You just look like you’ve got a tan.
Do you have hair under your hijab?
Do people eat insects in your country?
I just don’t see colour.
I don’t think of you as black.
This timeline provides a record of work on, and related to, Anti-Racist Curriculum (ARC) in the UK over the last several decades. ARC work is new to many, but has a long history in higher and further education. Clearly, ARC is not a new concept, and the ARC project is building on all the great work that has gone before, some of which is listed here. It is a continuation of a decades-old attempt to recognise, address, and eliminate racist curriculum practices.

This mapping covers work from within the sector; student work; interventions from government and related bodies; and relevant historical events. This timeline is not designed to be exhaustive, and focuses on the 1970s onwards to produce a more focused history and more immediate context for ARC work today.

What is ARC?

“An anti-racist stance [in contrast to non-racism] is an active rejection of the institutional and structural aspects of race and racism and explains how racism is manifested in various spaces, making the social construct of race visible.” - King & Chandler (2016)

For more on why we’ve chosen the term ARC, see specific content note.

Content and trigger warning: this timeline includes incidents of racial violence, racial trauma, and systemic/institutional racism, and may trigger trauma.

KEY:

- Historical events
- HE/FE specific
- Government/outside body-originated
- Student work

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The Black Students Alliance at the University of Essex forms and operates an anti-racist and anti-imperialist agenda. Victories across the decade include the establishment of a Students' Union anti-racism officer, and a scholarship each for one member of the African National Congress and one Palestinian student.

The Brixton Riots break out in south London and last for three days, with continued clashes between police and locals. Many feel that tensions were sparked by ongoing police brutality and the misuse of the ‘stop and search’ law against Brixton’s majority Black and Brown population. Riots later broke out in response in Bristol, Liverpool, Birmingham and Leeds.

Riots break out at the Broadwater Farm estate in Tottenham, London, in response to the deaths of two Black women from the community. Cynthia Jarrett died of heart failure during a police search on her home; Dorothy ‘Cherry’ Groce was shot during another police search.

Three new Black MPs and one Asian MP are elected: Diane Abbott, Paul Boateng, Bernie Grant, and Keith Vaz.

Sir Geoff Palmer becomes Scotland’s first Black professor.

Enoch Powell delivers the now infamous ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech - a racist tirade against immigration, colonised peoples and anyone non-white in Britain. Find out about the impact of the speech here.

Testimony
“The Enoch Powell Rivers of Blood speech has had a huge impact on my family and the community.”

The National Union of Students (NUS) and the Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM) come together to form the Anti-Apartheid Movement Campaign, a student network for anti-South African Apartheid efforts. The network successfully campaigned for university divestment from the regime and associated corporations. Read more here.

Blair Peach, an anti-racist demonstrator, is killed by a police officer at an anti-racist protest in Southall, London.

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In response to the findings of the Macpherson Report, the Commission for Black Staff in FE is formed, supported by all sector organisations.

The Race Relations Act is amended - most significantly, perhaps, to make institutional racism illegal.

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC) publishes guidance on ‘Educating for Anti-Racism’.

In light of the amended Race Relations Act, the Commission for Racial Equality publishes a framework for a race equality policy for HEIs.

Home Office ‘Section 11’ funding is replaced by the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG). The new grant is distributed to local authorities to support EAL and BAME learners in schools. (For the EMAG’s later curtailment, see 2011.)

Black British teenager Stephen Lawrence is murdered by a gang of white men in a racist attack. The Metropolitan Police would go on to seriously mishandle the subsequent investigation, prompting a public inquiry (see 1999).

Testimony
“I was a kid at the time. I remember how awful this was.”

New Gilborn & Gipps research finds that ‘not all ethnic groups benefit equally from attending apparently “effective” schools.’

“...the issue of education may not at first sight sit clearly within our terms of reference. Yet we cannot but conclude that to seek to address the well-founded concerns of minority communities simply by addressing the racism current and visible in the Police Services without addressing the educational system would be futile. The evidence we heard and read forces us to the conclusion that our education system must face up to the problems, real and potential, which exist.” Macpherson (Para. 48:34)

Read the Macpherson Report.

Testimony
“[Quoting the Macpherson Report] ‘No black person can ever trust the police. This idea is not preconceived. It is based on experience and people that I know who have had bad experiences with the police. I am afraid the story is still the same today 22 years later.”

KEY:
Historical events
HE/FE specific
Student work
Government/outsiders body-originated

May 2002
The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC) publishes guidance on ‘Educating for Anti Racism’.

Read the report.

In light of the amended Race Relations Act, the Commission for Racial Equality publishes a framework for a race equality policy for HEIs.

Read the report.
In the Foster Review, further education colleges are challenged to do better on race equality. Read the review.

2005

Universities Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council publish the Race Equality Toolkit for Higher Education, a resource for mainstreaming race equality into learning and teaching in higher education. This is in response to strong demand from HEIs in Scotland for guidance on meeting their obligations under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Access the Toolkit.

2006

The Commission for Racial Equality (CfREC) is introduced, creating nine ‘protected characteristics’ including ‘Race’, and a Public Sector Equality Duty. The UK government chooses not to enact the Socio-Economic Duty provisions.

2010

Mark Duggan is shot dead by the police in Tottenham, north London. Riots in London that summer, partly sparked by Duggan’s murder, ironically face racist media coverage. Despite significant opposition, the Ethnic Minorities Achievement Grant (EMAG) is mainstreamed into the Direct Schools Grant (DSG) and schools are allowed complete freedom over its use. Read about the impact of this here.

2011

The NUS publishes No Place for Hate - Hate crimes and incidents in further and higher education: Race and ethnicity. Read the report.

2012

The Commission for Racial Equality, Equal Opportunities Commission, and Disability Rights Commission cease to exist and are brought together into the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

2014

UCL students ask ‘Why is My Curriculum White?’ prompting a national movement at universities advocating for anti-racist curricula and decolonising universities. Watch the original video here.
March 2015

The Rhodes Must Fall movement is founded in South Africa by students at the University of Cape Town in protest against racism on their campus and the legacy of colonialism in their society. Read more here.

March 2015

Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford (RMFO) is formed, inspired by RMF in South Africa. This movement advocating for the decolonisation of universities - including curricula - sparks a UK-wide conversation about racism in higher education which will continue into the present day.

2015

The ECU Equality statistical report lays out racial disparities in academia; for example, that 4.5% (75) of UK Black academics were Professors, compared with 10.9% (13040) of UK white academics who were Professors. Read the report.

2015

Equality and diversity in learning and teaching at Scotland’s universities, a report published by the Higher Education Academy, recommends that equality and diversity are fully embedded in Scottish institutions and the sector as a whole. Read the report.

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March 2015

The Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), now Advance HE, establishes the Race Equality Charter with the specific aim of increasing the representation, progression and success of minority ethnic staff and students in higher education. The REC is now the sector’s premier Chartermark for race equality. Read more here.

2016

Building the Anti-racist University, action and new agendas, a paper from White Rose at the University of Leeds, is published. Read the paper.

March 2016

The ‘Race equality framework for Scotland, 2016-2030’ is published by the Scottish government. View the framework.

March 2016

By the beginning of 2017, the Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford (RMFO) movement has largely folded under the sustained pressure of hostile media coverage, racist attacks on its members, and opposition from the University.

2017

Leigh Patel’s book, Decolonizing Educational Research, is published, investigating the longstanding traditions of oppression, racism, and white supremacy that are systematically reseeded and reinforced by learning and social interaction. Read the book.

April 2017

Commissioned by the National Union of Teachers (NUT), the Runnymede Trust publishes Visible and Invisible Barriers: the impact of racism on BME teachers, a survey of over 1000 BME teachers which found that ‘discrimination based on race is one of the more significant and deep-rooted factors that affect the experience of teaching and career progression for BME teachers. Read the report.
12 13

#CallItRacism

KEY: Historical events
HE/FE specific
Student work

2010s

June 2017
The Educational Institute of Scotland (EIS) publishes a briefing report on Anti-Racist Education. Read the briefing.

April 2018
It is revealed that up to 57,000 Commonwealth-born people who arrived in the UK before 1971 could lose their homes, jobs, benefits, NHS treatment, or be threatened with deportation. This becomes known as the Windrush scandal.

2018
Publication of Dismantling Race in Higher Education (Ed. Arday, J. & Mirza, H.), an important collection of essays that 'challenges current discourses on racial inequality in higher education and sets out new ways of understanding race and racism in the academy'.

Decolonising the University, a book edited by Gurminder K. Bhambra, Dalia Gebrial and Kerem Nişancıoğlu, is published - open access, for maximum efficacy. Read the book.

Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford (RMFO) publishes Rhodes Must Fall: the struggle to decolonise the racist heart of Empire, a book which covers the story of the campaign, reflections, and calls to action for the future. Buy the book.

The Royal Historical Society publishes Race, Ethnicity & Equality: A Report and Resource for Change, which outlines the full extent of systemic racism in the discipline of History for the first time. Read the report and the full survey results.

The Scottish government publishes 'Teaching in a diverse Scotland: increasing and retaining minority ethnic teachers', which argues for the importance of BAME teachers in Scotland. An update to the report was published in March 2021 (see below). Read the report.

De Montfort University launches Decolonising DMU, a holistic project which subscribes to the decolonisation of the institution, including but not limited to curricula. Read more here.

2019
Melissa Ono-George publishes a decisive article, ‘Beyond diversity: anti-racist pedagogy in British History departments’. Ono-George writes, "Teaching practice is engaged, anti-racist and decolonial if it engages students, especially those comfortably in the majority, out of their comfort zones. It forces them to employ critical thinking skills, including understanding their own social positions, entitlements and power. A decolonised, anti-racist and engaged classroom is one in which students’ experience and contributions are respected and valued." Read the article.
May 2019
UK and the NUS publish a set of case studies around the BAME awarding gap. Read the case studies report.

2016–2019
The Home Affairs Select Committee begins an inquiry into progress made from the Macpherson Report recommendations made twenty years earlier.

February 2019
Data reveals the increase in racism and hate crime in the years following the Brexit referendum. Polling data reveals a 13-percentage point increase (from 58% to 71%) in the proportion of BAME people experiencing racism; Black people report the greatest increase. In the 2017/18 Police report, an increase of 17 percentage points in hate crimes is recorded; 76% of these are ‘race’ related.

March 2019
Goldsmiths Anti-Racist Action (GARA) occupies Deptford Town Hall, a campus building with deep colonial roots, and issues anti-racist demands in protest against conditions at Goldsmiths, University of London. The occupation lasts for 137 days, ending when the University agreed to meet GARA’s demands — an historic win for student anti-racist direct action. Read more here & here.

September 2019
The Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) publishes ‘The white elephant in the room: ideas for reducing racial inequalities in higher education’, a collection including essays from Prof. Kalwant Bhopal, Amatey Doku and others, and a Foreword from Baroness Amos. Read the collection here.

October 2019
The Equality and Human Rights Commission publishes ‘Tackling racial harassment: Universities challenged’, a landmark report which lays out endemic racial harassment in HE and the impact on students and staff. Read the report.

November 2019
Intercultural Youth Scotland & EDI Scotland launch the ‘In Sight’ report, which investigates the racism BAME students experience in Scottish schools. Read the report.

November 2019
The University of Cambridge holds a day workshop, ‘Anti-racist education: history, theory, practice’, putting forward anti-racist education as an alternative to equality and diversity. Read the report.

Nov-Dec 2019
Students at the University of Warwick, later known as Warwick Occupy, stage an anti-racist occupation prompted by mounting examples of racism on campus. Read the report.

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#CallItRacism

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The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) publishes figures which show that fewer than 1% of professors at UK universities are Black, and that few institutions employ more than one or two Black professors.

Read more here.

February 2020

George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, is murdered by police in Minneapolis, sparking the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement. Worldwide protests and increasing calls for racial justice in every facet of society characterise the growth of a global movement.

25 May 2020

The Free Black University is launched with the goal of providing an expansive, decolonial, transformative university experience challenging existing HE structures. Founded by Melz Owusu, the Free Black University is a watershed project for student activism in terms of scale, aims and ambition. The initiative has since attracted over £140,000 in donations.

Read more here.

May 2020

Public Health England publishes the ‘Disparities in the risk and outcomes of COVID-19’ report, following months of calls for acknowledgement of the pandemic’s disproportionate impact on BAME communities. It was later revealed that a section of the report which covered the impact of discrimination and poorer life chances was removed just before publication.

Read the report and analysis on the removed section.

June 2020

Common Ground Oxford pens an open letter, ‘Oxford University Must Tackle Systemic Racism’, which garners over 12,000 signatures.

Read the open letter.

June 2020

A prominent statue of the enslaver Edward Colston is toppled by Black Lives Matter protesters in Bristol, cementing the part played by colonial iconography in the experience of modern-day racism.

11 June 2020

The Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford (RMFO) movement returns to Oxford five years after its founding for a thousands-strong protest in support of Black Lives Matter. The protest is held beneath the statue of Cecil Rhodes on the facade of Oriel College, Oxford, which is still standing.

Read more here.

June 2020

A growing number of UK HEIs make public commitments to anti-racism and/or to examining their institutional histories and legacies relating to the transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, and eugenics. A more detailed list can be found in the Halpin report linked (Nov. 2020).

from Summer 2020

Prime Minister Boris Johnson commits to establishing a Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities, later appointing Dr Tony Sewell, an education consultant who has described the evidence for institutional racism as ‘vague’, to lead the Commission.

15 June 2020

The British Sociological Association publishes Race and Ethnicity in British Sociology, a landmark report into racism in the discipline that its President describes as ‘essential for the future of Sociology.’

Read the report.
In a rare crossover between student activism and HE policy, HEPI publishes Miseducation: decolonising curricula, culture and pedagogy in UK universities by Mia Liyanage, a student activist and former Co-Chair of Common Ground. The report looks beyond debates about whether to decolonise, focusing instead on the why & putting forward five recommendations for how universities should approach decolonisation. Read the report.

July 2020

A new plaque is unveiled to accompany a statue of William Dundas, a prominent enslaver and campaigner against abolition, in Edinburgh. Read more here.

July 2020

At the University of Warwick, the Warwick Decolonise Project (WDP) - made up of student Decolonise Advocates - ends its pilot year with Warwick SU and becomes the Warwick Decolonise Programme to reflect commitment to ongoing work.

July 2020

The National Education Union (NEU) publishes an Anti-Racism Charter and Framework for schools. Read more here.

2020

The Black Further Education Leadership Group (BFELG) pens an open letter to Prime Minister Boris Johnson calling on the government to address the falling numbers of BAME FE leaders in the wake of the resurgence of the BLM movement. Read more here.

August 2020

A landmark commitment is made from Scotland’s universities and colleges to support a declaration against racism. The Tackling Racism on Campus declaration states: ‘Racism exists on our campuses and in our society. Call it what it is and reject it in all its forms. We stand united against racism.’ Read more here.

August 2020

The NUJ launches the #NUSDecoloniseEducation campaign in recognition of the growing need for anti-racist education, especially in light of the pandemic’s disproportionate impact on Black and Brown communities. Read more here and access the decolonisers library.

October 2020

Universities UK (UKU) publishes guidance on ‘Tackling racial harassment in higher education’. Read the report.

November 2020

The interim report of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities, Contributions and Cynfn in the New Curriculum Working Group is published by the Welsh government, stressing the importance of diversity and engagement with local communities in proposals for school curricula on BAME themes. Read the report.

November 2020

The Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER) releases a Race Equality Manifesto for Scotland. Read the manifesto.

November 2020

The UK Minister for Equalities, Kemi Badenoch, stands against the use of approaches such as Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education, despite pushback from education experts and the contemporary context around anti-racist thought. Read more here.

November 2020

Osaro Otobo for the Halpin partnership publishes a comprehensive report on ‘UK Universities’ Response to Black Lives Matter’. The report’s survey revealed that only 26% of respondents viewed their universities’ response as appropriate or sufficient. The report recommends that “to effect meaningful, long-term change, the UK higher education sector will need to acknowledge the part it has played in systemic racism up until now. And then it must take action.” Read the report.

November 2020
The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) launches a new Collaborative Agency (QAA) launches The Quality Assurance exploring what decolonising diverse, Scotland-wide, with the aim to ‘shape a inter-institutional network Read more (post-)pandemic times.’

The second phase of the independent review of the Race Equality Charter is published. Read the report.

Testimony ‘Global colonial exploitation and processes are racialised, gendered and classed and remain a sacred talking point. There is a taboo, and uncomfortable contradictions and tensions in the intersecting experiences of colonisers and colonised that play out to this day, not just in this country, but globally. It is a sort of shapeshifting beast that can be obvious, overt, violent, but also silent, passive, hidden, Orwellian. The racist tropes and stereotypes into fact, twisting data and misapplying statistics to make claims that rationalise white supremacy despite considerable research and evidence of institutional racism is an unfortunate sidestepping of the opportunity to acknowledge the atrocities of the past and the contributions of all in order to move forward.’ Read the full statement.

#CallItRacism

**Historical events**

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Stephen D. Ashe for the schools curriculum on the report as ‘a script that... the intersecting experiences of colonisers and colonised that play out to this day, not just in this country, but globally. It is a sort of shapeshifting beast that can be obvious, overt, violent, but also silent, passive, hidden, Orwellian. The racist tropes and stereotypes into fact, twisting data and misapplying statistics to make claims that rationalise white supremacy despite considerable research and evidence of institutional racism is an unfortunate sidestepping of the opportunity to acknowledge the atrocities of the past and the contributions of all in order to move forward.’ Read the full statement.

Testimony ‘As George Floyd’s murderer is convicted - as a Minnesota native - I can say there are serious concerns amongst some of those involved in grassroots movements that this could take people’s eyes off efforts to defund and abolish the police - reducing the issue to a ‘few bad apples’ narrative, despite a superficial recognition of structural racism. This parallels concerns in efforts for decolonial and anti-racist efforts in HE/FE that don’t seek to ‘include’ so called ‘diverse’ people in unjust systems but transform the systems full stop.”

**Government/outside body-originated work**

**Student work**

**Historical events**

**HE/FE work**

**Student work**

**HE/FE work**
# CallItRacism

Further Reading


Various (letters), 'Decolonial and Anti-Racist Student Activism,' The Sociological Review (11 February 2021).

Resources for tackling the awarding gap, Office for Students.

A’ Adam’s Bairns?, a resource for teaching anti-racist curricula in Scottish schools mainly focused around Scottish history.

University of Westminster’s Decolonising the Curriculum Toolkit, including resources for over 30 disciplines.

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- [Statue Removal](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:-RMF_Statue_Removal_07_Desmond_Bowles.jpg)
- [Black Futures Matter](https://arck-project.org/blm-black-futures-matter/)
- [Death of Blair Peach](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_of_Blair_Peach)
- [Derek Chauvin Trial March](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Derek_Chauvin_Trial_March_(51013623363).jpg)
- [Coloured Map of Cape Town](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Decolonising_Upper_Campus_(UCT).jpg)
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Offensive questions, stereotypes and ‘jokes’ have a lasting impact on individuals, affecting their mental health, career progression and overall welfare at college or university.

It’s time to stop sweeping these microaggressions under the rug. Call racism out for what it is and challenge unacceptable behaviour.

It’s time to take a stand.

#CallItRacism

Call it racism | Challenge racist behaviour | Change racist structures