

# Anti-Racist Pedagogy Project

## Stage Two Report: A Student-Led Scoping Exercise in the Faculty of Arts.

### Project team

#### **Anti-Racist Pedagogy Project Investigators:**

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### Project background

The Anti-Racist Pedagogy Project began in AY21/22 under the umbrella of the Faculty of Arts' Equality and Inclusion Forum. Its aim is to engender strategic change to promote and embed anti-racism across the Faculty. Central to the project has been a scholarly and community-based approach so that the Faculty can build a strong knowledge-base, learn from current department initiatives and existing expertise, and create robust, evidence-based outputs. The first stage of the project involved seeking input from Faculty colleagues through discursive and survey-based methods on the following four key topics:

- Current departmental initiatives for supporting and enhancing anti-racist pedagogy.
- University-wide activities on this topic and how they feed into Faculty/Department activities.
- Initial, medium and long-term priorities for the Faculty.
- Activities, initiatives, etc., for achieving Faculty priorities.

A report from this first stage was presented to the Faculty of Arts Equality and Inclusion Forum and Arts Faculty Board. The second stage of the project involved working with student partners and is the focus of this report.

### Stage two project overview

This report emerged out of a six-week scoping exercise collecting data on existing initiatives related to anti-racist pedagogy in the Faculty of Arts at the University of Warwick. The Institute for Advanced Teaching and Learning (IATL) funded project prioritised data collection from the Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Process in HE Learning Circle in the Warwick International Higher Education Academy (WIHEA) and Tackling Racial Inequality at Warwick (TRIW), which emerged out of Learning Circle.

This data collection on existing anti-racist work aims to illuminate the activity within the Faculty and its connection to ongoing work within the wider university, so that a follow-up project can build on these established initiatives to form a wider intra Faculty community. The project investigators collected data through online meetings and asked several questions about current or previous work related to anti-racist pedagogy, the impact of such work, intersectionality and barriers and

challenges. In addition to the Learning Circle, all six departments/schools within the Faculty were represented in the data collection including Classics and Ancient History, English and Comparative Literary Studies, History, School of Creative Arts, Performance and Visual Cultures, School for Cross-faculty Studies and the School of Modern Languages and Cultures. To gain more information on student activity the investigators also approached the Students' Union.

### **Project findings:**

As indicated above, funding for this project was conditional upon engaging with the Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Process in HE Learning Circle and TRIW to broaden the scope of the data collected in the project's first stage. Key findings are presented from these investigations first, followed by a brief overview of significant points from discussions with departments and schools.

### **WIHEA Learning Circle: Anti-Racist Pedagogy and Process in HE**

**Current activities:** The Learning Circle is currently looking at changing the promotion process for staff to make anti-racist work more visible and weightier in the promotions criteria. Often this work is done by those passionate about the topic but this may not necessarily be reflected in their job descriptions.

**Impact:** The Attainment Gap Working Group within the Circle has had an impact on the way in which data is managed centrally at the University. Other outcomes of the working group include EDI monitoring for examiners and EDI monitoring for applicants.

The Learning Circle continues to have a personal impact on its members and their development. Some members commented that it had helped to instil responsibility, empowerment and confidence to tackle racism. The Learning Circle encourages its members to be more inclusive and reflective about how they are engaging directly with students of colour in their own disciplines.

It was suggested that examining tangible changes in module content may be a fruitful measurement of impact.

**Intersectionality/work with other initiatives:** The upcoming focus of the Learning Circle will be 'wider connections with other areas', e.g., disability groups, community engagement and greater tie in with the Warwick Institute of Engagement (WIE). The LC has already had a meeting with WIE to discuss collaboration.

**Barriers/Challenges:** Concerns echo those commonly expressed in this area, e.g., the challenge of tokenistic engagement with anti-racist work and the dangers of the burden of the work falling to staff and students of colour. Those who work in Professional Services or other support roles may also experience challenges in finding/accessing opportunities to learn about anti-racist pedagogy and how to apply it to their area of work.

### **Tackling Racial Inequality at Warwick (TRIW) Training**

**Impact:** The programme is designed to focus on the process of building an anti-racist community rather than measurable outcomes. Wider outcomes reported include attendees feeling empowered to take action in departments and feeling more comfortable about discussing race and racism. This

included talking to more Black students, revising modules, raising racism as an issue in department meetings and following the inclusive education model. Data suggests that student experience is a greater influencing factor than the content of the curriculum in the differentials in the awarding gap between white students and students of colour. Consequently, the programme aims to tackle the major issue of student experience, which is not always captured by easily measurable criteria.

**Intersectionality/work with other initiatives:** The programme has strategically focused on race and racism to challenge the tendency for anti-racist work to be subsumed into more general EDI work that often does not focus on specific power relations. The course draws on feminist pedagogy, class-based critiques and queer theories, which feed into the general focus on tackling power differentials. Disability liberation would be a further productive addition.

**Barriers/Challenges:** Time is a significant barrier to staff engagement so the programme is delivered online to mitigate against that. To enhance opportunities for engagement, the academic year 2022/23 will include two entry points in the Autumn and Spring terms. Convenors value the synchronous format, rather than asynchronous, for the community-building aspect of the programme. Professional services staff may face greater challenges in attending, such as limited visibility of this work in promotions criteria and limited autonomy to direct their time.

## School and department data

The school and department data continues to confirm the key findings reported in the first stage project report. Key points that are worth reiterating here include:

- Commitment to EDI and/or anti-racist pedagogy is evident in all schools and departments in some form.
- There appear to be challenges and/or barriers in carrying forward the material and principles from TRIW to enact change at the department level. A focus on building a strong anti-racist community at Faculty and department level may help to enhance the impact of TRIW at more local levels.
- Measuring impact (how and what to measure) continues to be a challenge raised in many conversations. There is a desire from colleagues to take an evidence-based approach to their work in this area and so evaluation support would be valued.
- Colleagues continue to feel challenged by heavy workloads and limited resources. This may lead to perceptions of limited time to engage pro-actively and strategically with this area of work. It can also impact on time available to engage with local and University-level initiatives.
- Resistance to anti-racism work can still be encountered. Additionally, it is an area that can create professional anxiety and feelings of vulnerability. These feelings need to be addressed when considering how to create a strong sense of community around anti-racist pedagogy.