



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE

Northumbria University Race Equality Charter Self-Assessment and Action Plan

Executive Summary October 2024

Foreword

When Northumbria University made a commitment to race equality and agreed to seek recognition under the Race Equality Charter in 2020, it did so knowing that there was a significant distance to travel to become an organisation that could claim to be truly dedicated to race equality.

Using the REC framework as a foundation, we have developed our approaches to hearing the voices of our community, and we have learned some uncomfortable truths experienced by our colleagues and students, which are not acceptable. We must ensure that colleagues and students feel safe to tell us when experiences fall below expectation and that they are confident in our response.

As a member of University Executive, I know we need to challenge ourselves to do things differently and model the behaviours we want to see across the university. Our new University Strategy 2024-2030 commits to fairness and to ensuring a sense of belonging for all of our community. A lack of diversity at executive level extends across the organisation and we are committed to addressing this as a matter of urgency. Diversity of thought and experience will make Northumbria a better university and currently too much of our community is monocultural and exclusive.

Our action plan sets out measures to ensure that all colleagues and students feel that they belong, have equitable access to opportunities and are empowered to succeed. The Action Plan we have created remains live, and insight gained over the next five years will be used to ensure we continue to address current and emerging race equality priorities. We will continue to hold ourselves to account for progress against our core goal of making Northumbria University a community in which everyone feels that they belong.



Professor Andy Long, FEng

Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive

Introduction

Application for Bronze Award



Northumbria University became members of Advance HE's Race Equality Charter (REC) in 2020 and in July 2024 we submitted our first application for a REC Bronze award. Our application for a Bronze award included a thorough self-assessment and a comprehensive action plan to respond to data explored in the self-assessment.

A Bronze award for Northumbria was conferred by Advance HE in October 2024. The award recognises that the university has demonstrated a solid foundation for eliminating racial inequalities and for developing an inclusive culture that values all staff and students.

Our aim is that race equality is truly embedded within the practices, processes, and actions of the University.

This executive summary provides an overview of Northumbria University's commitment to race equality, it summarises the self-assessment process that we have undertaken with colleagues and students and highlights the key actions that have been developed to address challenges.

The University acknowledges the work ahead and is dedicated to creating an inclusive environment for all members of its community.

A copy of the full application and action plan is available on our [race equality charter](#) intranet page.



Self-Assessment

In-line with the REC framework, the self-assessment was led by our Race Equality Steering Group (RESG). The RESG was chaired by Prof Tom Lawson, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost, and our Senior Sponsor for Race Equality at Northumbria, and the self-assessment process was managed by Dr Jenna Tudor, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Manager and RESG Secretary. The self-assessment was also supported throughout by our Race Equality Consultative Group, our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Staff and PGR Network, the Northumbria Students' Union, and colleagues and students from across our campuses.

The self-assessment explored aspects of our colleague and student demographics, utilising quantitative data from our internal systems and data publicly reported by the Office for Students and the Higher Education Statistics Agency, to study any differences by ethnicity and/or domicile.

Our self-assessment also included qualitative data informed by our staff and student community (utilising data from our 2022 Race Equality Surveys and the subsequent listening groups, in addition to data obtained in our regular staff surveys and the National Student Survey).

The focus of the self-assessment was wide ranging, exploring many aspects of the colleague and student experience and covering topics including colleague recruitment, pay, progression and development, and student recruitment, continuation, progression, attainment, and outcomes. It also considered race equality within research and within teaching, learning, and assessment.

Extracts from our self-assessment:

We need to increase opportunities for colleagues and students to give their views on race equality at Northumbria and ensure we are transparent about actions we are taking.

Data highlights instances of racial discrimination (on and off campus). We need to change behaviours and mindsets. We also need to improve awareness of our reporting processes and develop trust in related responses.

Our professional support staff are less diverse than our academic staff. We need to develop recruitment approaches and better understand our colleague lifecycle to support retention, development and progression.

The ethnic diversity of our colleagues, and of our UK domiciled students, is below the sector average. Data suggests both Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues and students feel the ethnic diversity at Northumbria impacts their experience.

Promotions data shows that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic academic colleagues are not less successful, however there is more to do to support colleague confidence in, and engagement with, the process.

There is more to do to ensure Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues are valued in all research relationships.

Many of our UK Black students have other widening participations characteristics at rates higher than their White peers. UK undergraduate applicants from Black backgrounds have the lowest overall offer rates.

Data shows positive retention for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic UK and non-UK students, however there are disparities within Faculties. Continuation rates for UK students highlight more Black students are repeating their year of study.

Awarding gaps persist between students from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds and White students.

Our PGT and PGR student bodies differ in scale and diversity, with a degree of fluctuation in international student enrolments. Northumbria's commitment to race equality needs to be more explicit to PG students.

Graduate Outcomes data shows a gap between Asian and White UK students' Positive Outcomes however, this is not evidenced in our internal Career Readiness data.

Race equality is not considered consistently across programmes. Our new Quality, Enhancement and Development Framework must help to address this, alongside greater colleague engagement with CPD.

Action Plan

Our actions aim to instil long term changes to our practices and to enable a more informed approach to reduce barriers for ethnically marginalised students and staff. Our action plan spans five years and is divided into four themes as shown below:

1. Embedding consideration of race equality to create a culture of belonging for all our community.

Commitment to race equality embedded for all students.
Continuous dialogue about race equality with colleagues and students.
Colleagues, line-managers and leaders developed to support and advance race equality, as allies and inclusive leaders.
Regional relationships enhanced to support sense of belonging.

2. Ensuring race equality is considered through policy and process development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Equality Impact Assessment process used to guide consideration of race equality in policies, processes and practices.
Questioning the norms and assumptions within existing processes.
Develop awareness and trust in our reporting mechanisms, and the actions taken, following a report of racial discrimination or racism.
Stakeholder involvement in review of policy and process implementation.

3. Ensuring racially equitable experiences across student access and success.

Continuous review of UG student admissions processes.
Race equality embedded into teaching, learning and assessment.
Advance student success for all; close Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic student progression and awarding gaps.
Support employability of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students through commitments to experiential learning and employability opportunities.

4. Increasing ethnic diversity across our workforce.

Increase representation across all the University and close ethnicity pay gaps.
More nuanced use of ethnicity demographic data (People Metrics) to inform activities across recruitment, retention, and progression.
Ensure all colleagues from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds feel supported to enhance and develop themselves and their careers.
Make progress towards our ethnicity targets, working with targeted Faculties to address trends of under-representation.

Monitoring Progress

All of our race equality actions have a University Executive lead and a named 'responsible owner' to drive forward progress.

The Race Equality Steering Group will monitor action progress however, the action plan is designed to be dynamic, allowing for adjustments and additions based on new insights and emerging priorities.

Colleague and student views will inform progress measurement and continued action development.

Further Information

Read our full [Race Equality Action Plan](https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/equality-and-diversity/race-equality-charter/) on our website at <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/equality-and-diversity/race-equality-charter/>

Finding out more

For more information about the race equality charter and Northumbria's race equality activity, colleagues are encouraged to review the [Race Equality](#) pages on the equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) intranet site, and students are asked to visit the [Race Equality Charter article](#) on the student portal.

Any questions?

If you have any questions about our race equality charter submission, our action plan, or our ongoing race equality activity please email the EDI team using equalitydiversityandinclusion@northumbria.ac.uk