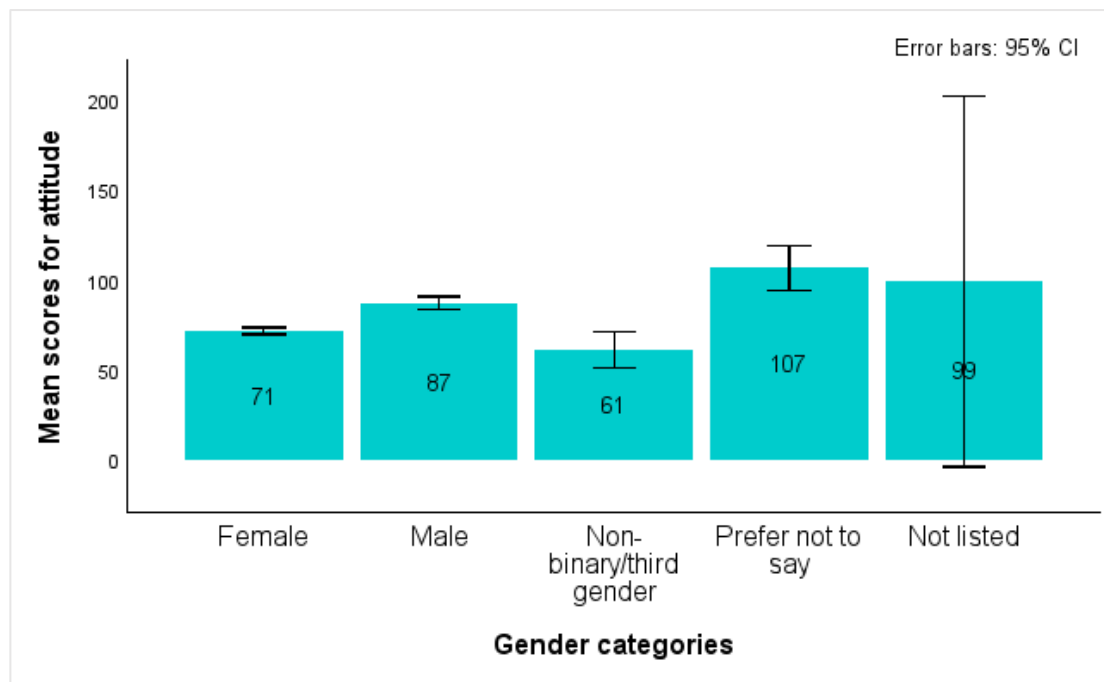


Figure 18: Difference in attitude between gender categories

Further analyses revealed that participants who have spent three to four years studying or working within the University reported a significantly higher level of prejudice (see Figure 19). Three to four years ago (from the time when the questionnaire was distributed) marks the start of the lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic. During the spring term of 2020 and the academic year of 2020/21, most teaching was delivered remotely. The restriction also applied to social and intergroup contacts, which make up a crucial part of the university experience. According to existing research, increased intergroup contacts reduces prejudice.¹⁹⁶ This temporal and societal context could potentially explain the significantly higher scoring on prejudiced attitudes for participants who joined the University three to four years ago. It also implies that social contact in higher education settings may be crucial for reducing racial prejudice, but future and follow-up research is needed to test this hypothesis.

¹⁹⁶ David S. Crystal, Melanie Killen and Martin Ruck, 'It is Who You Know That Counts: Intergroup Contact and Judgments about Race-Based Exclusion', *The British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 26 (2008), 51–70; Thomas F. Pettigrew, Linda R. Tropp, Ulrich Wagner et al., 'Recent Advances in Intergroup Contact Theory', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35 (2011), 271–80; Jasper Van Assche, Hermann Swart, Katherina Schmid et al., 'Intergroup Contact is Reliably Associated with Reduced Prejudice, even in the Face of Group Threat and Discrimination', *American Psychologist*, 78 (2023), 761–74.

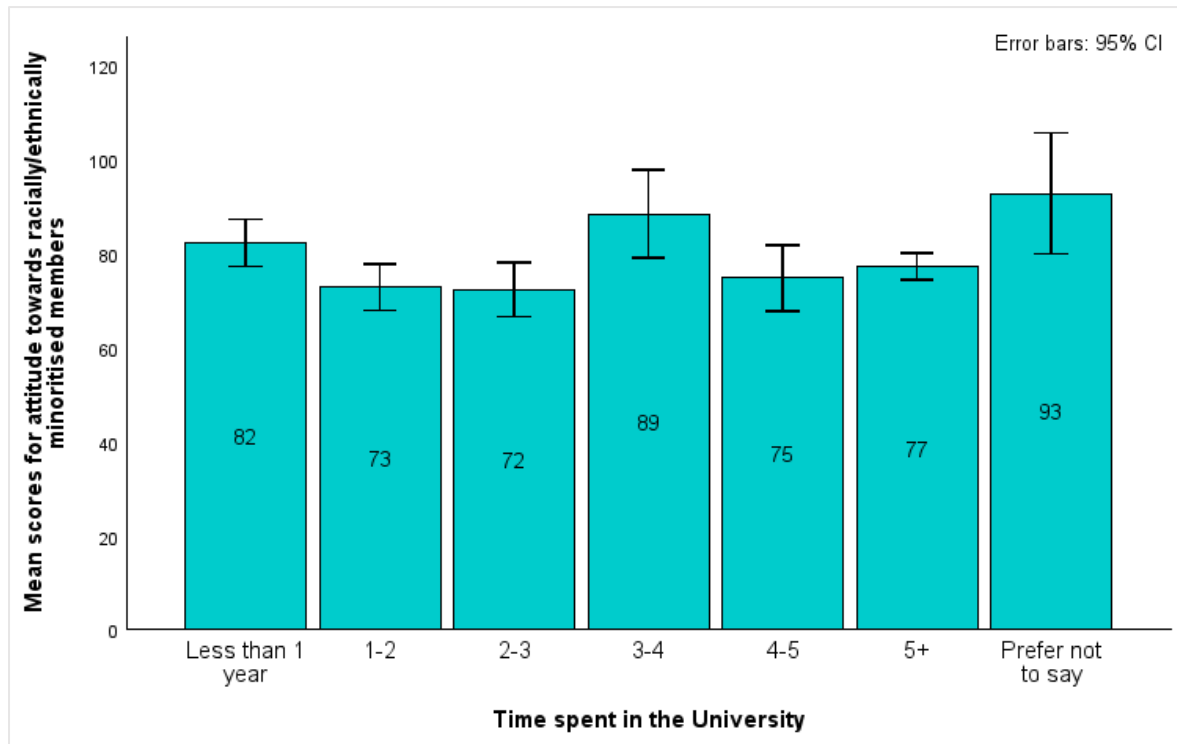


Figure 19: Difference in participants' mean scores depending on the time spent in the University

These synthesised findings suggest directions for future actions on decolonisation, as well as for improving and working toward racial equality. Education and social contact are pivotal for reducing people's prejudiced attitude toward racially and ethnically minoritised members. It is therefore useful to consider how best to improve various aspects of student life (e.g. from pedagogic design to learning experiences to student accommodation etc.), increase staff support, build a campus that fosters an integrated and dynamic space, and encourages intercultural and intergroup integration.

The graphs below describe the demographics of participants for Q1.

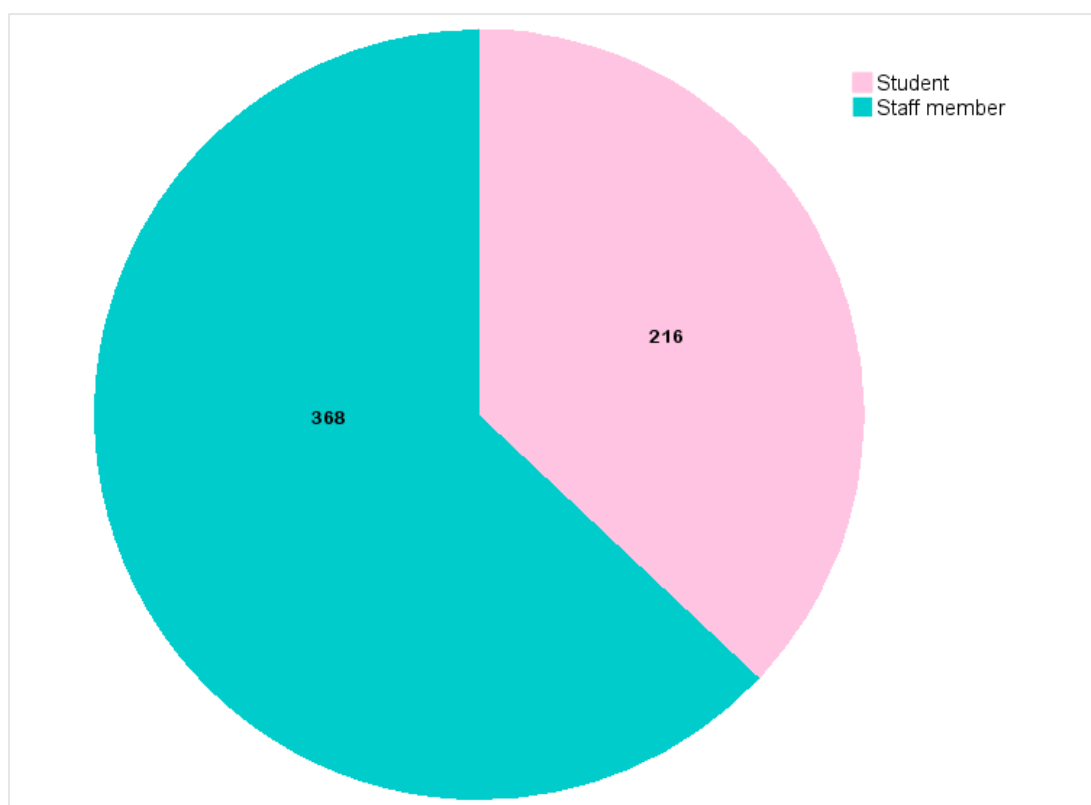


Figure 20: Distribution of participants by their roles in the University

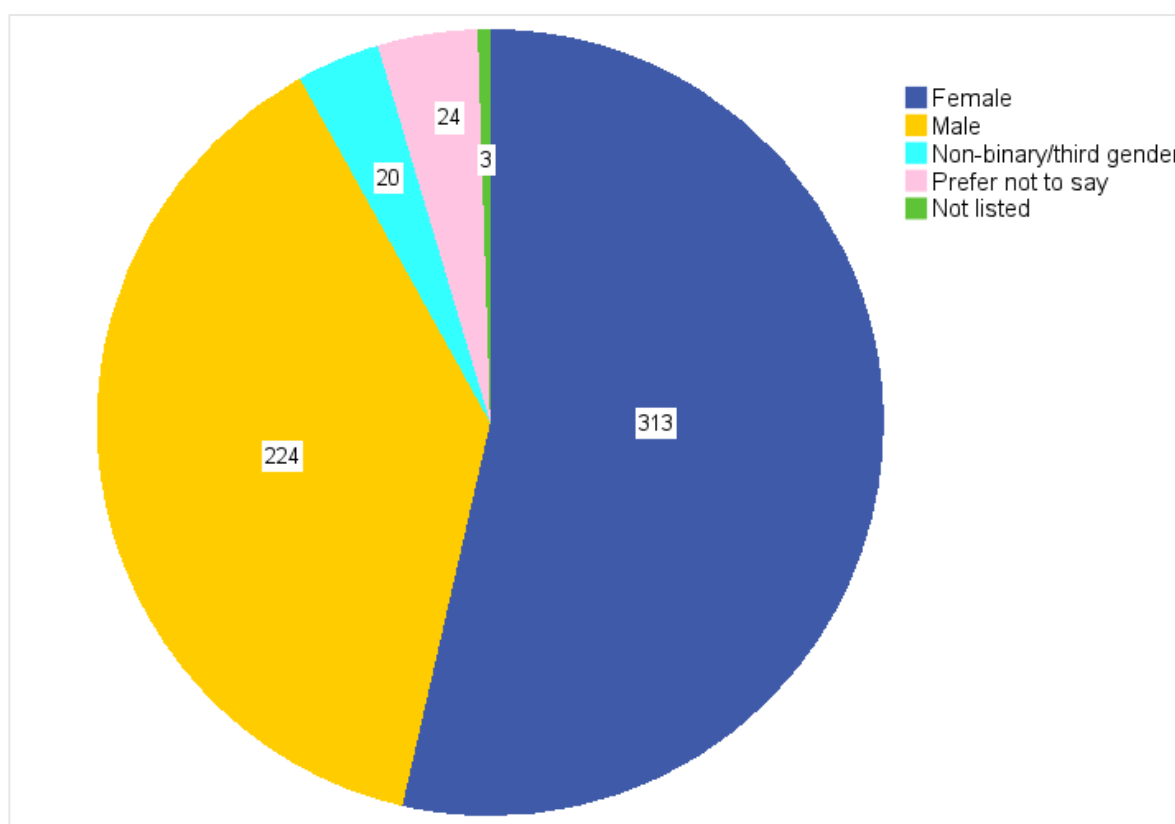


Figure 21: Distribution of participants by the gender categories they wished to include

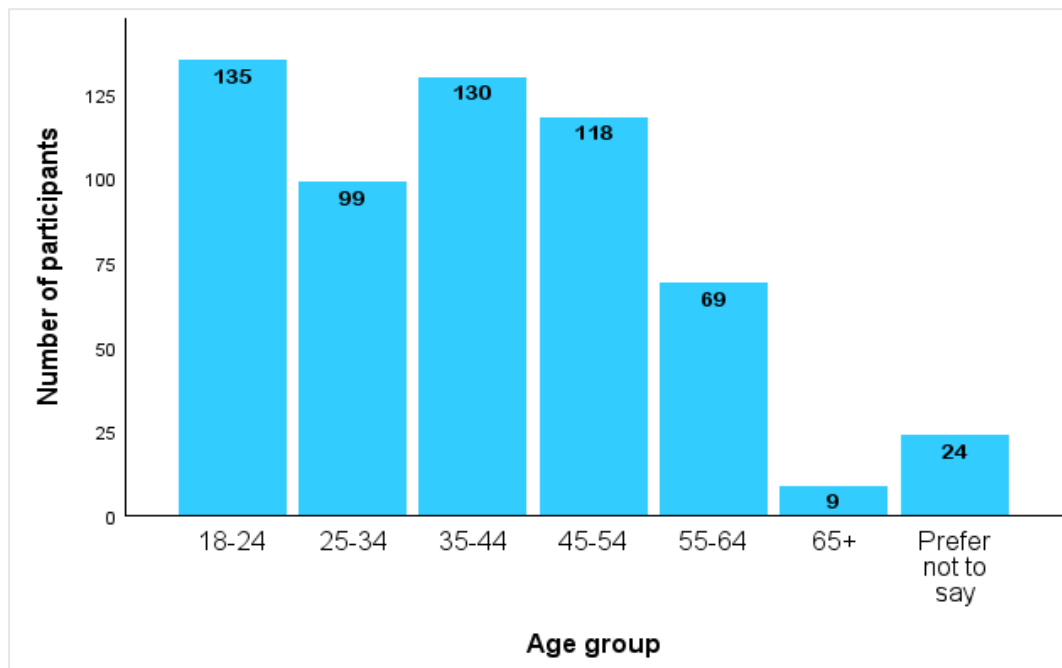


Figure 22: Distribution of participants' age groups

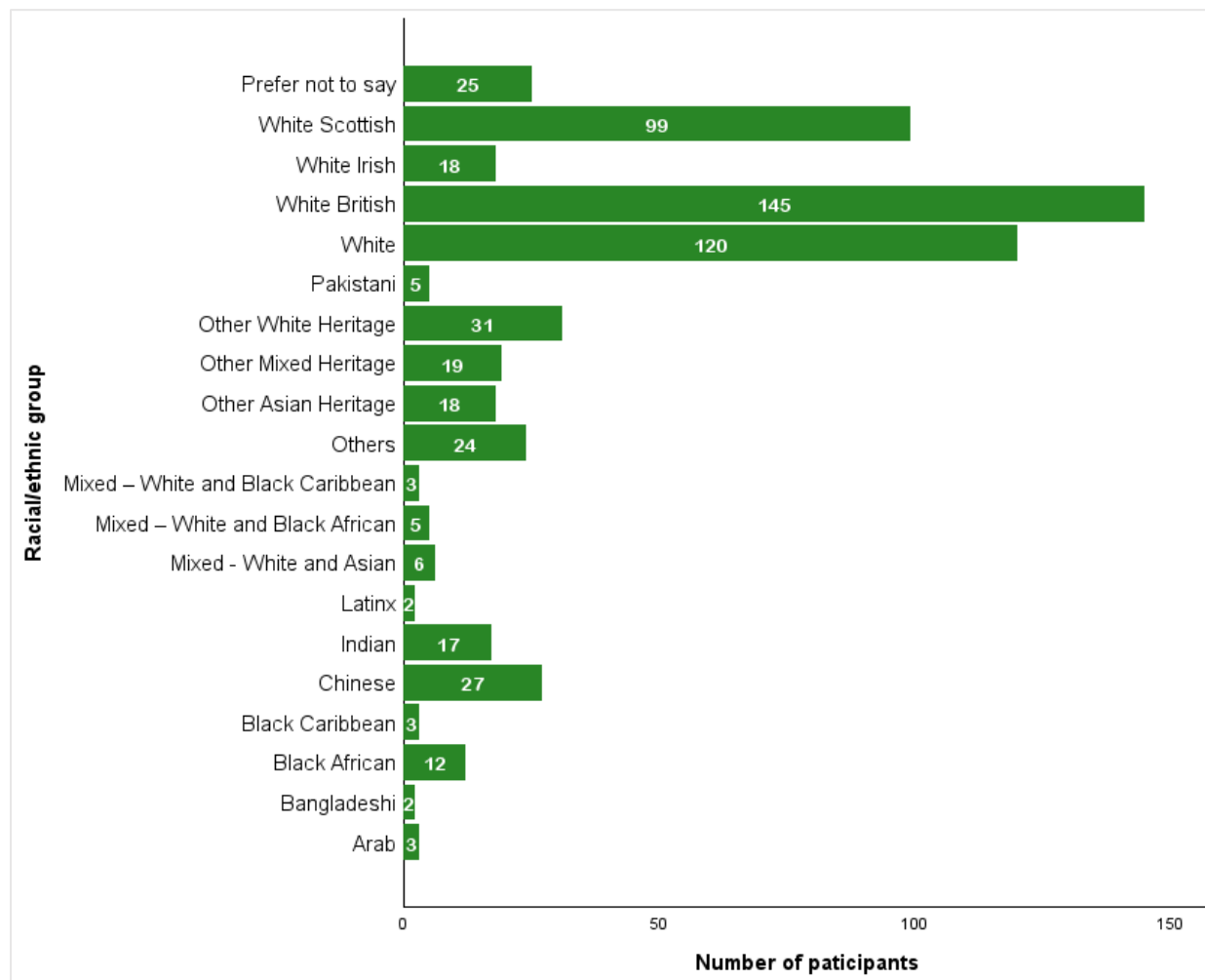


Figure 23: Distribution of participants by ethnic groups

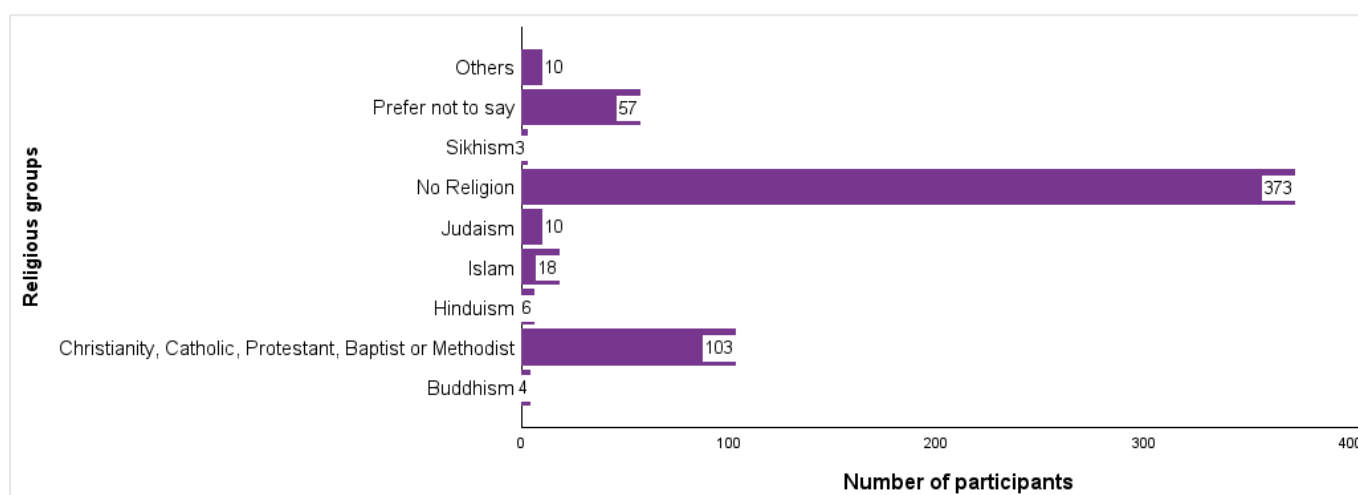


Figure 24: Numbers of participants in each religious group

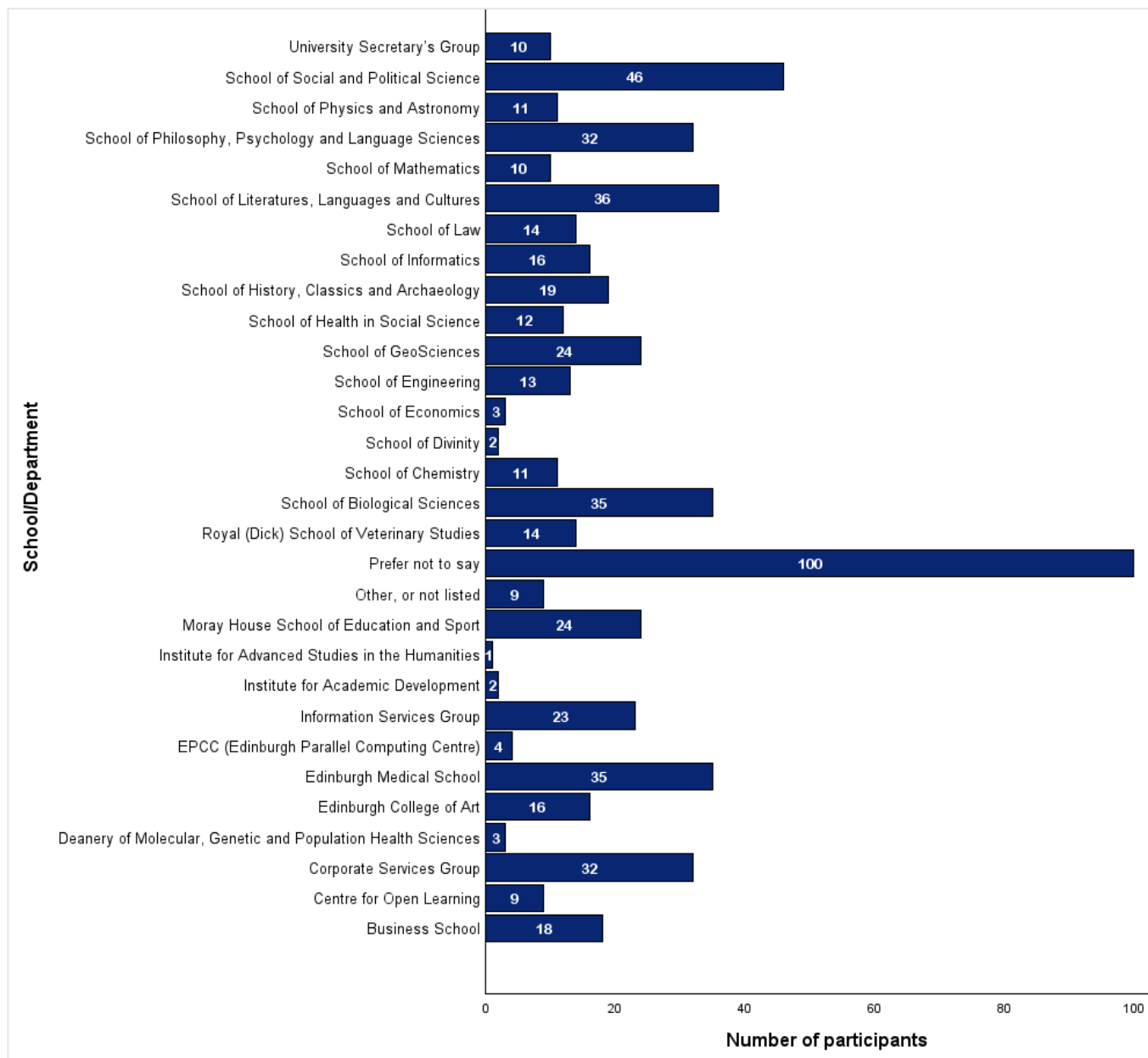


Figure 25: Participants' affiliated Departments/Schools within the University

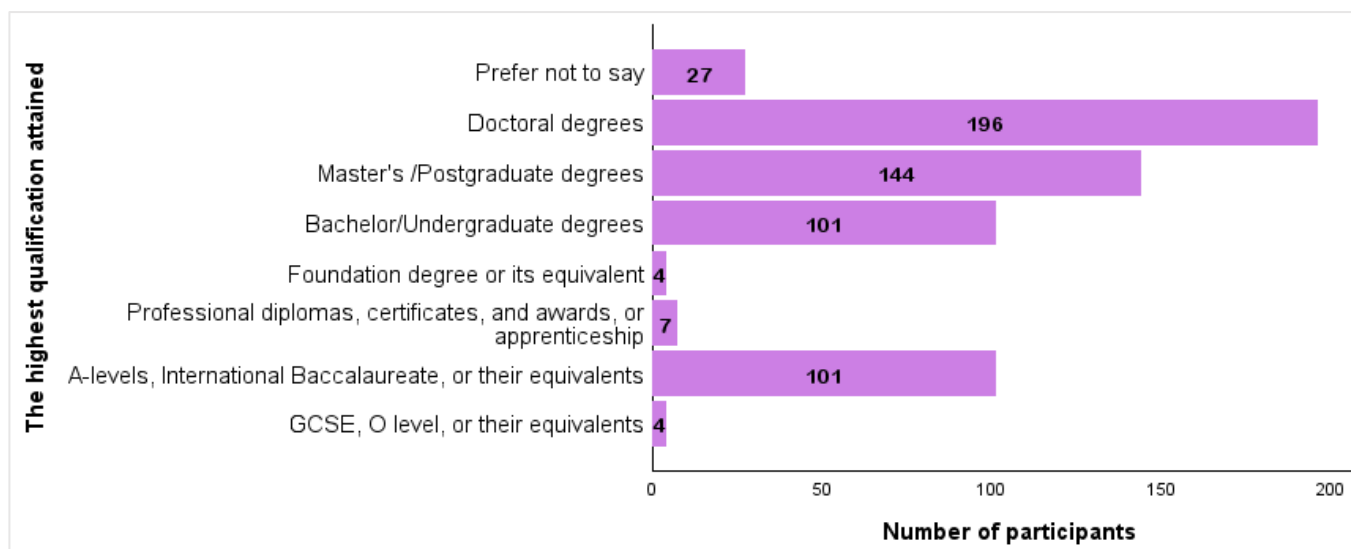


Figure 26: The highest qualifications attained by participants

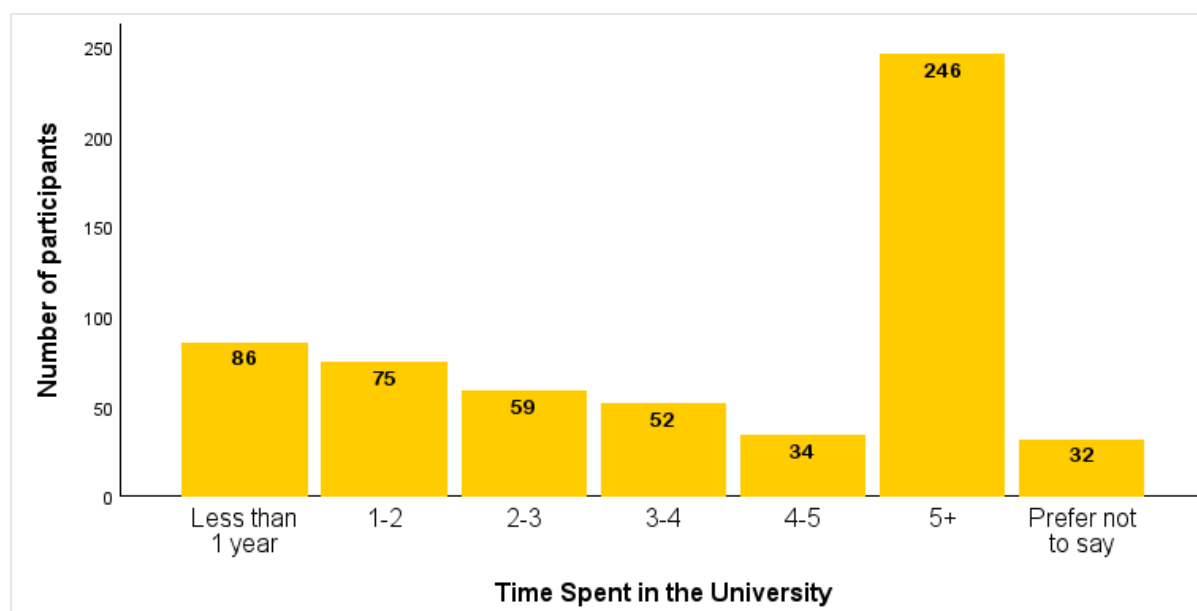


Figure 27: Time spent in the University for participants

Questionnaire 2: Understanding People's Experiences of Racial Discrimination

The results of Q2 showed that participants who self-identify as a racially/ethnically minoritised members experienced racism whilst studying or working in the University of Edinburgh (see normal distribution of the scores in Figure 28 below).

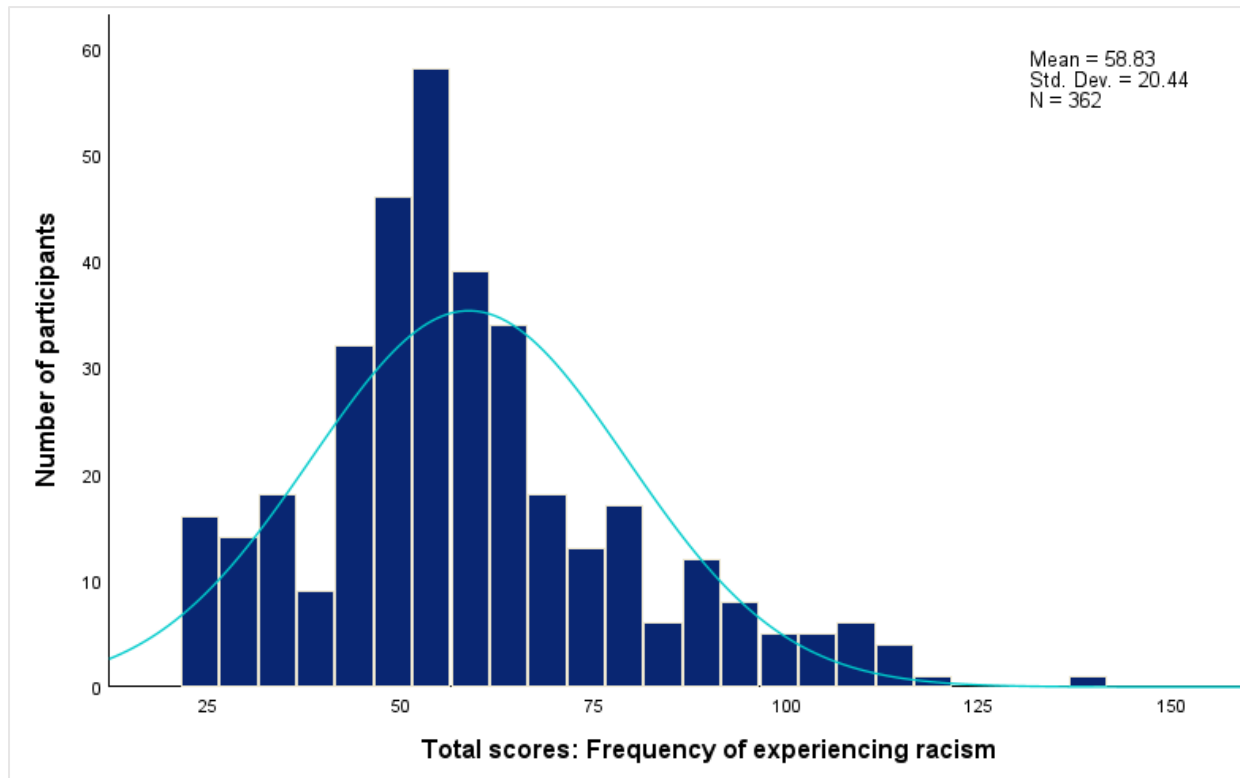


Figure 28: Distribution of the mean scorings

Participants who self-identified as Black African, Black Caribbean, Chinese, Indian and Mixed (White and Black Caribbean) experienced racism more frequently than their White counterparts.

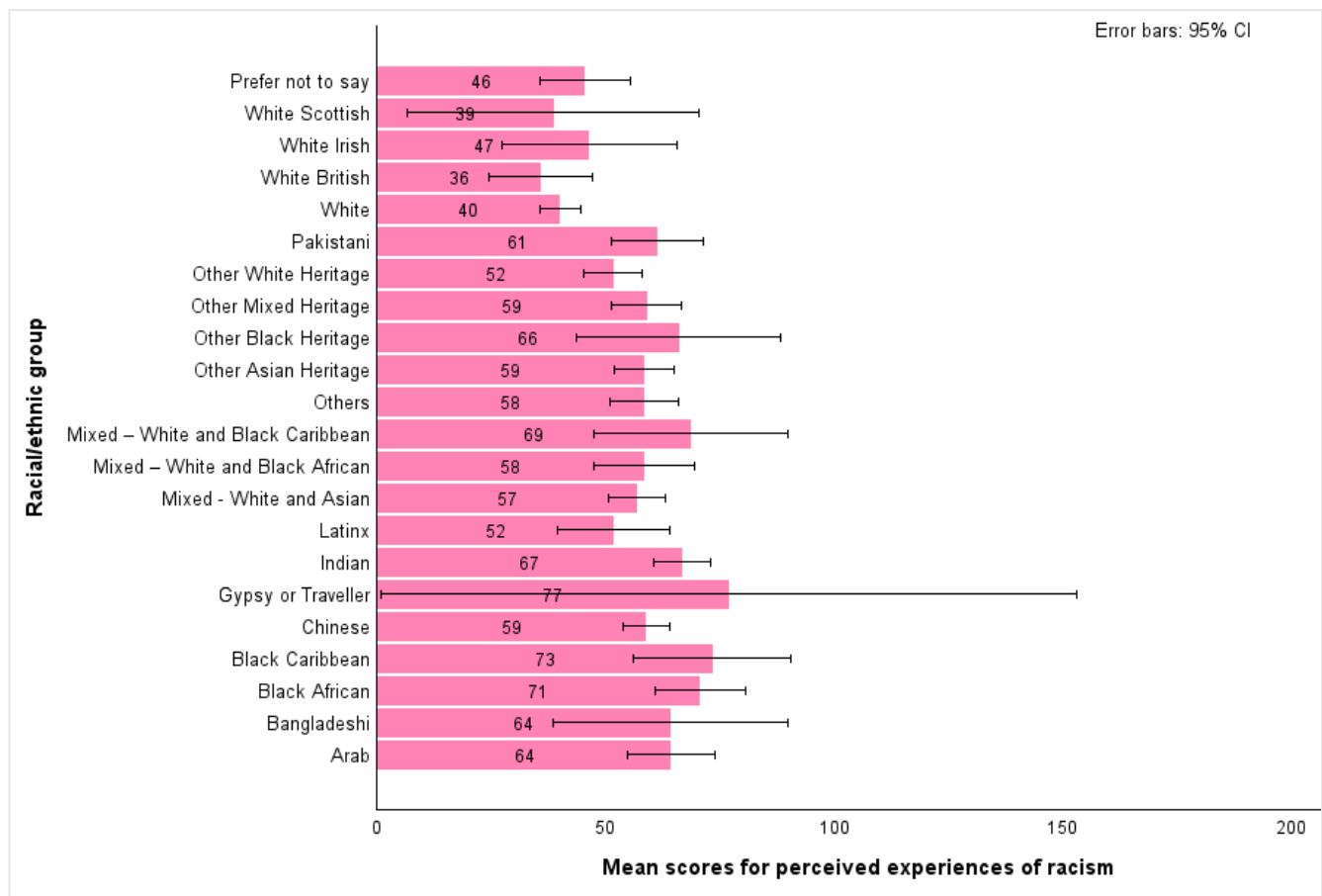


Figure 29: Mean scores of perceived experiences of racism for each ethnic group

No differences in experiences of racism were found between students and staff members, different age groups, participants holding different levels of qualifications or staff members working on different contract types and receiving different pay range. These findings provide strong evidence for participants' racial and ethnic backgrounds in determining their experiences of racism. Figures 30 to 38 below display the mean scores between groups of participants by different demographics.

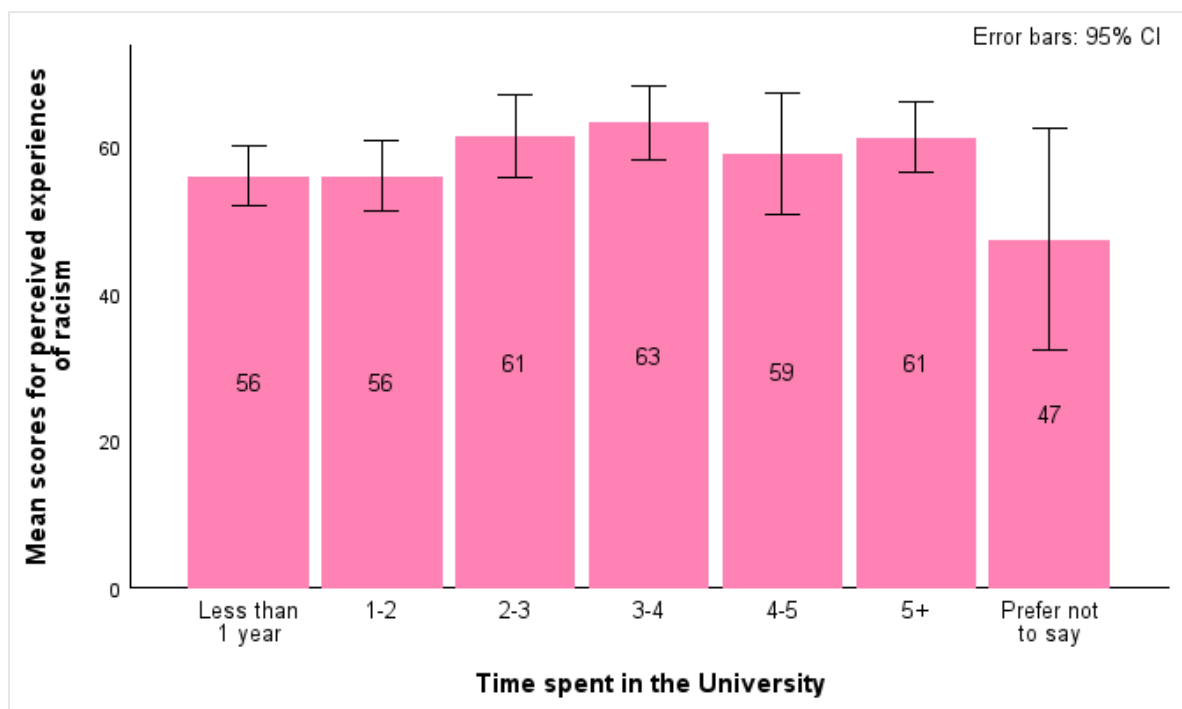


Figure 30: Perceived experiences of racism based on the duration participants have spent in the University

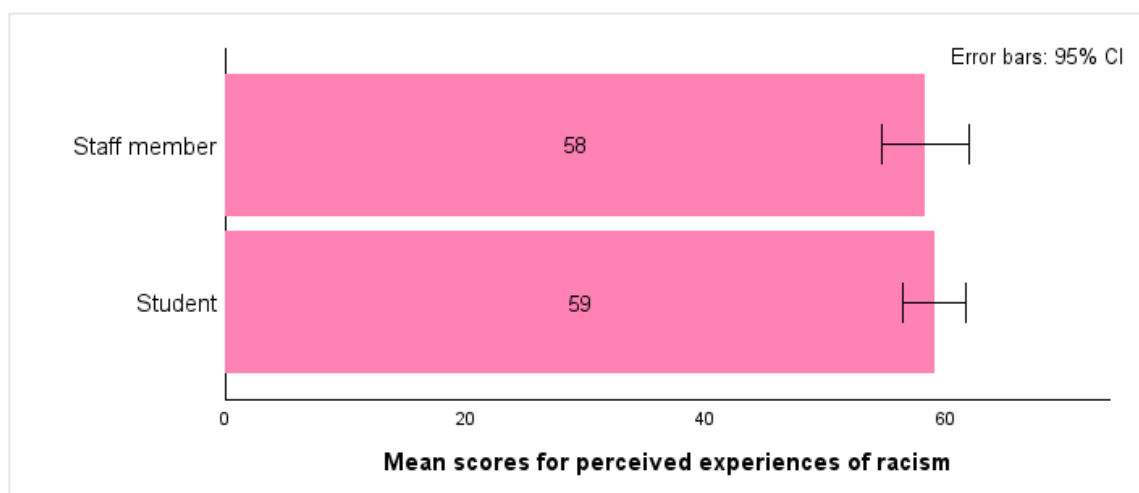


Figure 31: Mean scores in perceived experiences of racism for students and staff members

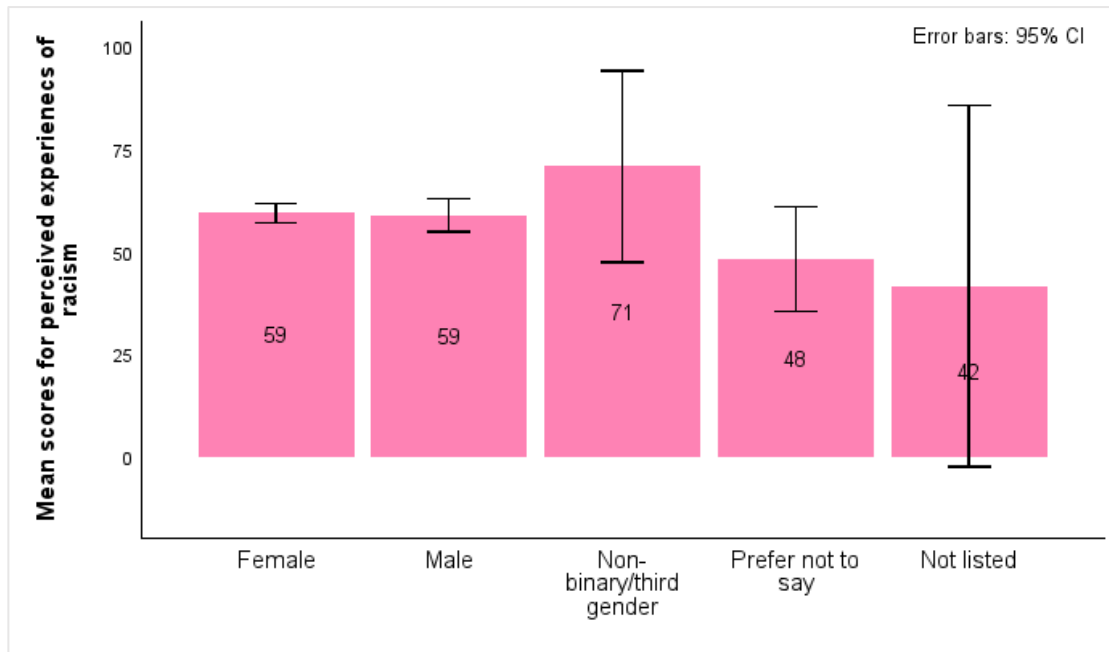


Figure 32: Mean scores in perceived experiences of racism for different gender categories

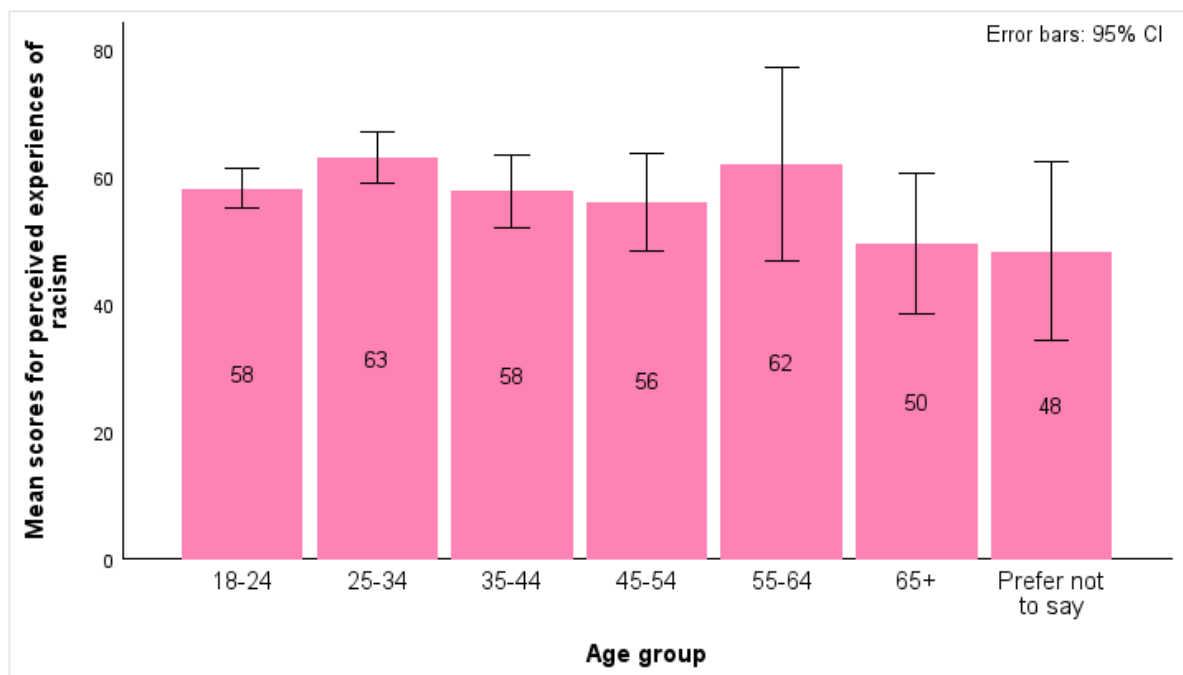


Figure 33: Mean scores in perceived experiences of racism for different age groups

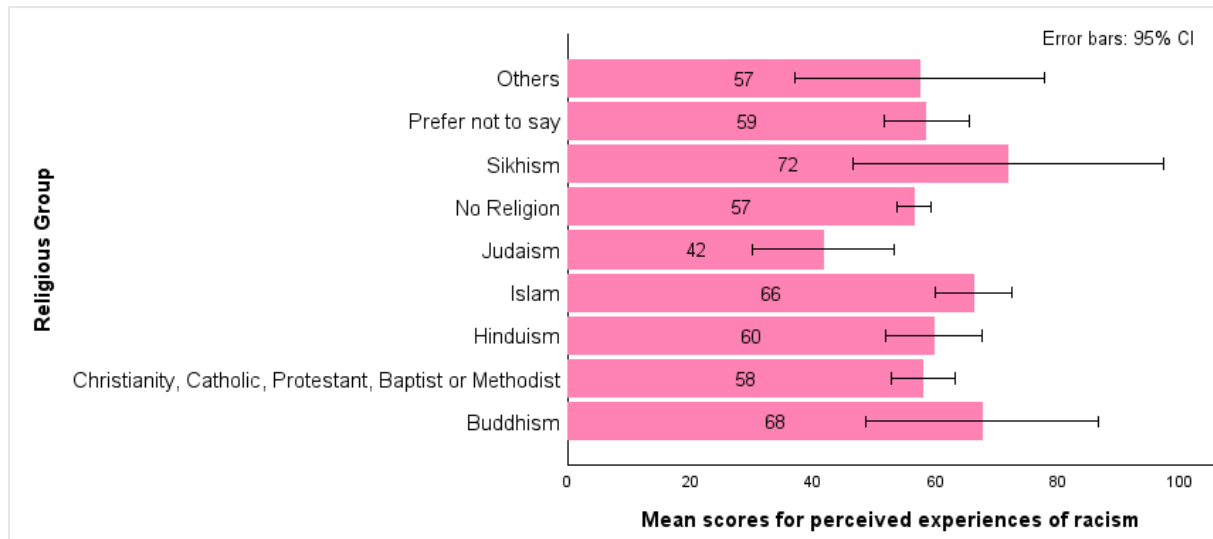


Figure 34: Mean scores in perceived experiences of racism for different religious groups

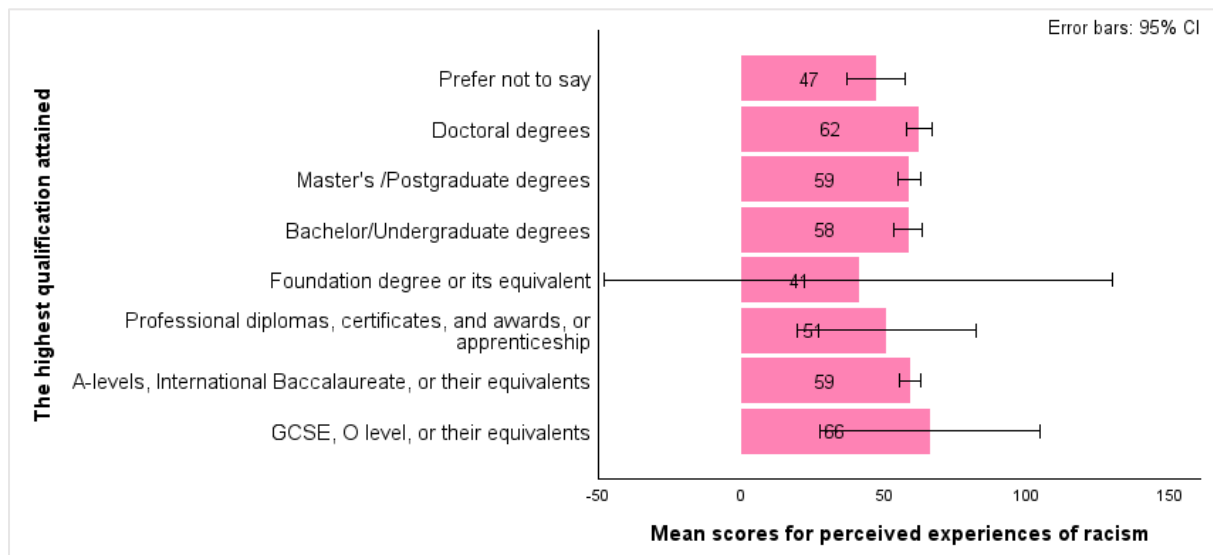


Figure 35: Differences in perceived experiences of racism based on the highest qualifications that participants have attained

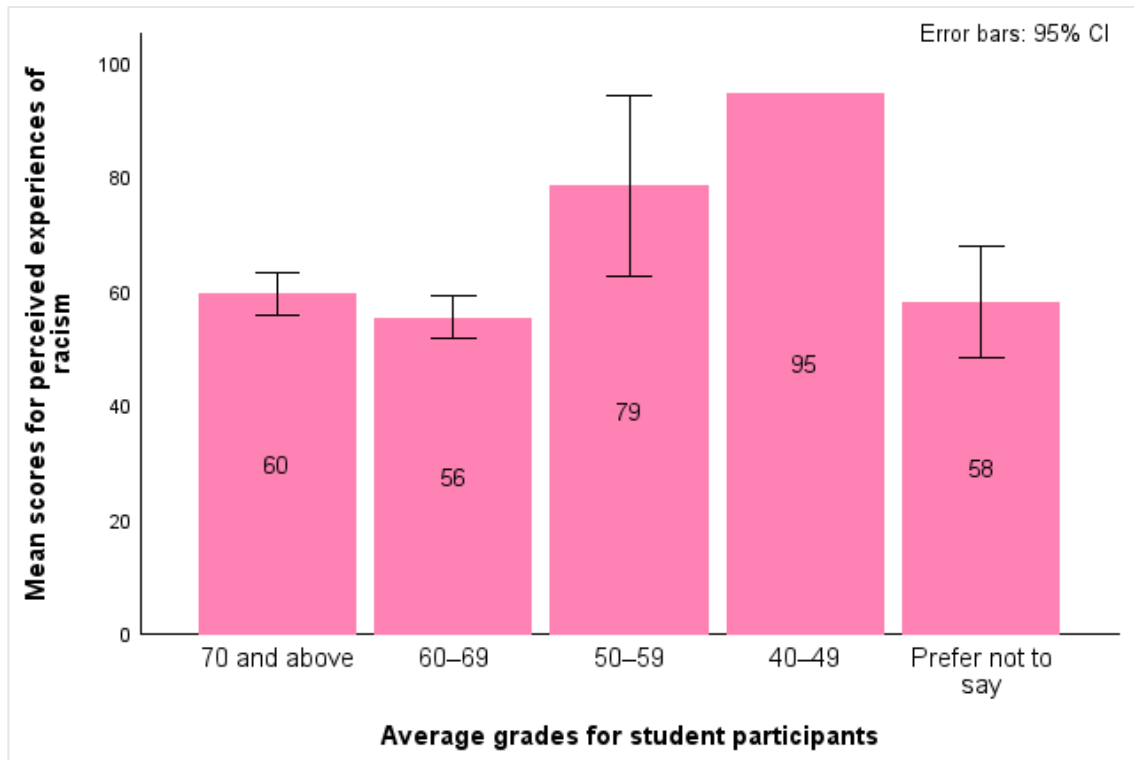


Figure 36: Perceived experiences of racism for student participants with different grades

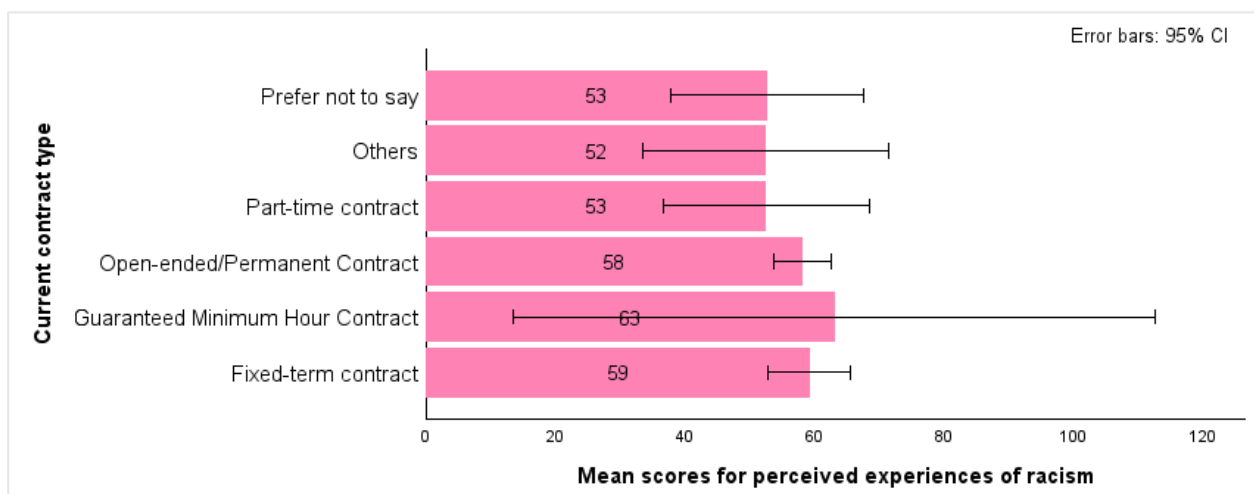


Figure 37: Perceived experiences of racism for staff participants working on different contract types

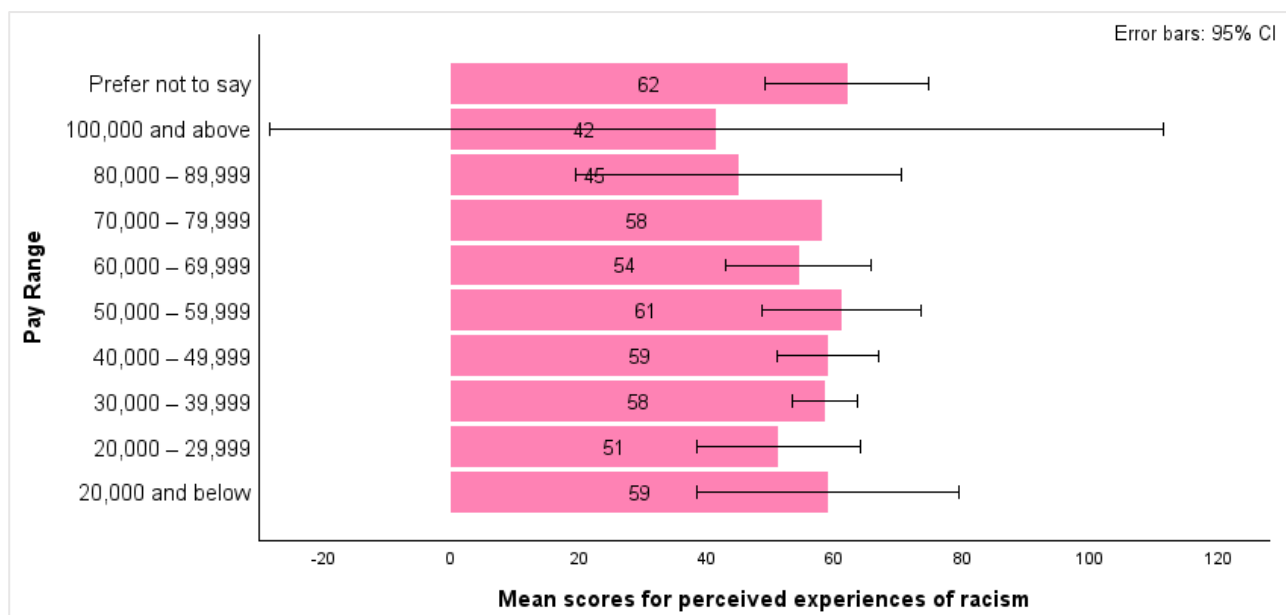


Figure 38: Perceived experiences of racism for staff participants on different pay scales

Participants indicated how they cope with their recent and general experiences of racism (see Figure 39). For both recent and general experiences of racism, ‘Telling families/friends about it’ was the most common coping strategy indicated by participants, while reporting racism to the police was the least common way of responding to racism.

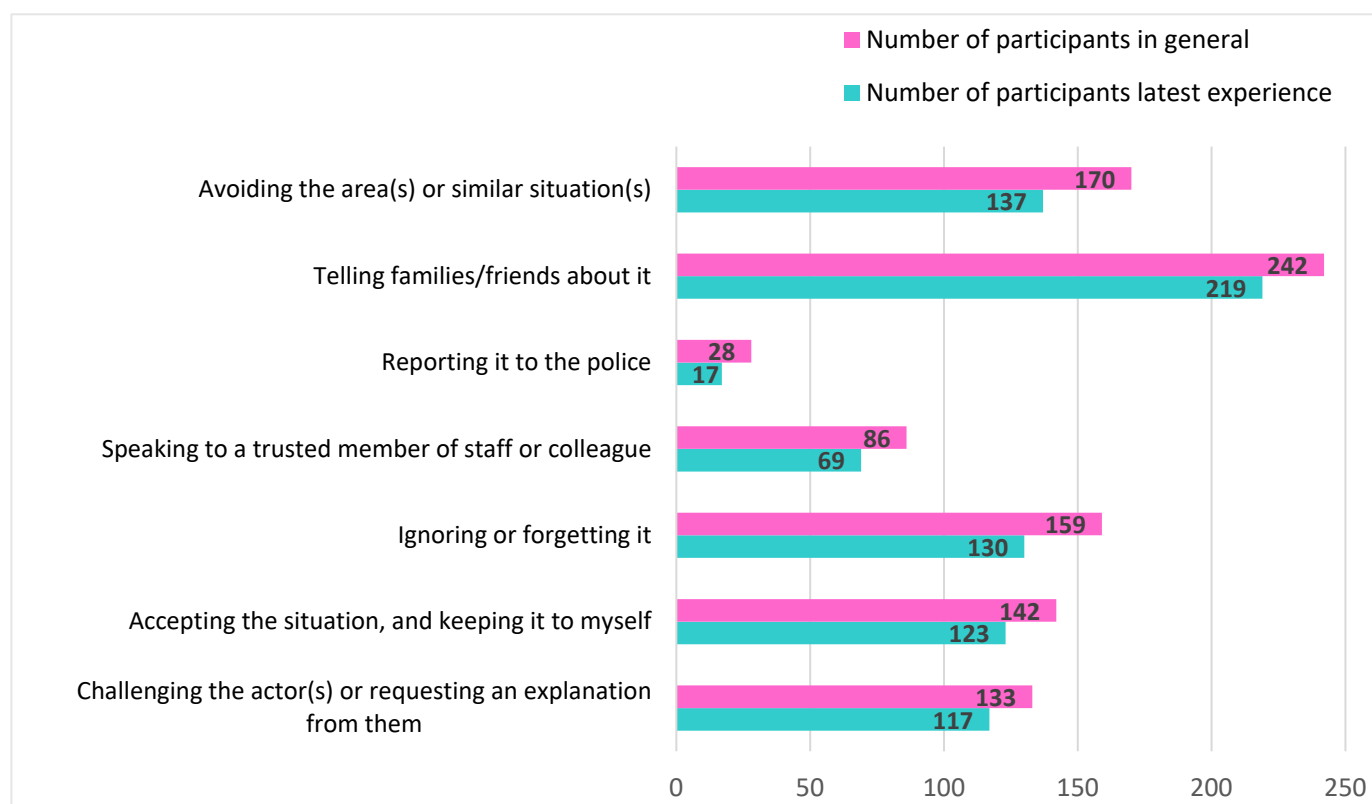


Figure 39: Participants’ ways of coping with their latest, and overall, experiences of racism

Participants' reported responses to experiences of racism suggest that support from colleagues or members of staff from the University was not often sought. This implies a lack of, and potentially inadequate, support from staff members in the University, again supporting the need to improve reporting mechanisms and racial literacy among staff and students.¹⁹⁷ It may also be that the participants did not feel comfortable seeking help from their tutors, supervisors or colleagues. According to Xie, 'the experience of racism, and the entitlement to know and claim such experience, tie with not only a person's victimhood, but also historically, culturally and categorially who (or which group of people) is more likely to be targeted and abused racially'.¹⁹⁸ Sharing experiences of racism with staff members (wherein the majority is of white ethnicity) may therefore be challenging. As Part 3 and Appendix 4 show, ethnically and racially minoritised staff members are under-represented in the University. Therefore, increasing the number of staff members from ethnically and racially under-represented backgrounds can be crucial in building rapport and trust with students and staff members (of ethnically minoritised backgrounds). This could also help to improve the experiences of reporting racism and provide support for members who experience racism. Further work is also needed to consider the effectiveness of current anti-racism training and develop more effective ways of improving racial literacy.

In the questionnaire, we also asked participants to provide further information about how they cope with their recent and general experiences of racism. One participant reported experiencing racism in a setting outside of the University. This is important for the University to consider. University life is inseparable and integrated with a person's everyday life in Edinburgh. The University of Edinburgh's campus is situated in the heart of the City of Edinburgh. It therefore requires a collective community effort to decolonise the University of Edinburgh and the City of Edinburgh and foster a space that welcomes members of all backgrounds.

¹⁹⁷ Arshad, 'Thematic Review', p. 1.

¹⁹⁸ Yarong Xie, 'Talking about the Experiences of Racism: A Study of Reporting Racism in Broadcast Interviews', *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 62 (2023), 1469–85 (p. 1482).

PART 5: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

A central goal of the REWG's work was to incorporate and engage communities of reparatory justice interests and other interested and invested parties. The aim was to identify recommendations and next steps to indicate how the University of Edinburgh should begin repairing the legacies of African enslavement, colonialism and racial thinking, and address contemporary forms of structural racism and under-representation within the institution.¹⁹⁹ This meant maintaining effective, sustainable and long-term engagement with affected communities. It also meant ensuring that the REWG reflected critically on the effectiveness of its processes over the course of the project. The summary below provides insight into the main considerations and reflections that emerged from the organisation of different community-centred events, workshops and focus groups, in line with our Principles of Participation.²⁰⁰ This work provides the foundation for our key reparatory justice recommendations and suggestions for what steps should be taken next.

Methods

Community engagement was understood as following a two-way approach where communities could speak to the institution and each other. The aim was to build community capabilities for engaging with the institution and to create a collaborative culture of shared ownership in the intellectual work and progression of the project. The project sought to move away from extractive models of engagement that are often limited to consultation, and move towards involvement, collaboration and empowering modes of engagement. As outlined in the West Lothian spectrum of engagement toolkit, noted below, there are various national standards that need to be attained for work to be classified as engagement.²⁰¹ At a minimum, the REWG's engagement with the public and communities of reparatory justice interest sought to achieve the involvement standard to guarantee that community concerns and aims were understood and considered.²⁰² This included having representatives from communities of reparatory justice interest working as paid consultants and members of the REWG, and setting up a subgroup on community engagement. The consultants were joined by a network of Community Anchors drawn from staff, student and external communities. Their role was to ensure the consideration of 'a range of views [...] in

¹⁹⁹ This work was led by Community Engagement Officer, Samantha Likonde, in collaboration with community consultants Esther Xosei, Zaki El-Salahi and Silence Chuhuri, Community Anchors Omolabake Fakunle, Rpgger Jeffery, Nini Kerr, Ebo Anyebe, Abigail Ocansey, Kobina Amokwandoh and Trishna Singh, and co-chair Nicola Frith.

²⁰⁰ REWG, 'Principles of Participation', 9 May 2023, <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/decolonise/2023/05/09/what-are-principles-of-participation-and-why-do-we-need-them/>.

²⁰¹ West Lothian Community Planning Partnership, 'Engaging Communities Toolkit: A Practical Guide to Community Engagement', https://www.westlothian.gov.uk/media/8652/Engaging-Communities-Toolkit/pdf/Engaging_Communities_Toolkit.pdf?m=635694591719070000.

²⁰² Five levels of engagement are outlined in the spectrum of community engagement, with increasing levels of public engagement from 'inform', 'consult', 'involve', 'collaborate' and 'empower'; West Lothian Community Planning Partnership, p. 4.

the formulation of engagement sessions, resource distribution and final recommendations'.²⁰³ Consultants and Anchors were selected based on their record of accomplishment in community work, their expertise and knowledge in relation to the histories and legacies of enslavement and colonialism, and their position as key individuals who understand the primary concerns of those within their respective communities.²⁰⁴ Both consultants and Anchors were instrumental in helping the REWG to critically analyse its processes and outcomes. They ensured that the work consistently considered community concerns and needs. They also encouraged a communicative atmosphere in which we sought to incorporate the advice of our community partners as part of the project's development. Finally, we aimed to achieve the empowerment standard of engagement by placing decision-making into the hands of both communities of reparatory justice interest and other interested parties, including staff, students and other professionals invested in addressing racial legacies.²⁰⁵ These processes were integral to the development of our final recommendations, with each instance of engagement being carefully documented and mapped. Contacts were made through the [Decolonised Transformations](#) blogsite and its mailing list, as well as external community networks (in Edinburgh, Scotland and the UK) and internal mailing lists, such as [EREN](#) and [RaceEd](#).²⁰⁶

The Process of Engagement

Preparatory Stage: 2021–2022

During the preparatory stages for this project, the Co-Chairs invited membership to the REWG, including three external community representatives/consultants, to help shape the research and engagement agenda and comment on the initial proposal to obtain University funding. These members include Esther Xosei (Reparationist, Jurisconsult, Community Advocate, Educator, Environmentalist and 'Ourstorian' of the International Social Movement for Afrikan Reparations); Zaki El-Salahi (Anti-Racist Policy & Participation consultant and lead of the Edinburgh Sudanese Community Partnership); and Jatin Haria (Executive Director, Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights). Silence Chihuri from the grassroots charity Fair Justice System for Scotland then replaced Jatin Haria following his decision to step down due to retirement.

Stage 1: September to December 2022

Having secured University funding, stage 1 included working with the REWG, the Steering Group and other relevant parties (such as [Edinburgh Local](#)) to identify communities, groups

²⁰³ REWG, 'Community Anchor Invitation', <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/decolonise/2024/01/25/community-anchor-invitation/>.

²⁰⁴ REWG, 'Community Anchor Invitation'.

²⁰⁵ West Lothian Community Planning Partnership, p. 4.

²⁰⁶ In total, 291 people attended our community events.

and individuals at local, national, UK and international levels who might be interested in being involved in the REWG's work. This period led to the creation of the 'Decolonised Transformations' blogsite, which functions as the main platform for staying in touch with the project. To design this site, the Community Engagement Officer worked closely with the REWG to define its overall purpose, tone and identity, and commissioned Zimbabwean artist, Nothando Grace Montgomery, to create the artwork that is used both as the main graphic for the project and for any information or advertisements relating to the REWG's research and events.

During this stage, a community engagement sub-group was established that comprised Samantha Likonde, Nicola Frith, Zaki El-Salahi and Esther Xosei who co-wrote the Principles of Participation. These were adapted from the principles outlined by the International Network of Scholar and Activists for Afrikan Reparations (INOSAAR) (2019), which acted as a forerunner in bringing scholars and activists together around the subject of reparations, as well as the Runnymede Trust's 'Finding Common Cause: Building Research Collaborations Between Universities and Black and Minority Ethnic Communities' (2018).²⁰⁷ The principles functioned as the ethical guidelines underpinning the reparatory justice and decolonising work of the REWG in relation to any activities that involved public participation, consultation and engagement within and beyond the University.

Stage 2: January to April 2023

During stage 2, the Community Engagement Officer reached out to staff and student networks with the aim of creating a cross-institutional, interdisciplinary working group of academics, students and professionals, as well as external public groups who represent community-based interests, including activist and community heritage groups. In total, 12 staff networks and committees, 40 groups representing communities of reparatory justice interest and six student societies were invited to attend our inaugural event.²⁰⁸ On 22 April 2023, the REWG officially launched its community engagement work with an inaugural event held at the Playfair Library in collaboration with the Talbot Rice Gallery and its temporary exhibition called the Accursed Share.²⁰⁹ Following an introductory panel with presentations from each attending REWG member, six roundtable discussions were held with separate

²⁰⁷ International Network of Scholars and Activists for Afrikan Reparations (INOSAAR), 'Principles of Participation', July 2021, https://www.inosaar.llc.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/atoms/files/principles_of_participation_jul_2021.pdf; Runnymede Trust, 'Finding Common Cause: Building Research Collaborations Between Universities and Black and Minority Ethnic Communities', 2018, <https://www.runnymedetrust.org/publications/finding-common-cause-building-research-collaborations-between-universities-and-black-and-minority-ethnic-communities>.

²⁰⁸ This is a link to the groups that were contacted ahead of the inaugural event: https://my.sharepoint.com/:x/g/personal/slikonde_ed_ac_uk/EefjCUrdfYpCjYit4aS3oQcBa7M74dAE8uMp-bLSTRpM5Q?e=JCu5Uh.

²⁰⁹ Talbot Rice Gallery, 'The Accursed Share', 17 March to 27 May 2023, <https://www.trg.ed.ac.uk/exhibition/accursed-share>.

questions and themes that were chaired by members of the REWG and notetakers.²¹⁰ Participants were able to attend two to three roundtables in addition to visiting the art exhibition. In total, 50 people were in attendance, including 14 representatives from community organisations, three students and 33 members of staff from Schools and departments across the University.

A summary of the key points raised and priorities identified during this event included:

- Addressing the power imbalances between the University of Edinburgh and communities of reparatory justice interest;
- Developing processes of engagement and dialogue for action;
- Finding appropriate spaces for engagement;
- Providing better access to archives and institutional records;
- Opening up access to education on an international scale;
- Transforming and decolonising the curriculum;
- Recognising the past, building awareness and sustaining transformation.

A key outcome of this inauguration was the identification of priority areas on which to focus community workshops and focus groups (see below).

The inauguration was followed by a press release, as well as the production of two podcasts entitled 'On Reparations at the University of Edinburgh' (part 1 and part 2), which were created in collaboration with the RaceEd network for their 'Undersong: Race and Conversations Other-Wise' series.²¹¹

Stage 3: May to September 2023

During stage 3, the REWG began planning its first thematic workshop and focus group series. This included seeking ethics approval, expanding the REWG network, attending seminars, conferences and events relating to community engagement, reparatory justice and decolonial research, and setting up the role of the Community Anchors.²¹² In this role, 10 individuals were invited to join the REWG as a committee of advisors. This group includes four individuals from external communities, three individuals from the University of Edinburgh's staff population and three individuals from the student population. All Anchors were invited to attend workshop planning sessions, co-facilitate activities and recommend representatives and speakers for events, as well as attend the events as participants. The

²¹⁰ Further information can be found here: REWG, 'Decolonised Transformations Inaugural Event: Recapitulation', 22 April 2023, <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/decolonise/2023/07/11/decolonised-transformations-inaugural-event-recapitulation/>.

²¹¹ University of Edinburgh, 'Minority communities to play key role in University Race Review', 21 April 2023, <https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/2023/minority-communities-to-play-key-role-in-universit>; Race.Ed, 'Race.Ed podcast – Undersong: Episode 13 (Parts 1 and 2) – On Reparations at the University of Edinburgh', 2024, <https://www.race.ed.ac.uk/podcast/>.

²¹² Decolonised Transformations: Confronting the UoE's Legacies of Enslavement and Colonialism, PPLS Research Ethics, 346-2223/3.

purpose of the initiative was to recognise the knowledge and expertise of the Anchors and reflect a serious commitment to knowledge exchange, as well as ensure capacity building for both the Anchors and the University of Edinburgh. For more information, view the [Community Anchor Invitation](#).

Stage 4: October 2023 to December 2024

During Stage 4, the REWG worked with communities on four priority areas through a workshop and focus group series.

Theme 1: Restitution and the Anatomical Museum

Our first theme related to '[Restitution and the Anatomical Museum](#)'. Its aim was to explore the questions raised by the existence of the Anatomical Museum's collection of ancestral remains, notably skulls, as a legacy of colonial violence, to understand more about processes supporting the repatriation of ancestral remains and ascertain what resource might be required to further enhance restitution and repatriation efforts, where possible and desirable. It is important to note that repatriation from the Anatomical Museum to communities of origin has been ongoing for many years. The first return took place in 1947, this being the skull of Keppetipola, a leader of the 1817–18 rebellion against British rule in the Kandyan area of what was then called Ceylon (Sri Lanka).²¹³ This was then followed by a series of returns in the 1990s following a campaign led by Michael Mansell, a Tasmanian Aboriginal (Palawa) activist and lawyer for Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre Inc who fought to have all of the Tasmanian and Australian Aboriginal ancestors returned. His campaign led to the adoption of a University repatriation policy on 5 November 1990 that has been in effect ever since.²¹⁴ Recent examples of repatriation include the return of nine skulls to the Sri Lankan Vedda community in 2019 that were taken during the British colonial period in the 1880s, and the return of four tribal warriors to the Mudan community in Taiwan in 2023.²¹⁵

To support this theme, we drew from existing research into repatriation, learned about the important repatriation efforts that have been undertaken by the Anatomical Museum staff to-date, worked with academics (notably John Harries and Nicole Anderson) on proactive forms of repatriation, and built on the long-term work of the Sudanese Community in Edinburgh, following the discovery of two skulls belonging to Sudanese martyrs that were stolen from the Omdurman battlefield by Reginald Koettlitz and given to

²¹³ Nira Wickramasinghe, 'The Return of Keppetipola's Cranium: Authenticity in a New Nation', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 32 (1997), 85–92.

²¹⁴ University of Edinburgh Court Minutes, 5 November 1990. For more information, see Cressida Fforde, 'Controlling the Dead: An Analysis of the Collecting and Repatriation of Aboriginal Human Remains', 2 vols (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Southampton, 1997); Cressida Fforde, *Collecting the Dead: Archaeology and the Reburial Issue* (London: Duckworth, 2004).

²¹⁵ 'Warrior Skulls Returned to their Ancestral Home', 7 November 2023, <https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/2023/mudan-skulls#:~:text=The%20first%20repatriation%20at%20the,colonial%20period%20in%20the%201880s>.

Henry S. Wellcome in 1900 and 1901.²¹⁶ On 31 October 2023, we held our first workshop at the [Scottish Storytelling Centre](#), which included a panel with museum professionals, researchers, community representatives and activists, with 45 people in attendance. This highlighted the main issues that would be discussed during the subsequent four focus groups held on 15 and 22 November and 6 and 13 December 2023. Each focus group covered different topics, such as the history of the collection, cases of repatriation, methods of reporting, transparency, access to information about the collection and its archives, the University of Edinburgh's repatriation policy, examples of repatriation policies at other museums/institutions, reactive and proactive approaches to repatriation and provenance research. A final workshop was held on 7 February 2024 to discuss the findings and recommendations. The findings from this workshop are summarised in more detail in Appendix 6, with recommendations being incorporated into the recommendations below (see Part 6).

Theme 2: Creating a Research and Community Engagement Centre for the Study of Racisms, Colonialism and Anti-Black Violence

Discussions were held on 3 and 6 April 2024 online and in person at the Scottish Salisbury Centre, inviting members of local communities, communities of reparatory justice interest, University of Edinburgh staff and students to discuss the possibility of developing a Centre. As outlined in the 'Vision' below (Part 6), its aim is to provide a dedicated infrastructure in which to house and implement the REWG's recommendations, while furthering research and community engagement into the history and legacies of racial violence. The summary report (Appendix 7) provides further insight regarding the findings from these discussions. It also provides additional context into the longstanding demands of community groups and community-based efforts to establish such a Centre. These groups include the [Sudanese Community in Edinburgh](#), the Pan-African Network of Black community groups, including the [African Caribbean Society of Scotland](#), the [Women of African Descent in Scotland](#) and the [Fair Justice System for Scotland](#), among others. These demands were brought into dialogue with Professor Tommy Curry's longstanding calls for a research centre for the study of racisms, colonialism and anti-Black violence.

A key discussion focused on the importance of creating a space that benefits community members of all ages and promotes development in areas such as access to resources and support from researchers. Communities emphasised the need for a dedicated centre in which to integrate community-driven research to inform policy and incorporate diverse perspectives. In one discussion, two visiting international scholar-activists from Ghana, Akorfa Gakpa and Dzigbordi Agbo, shared their ongoing work through the Ablodenunyansa Communiversity.²¹⁷ Their aim is to pave ways forward for a Gbetowo Indigenous Community Educational Institution, highlighting the potential for positively

²¹⁶ Daisy Chamberlain, 'Collections Uncovered: Omdurman Battlefield Skulls', 25 May 2021, <https://anatomicalmuseum.wordpress.com/2021/05/25/collections-uncovered-omdurman-battlefield-skulls/> (accessed 9 January 2025).

²¹⁷ Communiversity is a concept for bringing people's power together through educational procedures and systems that emphasise pluriversality, decolonisation and indigeneity in order to create a more integrated global academy commons.

impacting grassroots communities who are developing their own African Indigenous systems of teaching and learning.²¹⁸ The involvement of Indigenous community educationists in exploring decolonisation and decolonial curricula, through international engagement, provided an insight into the collaborative potential of establishing a new type of relationship between university institutions in Europe and Indigenous knowledge centres, as a form of repairs, as well as strengthening equitable access to knowledge. Such a Centre could offer support by providing a platform for various scholar-activist communities to connect and collaborate, as well as material resource (e.g. supplying technology) for international collaborators. Not only would this support grassroots communities to engage with the Centre, but it would also help communities to access resource and develop their own reparatory initiatives.

Another example discussed the ways that the Centre could support other communities who have experienced the effects of colonialism. For example, it could be used to challenge the limited perceptions of the Sikh Diaspora in Scotland and highlight their long-standing presence in Scotland. It could also be used to improve access to archival materials within the institution, providing a historical record of their colonial experiences by creating courses and space for reciprocal learning. This underscores the importance of supporting community-centred research that addresses the unique forms of marginalisation that different racialised communities face, particularly when these communities are further marginalised as a smaller minority within a minoritised group.

Additionally, participants highlighted how this space could foster engagement, reciprocal learning and collaboration across various intellectual efforts. The Centre was envisioned as a physical space that could bridge the gap between numerous communities, welcoming intellectual and socially progressive initiatives across the board and providing a well-funded platform to investigate different histories and legacies of racism and resistance movements. This would require dedicated staff to maintain and facilitate this type of interaction, including: a Community Archivist/Curator specialising in digital archiving and dedicated to archiving the work of contemporary movements, and improving access to historical archives; a Community Representative/Scholar-Activist-in-Residence as an annual post giving communities the opportunity to work on specific projects; a dedicated Centre Director; and a Community Engagement Officer/Manager to bridge the gap between the aims of various communities. These recommendations have been incorporated into recommendations below, but are outlined in greater detail in Appendix 8.

Theme 3: Digital Archiving

Work was also conducted on theme 3, which focused on two aspects of digital archiving. The first aspect looked at the feasibility of creating a publicly accessible, grassroots-driven digital archive to document the 40-year history of reparations movements in the UK and their

²¹⁸ For more information, see PRALER, 'Global Citizenship Education for Planet Repairs Action (GCEPRA) - Ghana in Planet Repairs Action Dialogue (GIPRAD)', 16 July 2024, <https://www.praler.net/post/global-citizenship-education-for-planet-repairs-action-gcepra-ghana-in-planet-repairs-action-dia>.

contribution to the ‘International Social Movement for Afrikan Reparations’.²¹⁹ This archive was initiated and is currently being held by the [Maangamizi Educational Trust](#), but has yet to be digitised to make it publicly available. Digitisation would address the lack of visibility of the UK reparations movement, offer a necessary counter-narrative to misconceptions about reparations (commonly reduced to monetary payments) and provide a valuable resource for racial justice movements, researchers, policymakers and educators. The process of digitising such an archive would also act as a pilot study for the establishment of a resource in the University of Edinburgh, to enable other community-based groups to digitise their reparatory justice and anti-racism work. Following an initial feasibility study conducted by [Janice Tullock Associates](#) and funded by the [Edinburgh Futures Institute](#), the archive was assessed by Etienne Joseph (an archivist with a specialisation in digital archiving who works at the [Hackney Archives](#) and for [Decolonising the Archive](#),) with a view to preparing it for digitisation. This process included weeding, looking at copyright, creating a digital management plan, identifying items for digitisation, tracking permissions, cataloguing and re-boxing. A more detailed report on the next steps is available in Appendix 8.

The second aspect concerned improving access to institutional records, either directly or through curated and mediated contexts, to help communities, researchers and students get to grips with the evidence base which tells the long history of the University’s links to enslavement, colonialism and the development of racial thought. A business case entitled ‘Race, Repatriation and University Histories’ has already been made by the Centre for Research Collections, which pointed to the need for significant investment in human resourcing to improve access to University records, for example through digitisation, including its links to slavery and colonialism. This includes requests for the creation of several new posts, such as a University Historian and a repatriation and community engagement specialist.

Complementing this work, the REWG collaborated with [Decolonising the Archive](#), a London-based organisation that ‘seeks to facilitate heritage-based therapeutic interventions for people of African heritage rooted in our archives, cultural principles and technologies’.²²⁰ This organisation offered activists and/or community representatives the opportunity to take part in a short four-day archival training programme. The bespoke ‘[Correcting our Collecting](#)’ course focused on African heritage archiving, offering an insightful introduction to the skills needed for creating, curating, preserving and engaging with archives from African heritage and decolonial perspectives.²²¹ The course was run by two Decolonising the Archive facilitators, Connie Bell and Etienne Joseph. Two days were held in Edinburgh (2–3 September 2024) and two in London (14–15 September). The Edinburgh sessions included a visit to the Centre for Research Collections, offering initial exposure to archival material and a foundational understanding of key archival practices. This was followed by a day at the

²¹⁹ The [Edinburgh Futures Institute](#) provided funds to resource a feasibility study into the ISMAR Archive collection. This aspect of our community engagement work builds on the recommendations of that feasibility study conducted by [Janice Tullock Associates](#).

²²⁰ Decolonising the Archive, ‘About Us’, <https://www.decolonisingthearchive.com/about>.

²²¹ Decolonising the Archive, ‘Correcting our Collecting: An Introduction to African-Centred Archiving (Bespoke Programme)’, September 2024, https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/decolonise/wp-content/uploads/sites/7804/2025/02/DTA_Correcting-Our-Collecting-Bespoke-Edinburgh-Group.pdf.

Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities that focused on decolonial perspectives, where participants reflected on critical questions, such as the relationship between memory and culture; the factors leading to cultural erasure and community memory loss; and how to build archives that preserve community interests. The London sessions expanded on these discussions, with a visit to the [Black Cultural Archives](#) and a session on the various ways that history is recorded, including oral histories.

A key takeaway from the experience was the importance of shifting from viewing archives as spaces for academic exploration, to recognising them as repositories of valuable cultural heritage, often containing the ancestors and histories of marginalised communities. By objectifying the collections, the traditional approach to archives risks stripping them of their humanity and cultural significance.²²² The course encouraged both individual and group reflection on these themes, facilitating a deep dive into how archives can align with cultural beliefs, principles and community visions. An especially valuable component was the opportunity for participants to share their personal work within their communities and discuss how they would apply their learning to strengthen community capacities following the course.

This course contributed to the idea that the University of Edinburgh could begin proactively building connections with Indigenous, African, Asian and other racially minoritised communities and engage with the collections in a way that ensures their humanisation. It was suggested that the University of Edinburgh commit to working with organisations such as Decolonising the Archive to support local and international groups in accessing their heritage collections and dignifying the collections (including ancestral remains) in ways that are supported by heritage communities. An example of this is the work taking place at the University of Birmingham where their African Collection is being explored through the work of artist-in-residence, Sipho Eric Ndlovu. This '[Africanize](#)' project challenges the colonial-collector mindset and reinterprets the collections in collaboration with the [We Don't Settle](#) organisation. The University of Edinburgh could also facilitate such an initiative and take a step further by collaborating with grassroots organisations to reinterpret the collections and engage in the facilitation of decolonial archival training for engaged communities.

Incorporating African, Indigenous and other knowledge systems into archival work challenges Western-centric perspectives that often dominate archival theory and practice. Institutions that embrace these diverse epistemologies can enrich their collections by incorporating alternative forms of knowledge that have been overlooked and undervalued in traditional academic settings.²²³ This would broaden the scope of intellectual and cultural inquiry within the University and encourage it to become a site for reciprocal learning where African, Indigenous and other racialised communities, staff and students learn from one another. This participatory approach can help to build trust and improve relationships by encouraging ongoing collaboration and access to the archives, for example by facilitating the involvement of racialised communities in the stewardship and interpretation of their own

²²² Sarah Van Beurden, 'LOOT: Colonial Collections and African Restitution Debates', March 2022, <https://origins.osu.edu/read/loot-colonial-collections-and-african-restitution-debates#page-content>.

²²³ Tosin Adeate and Anusharani Sewchurran, 'African Epistemologies and the Decolonial Curriculum', *Acta Academica Critical Views on Society Culture and Politics*, 55 (2023), 1–18.

heritage. This would ensure that the collections reflect the values, worldviews and histories of heritage communities, leading to more meaningful and accurate representations of cultures. It would also provide space to engage critically with, and counter, racial stereotypes and misrepresentations that have often been perpetuated by higher education institutions.²²⁴

Colleagues within the Centre for Research Collections (CRC) welcomed the opportunity to learn about the REWG's experiences with Decolonising the Archive, especially in relation to how access to, and engagement with, the archives could be better facilitated. Further resources to the CRC to increase staffing, as well as a budget to support the engagement and facilitation of archival training by and for racially minoritised communities, would be an important recommendation, in addition to improving accessibility by designing a more welcoming physical space.

Theme 4: Curriculum Transformation and Decolonisation

The final theme engaged with the need to decolonise the curriculum as an important aspect of addressing the University's history and legacies of enslavement, colonialism and the development of racial thought. This aligns with the stated aspirations in the University of Edinburgh's Strategy 2023 that point to 'a values-led approach to teaching, research and innovation' that will be developed 'through the strength of our relationships, both locally and globally'.²²⁵ However, a recent Principal's Teaching Award Scheme project, led by [Dr Omolabake Fakunle](#) (Senior Lecturer and Chancellor's Fellow at Moray House School of Education and Sport), revealed a lack of connection of inclusion and internationalisation narratives in the mission and vision statements of Schools across the University, pointing to a structural gap.²²⁶ To address this concern, the REAR Action Plan (section 4) called for the nomination of a lead person to steer the decolonisation aspects of the University's Curriculum Transformation Programme. In November 2023, Dr Fakunle was appointed to this position and has undertaken a scoping review of current decolonisation initiatives at Edinburgh across the three Colleges. This includes both the Decolonising Working Groups set out across different Schools in the University, and decolonisation-related courses such as those captured on the RaceEd website. Examples include 'Understanding Race and Colonialism'; the decolonisation-related blog series (curated by Prof Rowena Arshad) by the Race and Inclusivity in Global Education Network; and the student-led archival project UncoverED that created a database of students who attended the University of Edinburgh from Africa, the Caribbean, Asia and the Americas from as early as 1700.

A key aspect of the work involves engaging and consulting with staff and students to understand commonalities and differences in meanings attributed to decolonisation in

²²⁴ Julia E. Rodriguez, 'Decolonizing or Recolonizing? The (Mis)Representation of Humanity in Natural History Museums', *History of Anthropology Review*, 44 (2020), <https://histanthro.org/notes/decolonizing-or-recolonizing/>.

²²⁵ University of Edinburgh, Strategy 2030, <https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/strategy-2030.pdf>, p. 6.

²²⁶ Omolabake Fakunle, Yifang Xu, Mariel Deluna, 'Exploring the intersection of inclusion and internationalisation at the University of Edinburgh. Final Report: Scoping Study (2022)', PTAS Project Report (2022), <https://institute-academic-development.ed.ac.uk/learning-teaching/funding/funding/previous-projects/year/march-2021/inclusiveness-in-internationalisation>.

practice across the different Colleges. As a representative of the REWG, the Community Engagement Officer attended the in-person student roundtables organised by Dr Fakunle at the Scottish Storytelling Centre on 14 May 2024 (partnership with Mastercard ensured the inclusion of online distance learning students as described in this [Teaching Matters blog](#)).²²⁷ The aim of this session was to understand students' perceptions of decolonising the curriculum based on their experiences of studying at Edinburgh at undergraduate, masters and doctoral levels. The extensive consultation and review as part of the Curriculum Transformation work on decolonisation informs the development of a transdisciplinary challenge course titled, 'Understanding Decolonisation in a Globalised World'. This is a pre-honours course expected to start running in the 2025/26 academic year. The curriculum offers an opportunity to transform the pedagogical climate and culture of a university. For instance, a decolonised curriculum allows learners to call into question the origins of the structures of traditional scholarship and how hegemonic constructions of knowledge in universities and centres of learning in the Global North are imposed on Global South institutions and communities. The conceptual and experiential dimensions of this challenge course provide an innovative pathway for engagement with the topic.

Further, decolonisation related work embarked upon by the REWG included a Student Dialogue event on 13 November 2024 in collaboration with the African Caribbean Medical Society, Black Women in Edinburgh, the African Caribbean Society, and the University's BAME Liberation Officer. This event explored the REWG's final recommendations to gather students' responses based on their academic experiences. The event opened a space for authentic dialogue across a range of African heritage societies, with long-term engagement in pursuing a healthier racial climate on campus, to benefit the experience of all marginalised students. Key takeaways from the event included the need for Schools and departments to address the impact of racism and develop a cohesive zero-tolerance approach to tackling racial incidents, such as hate crimes and micro/macro-aggressions. This, once again, pointed to the salience of addressing the lack of racial literacy among staff and students, as well as the findings of the REWG's Questionnaire 2 in relation to experiences of racism among staff and students, and the reluctance to report racial incidents to colleagues.²²⁸ The Student Dialogue also noted systemic barriers, such as the lack of access to Black academic journals and intellectual resources, as well as the insufficient recognition of knowledge produced outside of the Western context, enforcing the narrative that 'the Western way is the best way to do academia'.²²⁹ One suggestion for reversing this trend would be to explore how alternative pedagogies from the Global South can be incorporated to meet different needs within the University community. For example, the REWG's discussions with Indigenous community educationists from Ghana, Akorfa Gakpa and Dzigbordi Agbo, highlighted their interest in establishing an exchange programme with the University of Edinburgh under the auspices of a Global Open Summer School for Planet Repairs Action Learning (see also theme 2). Setting up such an exchange programme would

²²⁷ Omolabake Fakunle, Charlie Bevan, Sharon Boateng and Megan Douglas, 'Decolonising the Curriculum: A Conversation with Dr Omolabake Fakunle', *Teaching Matters*, 1 July 2024, <https://blogs.ed.ac.uk/teaching-matters/decolonising-the-curriculum-a-conversation-with-dr-omolabake-fakunle/>.

²²⁸ Arshad, 'Thematic Review', p. 1

²²⁹ Link to Appendix 9.

offer an important opportunity to discuss existing principles around international partnerships and think through possible recommendations to ensure reciprocity and equality.

The current gap between policy and practice means that there are lost opportunities for the curriculum to meaningfully and explicitly introduce courses grounded in new ways of teaching, thinking and learning that would enliven the existing provision. The Curriculum Transformation Programme's decolonisation work is seeking to contribute to address this gap, as are other staff and students with demonstrable commitment, experience and expertise to practically take forward the intent of the decolonised transformation work, and ensure that the work of decolonisation is recognised and embedded into the structure of the University in different areas and at all levels.

PART 6: REPARATORY JUSTICE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following outline of reparatory recommendations and suggested actions is the result of two years of intense work to investigate the University's history and legacies of enslavement, colonialism and the development of racial thought, and engagement with communities of reparatory justice interest and others invested in tackling racial injustice and violence, including University of Edinburgh staff and students, local groups and wider UK-based communities. The reparatory vision and recommendations below are designed to guide the University of Edinburgh towards phase two of the REWG's work, during which the recommendations and actions need to be approved, costed and implemented across the institution. The overarching aim is to deepen the institution's commitment to tackling racism by recognising the long-lasting effects of its historical links to enslavement and colonialism, and embedding a sustainable approach to reparatory justice work into Edinburgh's institutional structures. These recommendations aim to bring to life aspects of the University's [Strategy 2030](#), including widening participation and inclusivity, improving digital outreach and accessibility, creating opportunities for community engagement and ensuring the principled relevance of our work to students, researchers and wider publics.

Vision for a Research and Community Centre for the Study of Racisms, Colonialism and Anti-Black Violence

To demonstrate the University's commitment to repairing its racial legacies, the REWG is calling for the establishment of a Research and Community Centre for the Study of Racisms, Colonialism and Anti-Black Violence that will provide a dedicated infrastructure in which to house and implement the REWG's recommendations, while furthering research and community engagement into the history and legacies of racial violence. This sector-leading Centre will be the foundation for new ways of thinking about and addressing the problems of racism, racial injustice, inequality and violence. It has the potential to work in partnership with existing centres, such as the Centre for South Asian Studies and the Centre for African Studies. As a cross-College initiative, funds for this work should be prioritised under the [University Initiatives Portfolio](#), with its remit to lead on 'governance of change' projects and its dual ethos of putting people 'at the heart of everything we do' and 'engaging with and listening to what our community has to contribute'.²³⁰ Unlike equivalent centres at peer institutions, this Centre will not only bring together a transdisciplinary collection of scholars from all three Colleges of the University, but will also include the work of activists, practitioners, artists and other community groups as part of its structure. It will serve as a hub for Black and other racially and ethnically

²³⁰ University of Edinburgh Corporate Services Group, 'University Initiatives Portfolio Board', <https://corporate-services.ed.ac.uk/our-departments/strategic-change-service/university-initiatives-portfolio-board>.

minoritised students and staff to learn about and research issues of racism, including anti-Blackness and Black philosophy and theory, and will function as a training ground for clinicians, social workers, policy-makers, public sector workers and other professionals intent on addressing the effects of racism throughout the UK. It will provide a resource for the City of Edinburgh, in line with its own efforts to implement its [slavery and colonialism legacy review](#).²³¹ As an international platform and pathway for the hiring and hosting of Black, Asian and other racially/ethnically minoritised academic staff, it will act as a mechanism for addressing racial and ethnic under-representation and improving the overall climate for racially/ethnically minoritised peoples. In line with similar pledges made by peer-institutions (e.g. Oxford, Cambridge, Glasgow, etc.), this Centre is proposed as a permanent institution within the University of Edinburgh. This requires a guaranteed minimal amount of support by the institution within each budget cycle, which will be supplemented by grant capture, philanthropic donations and collaborative projects with the City of Edinburgh and other organisations in Edinburgh, across Scotland, the UK and abroad. More details on suggested resource and set-up requirements can be found in Appendix 8.

Reparatory Justice Recommendations: Next Steps

The following list of reparatory recommendations outlines the principal aims and actions of the Centre for Study of Racisms, Colonialism and Anti-Black Violence and provides a roadmap for next steps. It also lists any related recommendations focusing on specific areas of concern that the Centre will support. It includes suggested stakeholders within the institution with whom actions, if approved, are likely to be coordinated. It notes areas where there is existing activity, policy and/or action plans to ensure cross-institutional alignment and support. The measures of the success refer to the REWG's [Principles of Participation](#), which would need to be attached to tangible and quantifiable measures during the implementation and rollout phase. Importantly, the recommendations listed below do *not* represent a hierarchy of demands. Rather, they represent a holistic reparatory vision and roadmap for institutional change. To bring these recommendations forward and enter phase two, a 'Coalition for Implementation and Action Group' is required that builds from existing REWG membership, expertise and links to communities of reparatory justice interest, and includes other institutional stakeholders with the power to effect change. Additional funds are also needed to support the dissemination of the research and engagement findings from phase one and ensure public access to the findings of this report.²³²

²³¹ Edinburgh Slavery and Colonialism Legacy Review, <https://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/edinburghslaverycolonialism>.

²³² This is particularly important for members of the REWG who no longer have contracts at the University but are already being invited to talk about their research and involvement in the Decolonised Transformations project.

Aims	Recommendations	Measures of Success
1. To create a central point for cultural transformation within the University of Edinburgh by mainstreaming issues relating to racial discrimination and decolonisation, in recognition of the different kinds of racisms experienced by different ethnic/racial groups.	1.1 Establish a Research and Community Centre for the Study of Racisms, Colonialism and Anti-Black Violence as a dedicated, University-funded infrastructure, including core staff (e.g. Director, Community Engagement Officer/Manager, Professional Services Manager, Administrator and others).	Principle 8: A commitment to sustainability and legacy. The establishment of the Centre would ensure the development of sustainable research dedicated to understanding racial and ethnic difference, addressing racism and racial discrimination through ongoing, cross-disciplinary and cross-community collaboration.
	1.2 Appoint the Centre Director to EDIC, REAR and the Executive with responsibility for ensuring the University of Edinburgh's adherence to the Race Equality Charter.	
	1.3 Create a central point for decolonising efforts across the University of Edinburgh (noting that efforts are currently very dispersed) in collaboration with all Colleges and Schools to generate a more unified and cohesive strategy for implementing change and helping Schools address their colonial and racial legacies. This includes ensuring that all Schools and units within the University take account of this report and address any implications or related actions.	
	1.4 Adopt and endorse a definition of racism and decolonisation at an official level that underpins all institutional reforms and guides the University of Edinburgh's corrective vision.	
2. To support a public acknowledgement and apology for the University of Edinburgh's historical links to slavery, colonialism and their legacies today.	2.1 Work with the Principal, Senior Leadership Team and Communications Team on taking a proactive approach to formally and publicly acknowledging and apologising for the role the University of Edinburgh has played in histories of colonial violence and their legacies today.	Principle 1: A commitment to recognising historical and contemporary struggles for social and reparatory justice.

3. To improve the institutional climate for ethnically/racially minoritised staff and students and address under-representation by improving institutional practices and policies around hiring, retention and racial literacy.	3.1 Set up a working group to revise current hiring strategies and develop new training resources for recruitment panels.	Principle 1: A commitment to recognising historical and contemporary struggles for social and reparatory justice. Principle 6: A commitment to transparency and accountability.
	3.2 Create a scholarship programme to financially support students from racially/ethnically under-represented groups, notably Black students, at undergraduate, postgraduate and post-doctoral levels.	Principle 12: A commitment to equality, diversity and anti-racism.
	3.3 Set up a Task Force to monitor searches and ensure that departmental searches are trying to attract racially and ethnically diverse candidates. Members of the Task Force will work with HR to make sure selection and hiring committees are racially and ethnically diverse.	
	3.4 Establish a goal of institutional diversification that reflects national and international diversity in the hiring and retention of academic and other staff members.	
	3.5 Examine racial/ethnic gaps in grant capture at the University of Edinburgh and track the impact of this disparity in promotion and salary outcomes.	
	3.6 Use new hiring policies to appoint a minimum of three new Chancellor's Fellows to join the Centre, targeting outstanding researchers from racially/ethnically marginalised groups.	
	3.7 Reassign or appoint a minimum of three Academic Leads from across the three Colleges to develop research and engagement pathways for the Centre, targeting outstanding researchers from racially/ethnically marginalised groups.	
	3.8 Increase racial/ethnic diversity within student support and counselling services.	
	3.9 Seek to diversify the membership of high-level decision-making bodies within the institution, such as Court, Senate, the Senior Leadership Team and Executive.	

	3.10 Support the un-adoption of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism which precludes free academic and public conversation about the University of Edinburgh's legacy in Palestine.	
	3.11 Improve racial literacy by critically assessing the staff training courses on racism and anti-racist policies and develop a new course targeting students.	Principle 6: A commitment to transparency and accountability.
	3.12 Work with the Senior Leadership Team on communicating anti-racism messages for incoming and existing students to make clear its importance to the University of Edinburgh.	Principle 12: A commitment to equality, diversity and anti-racism.
4. To make the study of colonialism, enslavement and their racial legacies, as well as anti-colonial resistance, decolonisation and reparations, central to the educative mission of the University of Edinburgh.	4.1 Use the findings from the work of the REWG to create both a physical and online digital exhibition and educational resource (open access). This will be used to support new undergraduate courses that could be offered across disciplines (see also 4.4).	Principle 3: A commitment to cognitive justice and equity in collaboration.
	4.2 Appoint a Community Archivist/Curator with expertise in digital archiving to help build the digital exhibition in collaboration with invested communities and improve access by acting as a bridge for those who are less confident in approaching or using institutional archives.	Principle 7: A commitment to the co-production of knowledge. Principle 9: A commitment to data co-ownership.
	4.3. Hire a Communications Officer to work on internal and external comms around public-facing educational initiatives.	Principle 11: A commitment to accessible communication.
	4.4 Use findings from the REWG's work, archival resources from the Centre for Research Collections and the work of UncoverED to develop and contribute to existing courses, including within the Curriculum Transformation Programme. Topics could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Histories of enslavement, colonialism and the development of racial thought from across the former British empire in Asia, Africa, Australasia, the Americas and the Middle East with a focus on the University of Edinburgh's legacies. 	Principle 7: A commitment to the co-production of knowledge. Principle 5: A commitment to knowledge exchange and reciprocal learning.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Histories relating to the contributions of specific communities in collaboration with those communities (e.g. the Sikh community in Edinburgh). • Social movements and theories of reparations and reparatory justice in link with communities of reparatory justice interest. • Black, Asian, Indigenous and other minoritised histories, philosophies and liberation movements. <p>Ensure that this work is done in collaboration with relevant student organisations and communities to embed the histories and cultures of ethnically/racially minoritised communities in teaching programmes and engage with non-Western pedagogies and practices.</p>	
	4.5 Establish an annual summer school programme with African, Asian and/or other Indigenous communities and centres of learning to develop decolonised pedagogies and practices.	Principle 1: A commitment to recognising historical and contemporary struggles for social and reparatory justice.
	4.6 Invest resource into student-led organisations that are working on decolonisation and anti-racism projects via a Student Action Fund.	Principle 3: A commitment to cognitive justice and equity in collaboration.
	4.7 Encourage more engagement and collaboration between academics and students to support decolonisation and anti-racism efforts.	Principle 2: A commitment to strengthening partnerships and restoring agency through participation.
	<p>4.8 <i>Support the establishment of a Palestine Studies Centre (within Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies, IMES) that:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Provides resource (space and funding) for educational activities and community engagement relating to the effects of imperial legacies on Palestine and dispossession.</i> • <i>Forges institutional links with other Palestinian Studies Centres by hosting visiting scholars and co-creating programmes.</i> 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Creates a scholarship programme for students of Palestinian heritage at undergraduate, postgraduate and post-doctoral level.</i> • <i>Develops teaching and research in key areas such as race, racism, settler-colonial dispossession, refugees, migration, displacement, etc.</i> 	
5. To support research (both academic- and community-led) into the histories and legacies of enslavement, colonialism and the development of racial thought across all three Colleges.	5.1 Identify and develop research and engagement pathways linked to the Centre themes across the Colleges as part of the role of the Academic Leads (2.7) and Chancellor's Fellows (2.6), such as in natural/physical sciences, public health, AI, data, history, sociology, psychology, Black Studies and social sciences, archaeology, theology, literature and philosophy, creating a sustained research programme concerning racisms, colonialism, enslavement and racial violence.	Principle 3: A commitment to cognitive justice and equity in collaboration.
	5.2 Support Academic Leads and Chancellor's Fellows to develop external funding applications for Centre-related projects.	
6. To create a bridge between researchers, practitioners, communities and activists by encouraging collaborative and reparative efforts to address racial legacies and enhance the institution's connection with local communities.	6.1 Appoint a Community Engagement Officer/Manager (1.0FTE) with a strong track record in working with racially/ethnically minoritised communities and experienced in event coordination.	Principle 2: A commitment to mutual benefit, strengthening partnerships and restoring agency through participation.
	6.2 Provide a permanent, dedicated, fully accessible and substantial community meeting space as part of the Centre, in which local community groups and Centre members can host knowledge-exchange events and exhibitions, thereby breaking down the walls of institutional knowledge.	
	6.3 Set up a rolling (annual) residence programme to host a Community Representative/Scholar-Activist, giving communities the opportunity to work on specific projects. This can be someone from local, national or international communities.	Principle 1: A commitment to recognising historical and contemporary struggles for social and reparatory justice.
	6.4 Set up a working group to look at improving the payment system for external non-academic groups/individuals, such as engaging with non-English speakers, creating clear resources	Principle 5: A commitment to knowledge exchange and reciprocal learning. Principle 10: A commitment to fair practices in payments.

	explaining the system, as well as setting up alternative and more flexible systems of payment that recognise different financial systems outside of the UK banking system.	
	6.5 Establish a small grants funding scheme to support dedicated community and other research projects where community leads are Primary Investigators (in recognition of the limitations of current UKRI funding opportunities).	Principle 9: A commitment to data co-ownership. Principle 7: A commitment to co-production of knowledge.
	6.6 Set up a system of accreditation/certification to recognise the contributions of communities to the Centre (and the wider institution) and any work they have undertaken.	Principle 3: A commitment to cognitive justice and equity in collaboration.
	6.7 Set up a working group to investigate issues around intellectual property and provide policy guidance on co-ownership with communities, for example in relation to grants.	Principle 9: A commitment to data co-ownership.
7. To provide an academic unit responsible for converting research about racism into proactive strategies, aimed at improving the life chances of racially and ethnically minoritised peoples and able to influence opinion and policy making in the UK and abroad.	7.1 Liaise with different public bodies, such as Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights, the Runnymede Trust, the Race Equality Foundation, UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) as part of the role of the Director and Academic Leads.	Principle 5: A commitment to knowledge exchange and reciprocal learning.
	7.2 Set up a speaker series attracting high-profile academics and public figures.	
8. To establish a platform for garnering research grants, entrepreneurial opportunities and philanthropic (donor-based) support.	8.1 Appoint a dedicated grant writer (1.0FTE) to capture external funding opportunities for the Centre.	Principle 8: A commitment to sustainability and legacy.
	8.2 Support Academic Leads and Chancellor's Fellows to develop external funding applications for Centre-related projects.	
	8.3 Work with the Development and Alumni team to create strategies around securing external donors.	
	8.4 Look at existing bursaries, gifts and donations that are linked to the profits of enslavement and colonialism (e.g. the Gunning endowment) with a view to repurposing them. This could be to support the work of the Centre and/or work by Black and other minoritised scholars and students linked to racism, racialisation and colonialism within existing Schools.	

	8.5 Contribute to the review of the Responsible Investment Policy to ensure that the University of Edinburgh's direct and indirect investments are not complicit with ongoing harms (human and environmental), including genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and ecocide, and repurpose profits made from any such investments for appropriate reparatory initiatives (such as funding scholarships for students affected by ongoing wars in Gaza and Sudan).	Principle 6: A commitment to transparency and accountability.
9. To improve access to institutional archives, work on decolonising the archives and repatriation efforts, and secure resource for new archives to improve the visibility of anti-racist and reparations work, ensuring that future work evolves in dialogue with what has come before.	9.1 Provide institutional resource (space and funding) for re-cataloguing elements of the Centre for Research Collection's collection pertaining to colonial histories, such as Palestine and the Anatomical Museum, and inform users about their racial, colonial and imperial underpinnings. This requires hiring at least 2x UE06 Assistant Archivists (for cataloguing) and 1x UE07 Archivist to address long-term under-resourcing in this area.	Principle 2: A commitment to mutual benefit, strengthening partnerships and restoring agency through participation.
	9.2 Support a digitisation project to make archives linked to colonialism, enslavement and the development of racial thought more accessible to students, researchers and external communities/users. This would be a rolling commitment to increase the amount of staffing in the digitisation team to match the throughput of metadata created by the Archives Team (UE05 x 2 photographers/processors).	
	9.3 Set up a digitisation project to improve access to Edinburgh's Black Liberation archives, piloting a 'Pan-African Living Archive' project. This would be a short three- to five-year project requiring a UE06 Assistant Archivist, 2x UE05 digitisation officers and a UE04 digitisation quality control person.	Principle 1: A commitment to recognising historical and contemporary struggles for social and reparatory justice.
	9.4 Assist external community members with accessing institutional archives as part of the role of the Community Archivist/Curator and support the engagement and facilitation of archival training by and for racially minoritised communities.	
	9.5 Explore the possibility and resources needed to create new (community-based) archives that record activism on reparations,	

	decolonisation and anti-racism, from the perspective of activists, as part of the role of the Centre's Community Archivist/Curator, in collaboration with external communities and the CRC's digitisation team.	
	9.6 Support the repatriation of ancestral remains to their original communities from the Anatomical Museum, with recommendations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clearer information online about the process of repatriation and who to contact. • Clearer narratives about existing repatriation efforts. • Ringfencing money for descendant communities to visit their ancestors and build relations with Anatomical Museum staff. • Creating funded PhD programmes to support provenance research. • Establishing advisory boards linked to specific geographical areas. • Creating an accessible and searchable digital catalogue to assist descendant communities with finding their ancestors without reproducing colonial violence. • Hiring a dedicated provenance researcher (1.0FTE UE07) who will work on creating a database and be the lead on Anatomical/School of Medicine archives and provenance research to support repatriation claims. 	<p>Principle 1: A commitment to recognising historical and contemporary struggles for social and reparatory justice.</p> <p>Principle 2: A commitment to mutual benefit, strengthening partnerships and restoring agency through participation.</p>

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