



Learning  
Enhancement and  
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2022-23

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# BAME ATTAINMENT AT UON

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*BAME Attainment in Higher Education: Exploring the Experiences of African Descent Students and the Factors that Impact on their Low Grades at Northampton University.*



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# GEM AWARD GAP AT UON

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*BAME Attainment in Higher Education: Exploring the Experiences of African Descent Students and the Factors that Impact on their Low Grades at Northampton University.*

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FACULTY: *FAST*

SUBJECT AREA:  
*COMPUTING*



FACULTY: *FAST*

SUBJECT AREA:  
*JOURNALISM, MEDIA  
& PERFORMANCE*

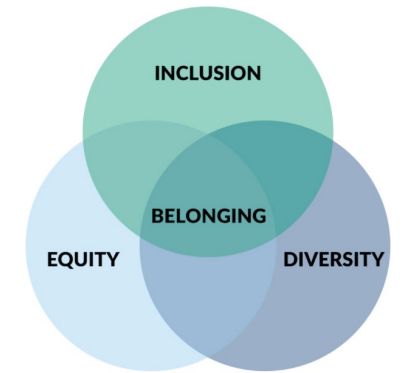


FACULTY: *FBL*  
SUBJECT AREA:  
BUSINESS SYSTEMS &  
OPERATIONS



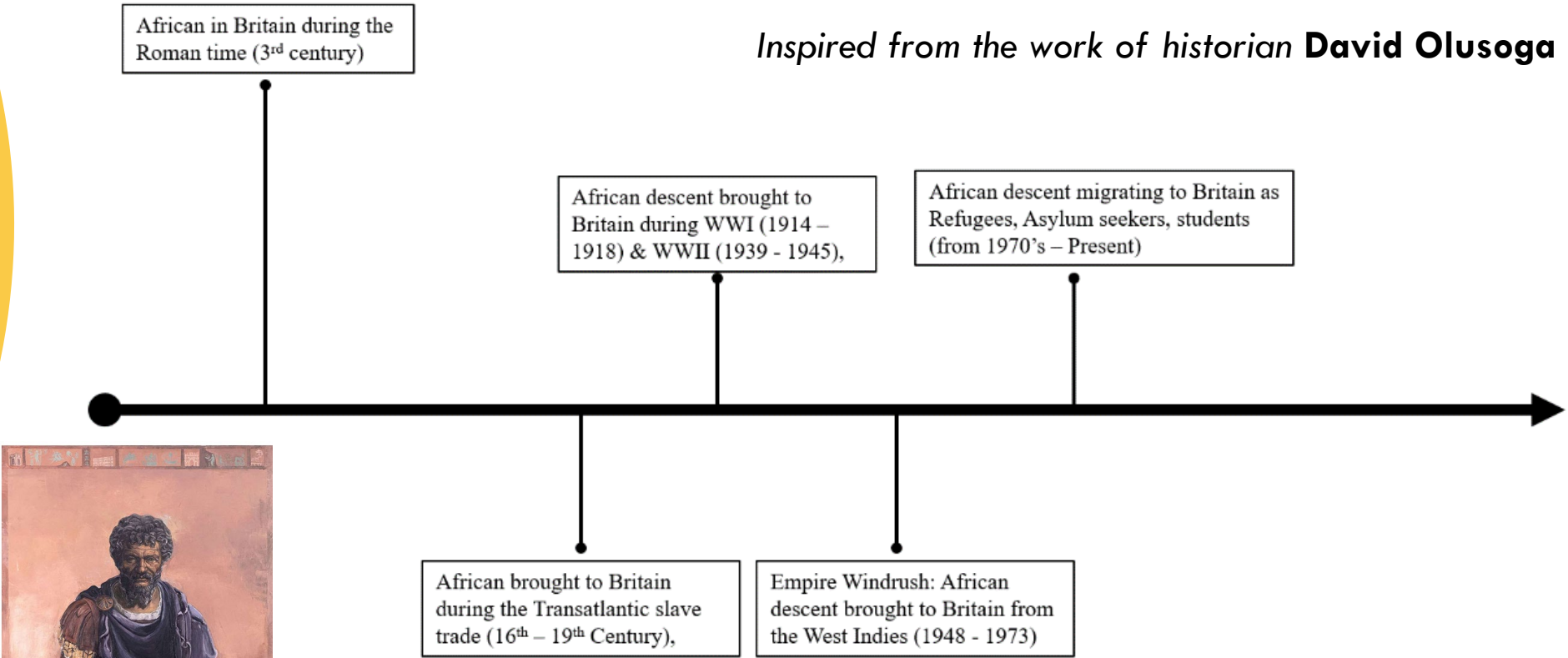
# Background & Motivations

- Key reformers :Wilhelm von Humboldt (1810); Cardinal John Henry Newman (1852)
- BAME award gap (Miller, 2016)
- The 1963 Lord Robbins report
- The 1997 Lord Dearing Report
- The 2021 Sewell report: Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities
- The 2022 Augar report (The Post-18 Education and Funding Review)
- Substantial inequalities still persist throughout the student lifecycle



# A timeline showing African descent migration to Britain

Inspired from the work of historian **David Olusoga**



AD 193, **Lucius Septimius Severus**

Fig. 1 A timeline showing African descent migration to Britain (Seuwou & Ajani, 2022)

Teaching Boot and Shoe students  
Northampton College of Technology c.1950's



Technical drawing  
Northampton School of Art 1959



Senior Typing Class, 1960  
Northampton College of Technology



Students relaxing by the Brampton  
Building, School of Health 1992



# CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

Within the last ten years, we've seen...

- Increasing competition
- A growing number Black students on campus coming from London

*Once upon a time the University  
would have served the county  
of Northamptonshire's needs....*



# Comparison of ethnicity 2019/20

## – intake, staff, town -- Data - UoN

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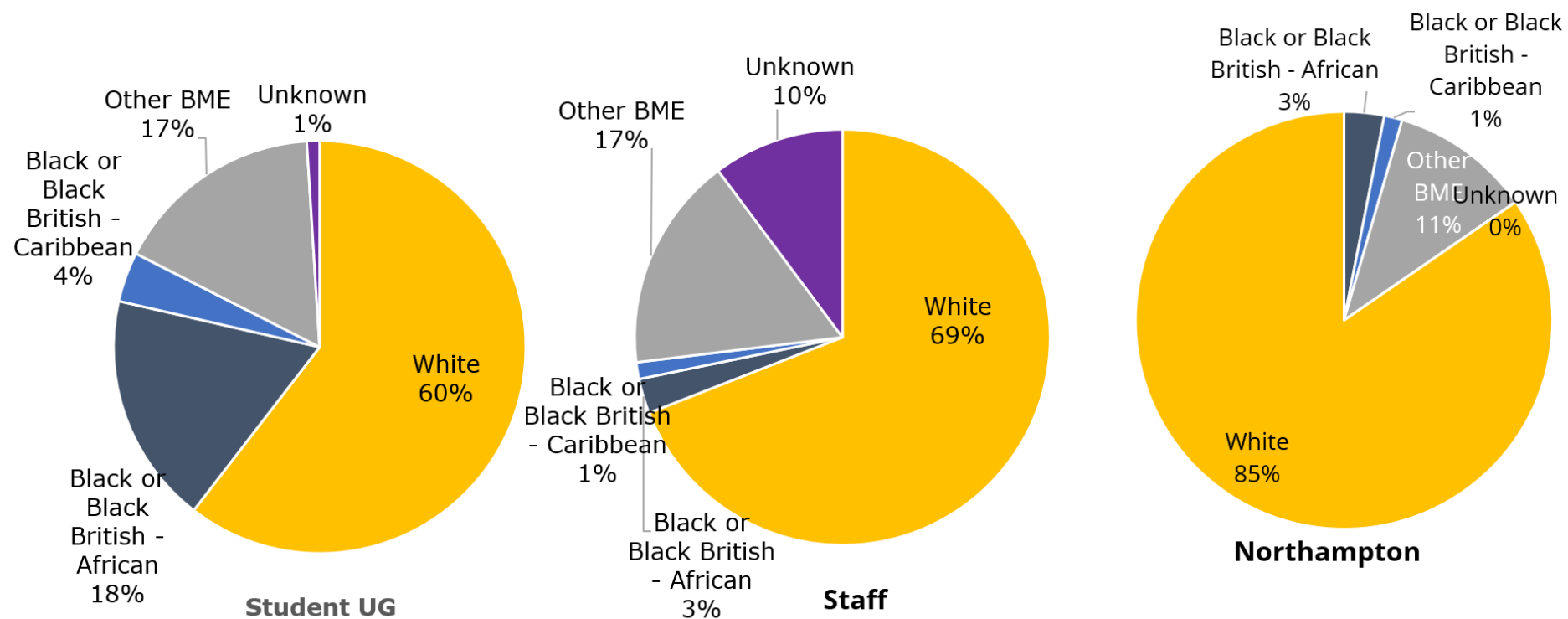


Fig. 2 Comparison of ethnicity 2019/20 – intake, staff, town -- Data – (UoN BI Team)

## **Overview of the Project** – a Longitudinal Study on GEM Award Gap at the University of Northampton

- **Phase 1.1 - Overall BAME attainment gap and experiences (2019-20)**
- **Key objectives**
- **Research Methodology**
  - Phenomenology
  - Interviews with 11 Academics
  - 2 Focus groups with Undergraduate students



# Overview of the Project – a Longitudinal Study on GEM Award Gap at the University of Northampton

- **Phase 1.2 - African descents (2020-21)**
- Key objectives
- Research Methodology
  - Interviews with 9 Academics
  - 2 Focus groups with Academics
  - 2 Focus groups with Undergraduate students
  - Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)
  - Critical Race Theory (CRT) to explain the findings.

# Theoretical Framework

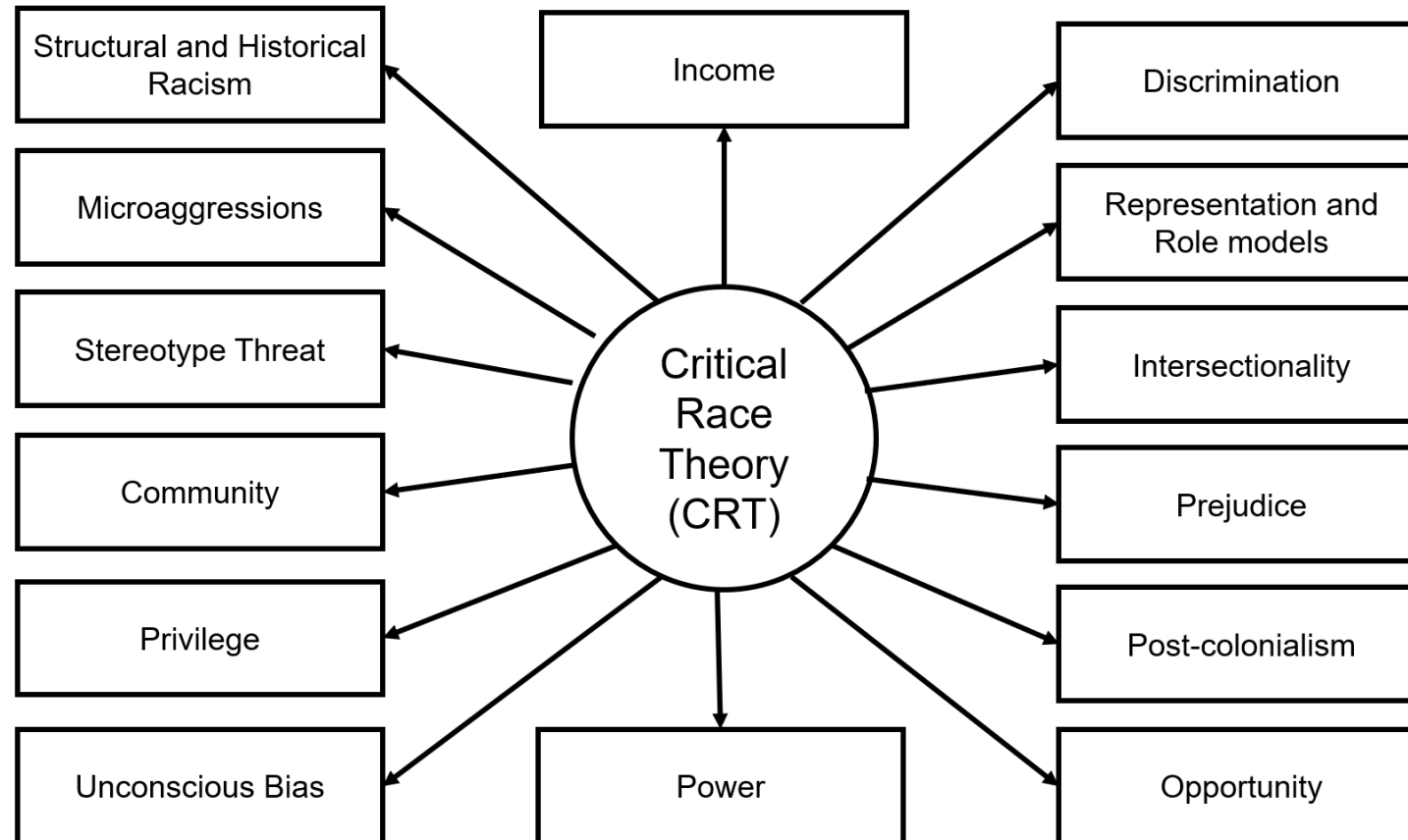


Fig.3 An Illustration of the key building blocks of the Critical Race Theory - Adapted from Adrienne et al, 2017)

## **Overview of the Project** – a Longitudinal Study on GEM Award Gap at the University of Northampton

- **Phase 1.3 - Asian descents (2021-22)**
- Key objectives
- Research Methodology
  - Focus group with Undergraduate students

# Overview of the Project – a Longitudinal Study on GEM Award Gap at the University of Northampton

- **Phase 2.1 – Academic Misconduct (2022-23)**
- **Key objectives**
  - Reasons for committing academic misconduct
  - Identify the academic challenges
  - Make recommendations to the University on how to better support GEM students
- **Research Methodology**
  - Interviews with AIO
  - Interviews with current students and Alumni
  - Secondary data analysis

# Key Findings

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# Black not a homogenous group

1. Black British students born in the UK (2nd 3rd and 4th Generation)
2. Black British students born in Africa (1st Gen)\*
3. Black British students born in the Caribbean (1st Gen)
4. Mixed race and Other Black background
5. African Students
6. Caribbean students



## Prior educational experiences affect their knowledge base

- Negative learning experience during their primary and secondary education impact on learning
- Not academically challenged enough compared to White pupils
- Low expectations of their academic abilities
- Low aspiration (particularly amongst Black British)
- Lack role models
- Constantly treated unfairly by teaching staff and other white students – White Privilege
- Consistently experienced racism, discrimination, micro-aggression

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# Third cultural identity

- Cultural identities are influenced by religion, ancestry, skin colour, language, class, education, profession, skill, family and political attitudes.
- They form a cultural hybrid, a blend of cultures that can be interesting, but also confusing and frustrating to them.
- Code switching

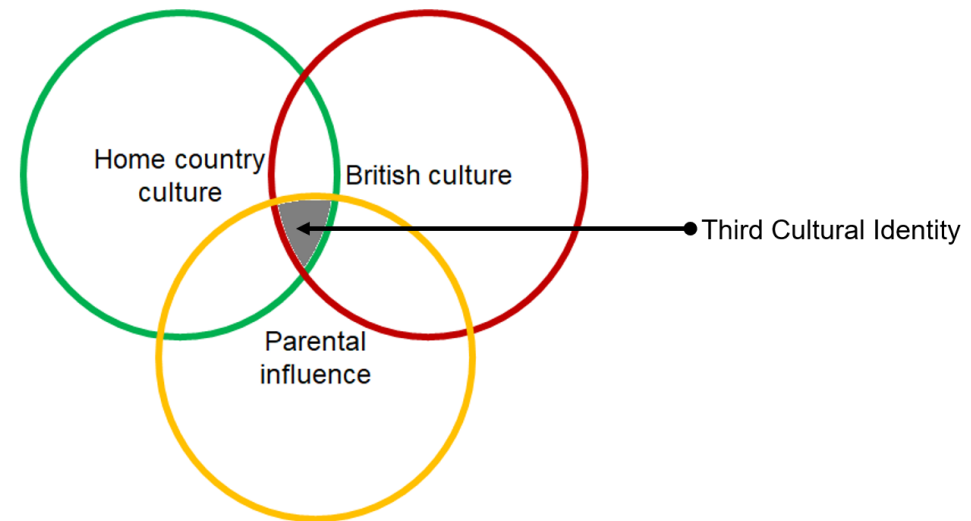


Fig. 4 Third cultural identity (Seuwou et al, 2021)



# Discrimination, racism and Self doubt

- Black students continuously experience, fight against and bear emotional scars from racism, which can lead to increased anxiety and poor mental health outcomes.
- Less favourable treatment due to ethnicity
- No perception of overt racism (note of caution)
- Modification of personal behaviour to 'fit' in
- Felt labelled and not included in classroom conversation.
- Students sighted examples of what they considered as intentional and unintentional 'microaggressions' prior to coming to UoN and during their time at UoN



# Socio-cultural needs not met

Participants identified barriers that they believed impacted upon their ability to engage fully with the rigours of university study

All three barriers or factors can be explained through relatedness and autonomy.

1. Experiencing dissatisfaction with the module and course content,
2. Having caring responsibilities Engaging in part-time employment.
3. The mainstream media narratives



Links between family responsibilities, socio-economic background (“black tax”)

# Effect of long Commuting

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- Lack of accommodation locally
- Cost of accommodation
- Need to live with family member
- Care responsibilities

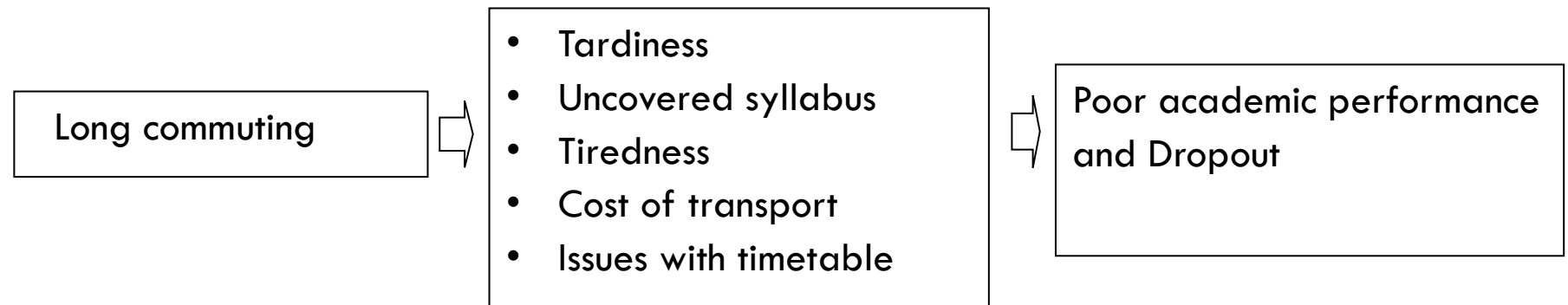
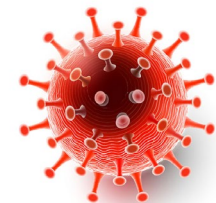


Fig. 6 Effect of long Commuting

# Impact of COVID-19 pandemic and the implications of online education for black students

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- COVID-19 tsunami crashing into the global economy
- Many black students lacking the necessary equipment/resources to access online sessions (PC/laptops)
- Bad internet connection affecting their experiences
- Lost of family members (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people are at a greater risk of catching and dying from the disease).



**COVID-19**  
CORONAVIRUS

# Curriculum is not inclusive

- Black students find it difficult to relate to a large proportion of course content and references used on some programmes.
- The need for decolonising UON curriculum

*"If we were able to negotiate **BREXIT** then we should be able to facilitate the decolonisation of the British curriculum too" ~Seuwou, P.*



# Positive Action



- Difficult conversations continue...
- We should avoid the traditional 'deficit' approach, which views GEM students' lower attainment as a consequence of their failure to adjust or adapt, or a lack of ability
- Personal development/ Ongoing training on equality, diversity, and inclusion
- Impact on curriculum development and design

# Recommendations



- Set achievable targets and KPI
- Universities making strides towards gaining the Race Equality Charter Mark
- Collect more specific data/greater and more efficient use of this data
- Zero tolerance policy
- Unconscious bias programme to change culture
- Development of mentoring programmes
- Reciprocal mentoring
- Allyship

# Conclusion

- The University of Northampton has the potential to offer all students **life-changing and transformative experiences**, but for this to become the norm for GEM students, universities will have to undergo a significant transformation.
- In order for us to move forward as an institution, it begins with acknowledgement from all changemakers that **there is a problem, then embracing the strategies** for the implementation of effective solutions.
- We are an educational institution after all, let us continue educating ourselves & each other, understanding our past, thus continuing to shape our present and future.





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2019/20

<https://mypad.northampton.ac.uk/uonattainmentgap/>

2020/21

<https://mypad.northampton.ac.uk/blackattainment/>

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