



5 June 2020

Dear Chineye, Annette, Gakenia, Bolu, Jared, Nifemi, Adila, Omolade, Bridget and Michelle,

Thank you very much for your open letter. You have raised extremely important and powerful points. The appalling killing of George Floyd has raised questions across the globe and for us at the University. These events and your letter, have prompted us to reflect on how we listen to - and learn from - your experiences, live our values and take further meaningful action to become truly anti-racist. We are renewing our commitment to lead visibly on this issue, to act against racism in our University community and accelerate our work to dismantle structural racism in our policies and processes. We know that watching these events unfold, experiencing and coping with discrimination has a terrible impact on our Black students. We pledge to work with you so that we can support you better.

We will meet with you as soon as possible to listen and discuss how we can act on the extremely important issues you have raised, and find out where we can go much further than we already are. Many of the issues you raised are already being acted upon, but your letter to us highlights that we could do more to involve our Black students and share the work we are doing. Please allow us to use this as an opportunity to rectify that.

In preparing to submit an application for the Race Equality Charter (REC) at Nottingham, we have been working with the Students' Union and other students to listen to the voices of students, and compose an action plan informed by more than 2,400 REC survey responses across our University community. The concerns we have heard through our Race Equality Charter process have come through qualitative and quantitative responses to our survey, follow up focus groups with students and staff, and the direct input of our student REC ambassadors, who have spoken with an active and powerful voice in our meetings to analyse and respond to the data.

We outline some initial responses here, but feel it is important to discuss and extend this work in partnership with you - to listen, to learn and to act.

- Reporting racism, discrimination and harassment: it is critical that reporting methods are good, visible, trusted and provide the strongest level of support but you are right to have raised this as a concern. Introducing the "Report" function on the *My Nottingham* app has improved visibility, but we recognise the lack of trust in reporting methods as they stand and have been working with the Students' Union on an action plan to improve them. We would welcome your insights into this work as well as how we can ensure further accountability in our policies and procedures in response to racism.



- Degree awarding gap and curriculum: we have curriculum decolonisation programmes in place in some, but not all, of our University programmes. We believe progress can be made faster and impact needs to be felt more widely. Our work has told us that the influences on the degree-awarding gap for black students are multifactorial, and we must do more than simply focus on the content of our curriculum. Here we would want to accelerate the existing use of anonymised applications for University roles, training to address unconscious bias in the classroom, inclusive teaching practices and reverse-mentoring schemes. We have specifically identified a need to deliver anti-racist training to support effective conversations about racism, and this will be included in our Race Equality Charter action plan, and in our University-wide staff and student EDI engagement programme that we will be launching in January 2021. Building on our collaborative Stronger Together programme, we are also developing a student-facing programme to deliver clear and impactful education focused on inclusion and respect to our students for the start of the 2020/21 academic session.
- Black History Month: is an important moment that celebrates black communities, but you are right, we could use it better to educate everyone in the fight against racial injustice. We must also ensure that one month is not the only time that we focus on our efforts against racism. We will continue to enhance this dedicated month, but also supplement this with a University-wide diversity festival, and ensure that other events are created across the year in partnership with the Students' Union and BME networks.
- Data: we strongly agree with you on the value of qualitative data on diversity alongside quantitative metrics, and our [EDI Strategic Delivery Plan](#) commits us to this. We have enacted this in our work to inform our Race Equality Charter, and will retain this approach as we continue to develop our understanding of the changes we need to make to improve the experiences of our black students.
- Financial support: we would also be very pleased to discuss your ideas around identifying a mechanism to provide financial aid for Black British students who come from lower socio-economic backgrounds.



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We agree with you that there is much more for us to do, that progress has not been fast enough, and that impact of our actions is not yet being widely felt across the University. Our activities and actions will be more impactful through our work together, our confidence to challenge each other, and our shared commitment to improve things. Once again, we are very grateful for your proactive response to the current situation and look forward to the opportunity to work with you and the black student society members in the future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Shearer West".

Professor Shearer West  
President and Vice-Chancellor

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sarah Sharples".

Professor Sarah Sharples  
Pro Vice-Chancellor, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion