



BLACK VOICES GUILD OF STUDENTS

In early 2020, the Guild launched its 'Black Voices' campaign. This campaign aims to elevate the voices of Black Students and provide them with a platform. According to the 2019 National Student Survey, Black students are 10% less satisfied with their experience at the University of Birmingham. There is also a 15% attainment gap between Black and White students at the University of Birmingham, even when you control for other factors such as prior performance.

While COVID-19 prevented us from holding many of the events we had intended to, the launch event and research we have completed so far led to the development of this manifesto. This manifesto should be considered the start, not the end, of the process of listening to the needs of Black students on our campus to ensure they can thrive:

1. The University should establish a Historical Reconciliation Committee tasked with deciding how best to appropriately acknowledge the University of Birmingham's heritage without giving the appearance of idolising those who were involved in mass enslavement¹. This group should have equal representation of University Staff and Black Students. Black Staff should also be given the opportunity to take part in this committee. This committee should be formed as a matter of priority and should produce recommendations as soon as possible.
2. The University should begin a proactive process of decolonising the curriculum of every subject, including but not limited to:
 - a. Including and highlighting the contributions made to subject areas by those from a range of backgrounds, not just white European males.

¹ <https://www.redbrick.me/joseph-chamberlain-the-truth-behind-birminghams-landmarks/>

- b. Reviewing the education of medical focused subjects in light of the measurable inequalities that Black individuals face in medical care² ³.
 - c. Black Students and Student Representatives should be engaged meaningfully in discussions at a school and college level to source additional ideas to develop the curriculum.
 - d. Develop approaches to learning and assessment that do not simply assess the ability to absorb and reproduce the knowledge of those who came before, but that also equip us to solve the problems of the future and deconstruct the problems of the past.
 - e. Ensure any curriculum review activity includes a consideration of decolonisation. This should not simply involve having specific modules that a 'the decolonised ones', rather it should be ensured that core modules are written in this way.
3. Students should have the option of accessing wellbeing support from a Black or BAME member of staff should they wish
 4. The University and Guild should engage proactively in a strategy of making its staff more racially diverse, this should include publicly reporting pay gaps.
 5. Educators should be trained and expected to deliver teaching that is truly inclusive and does not alienate students
 6. The Guild should make a proactive effort to diversify the range of events and activities it offers to cater to the needs of its full membership. This should include engagement with Black Students, many of whom report feeling that they do not belong in 'FAB' nights.
 7. All Student Groups should be encouraged to have trained Equality and Diversity roles on their committees
 8. The BAME umbrella should be disaggregated when reviewing, reporting and publishing statistics.
 9. To achieve all of this, the University and Guild should not rely on the goodwill of departments, staff or students. Individuals and committees should be given direct responsibility for implementing these changes within reasonable timeframes. Where students are asked to engage in this work in partnership with staff, they should be fairly remunerated for their labour.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-review-of-disparities-in-risks-and-outcomes>

³ <https://www.change.org/p/gmc-medical-schools-must-include-bame-representation-in-clinical-teaching>