

Mapping the history of anti-racist curriculum work in tertiary education

This resource was developed by and for Scottish tertiary institutions as a sector-led and co-produced resource

This timeline was developed and written by Mia Liyanage with input from the working group members of the Anti-Racist Curriculum (ARC) project

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.

**Call it
racism.**

#CallItRacism



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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

KEY:

Historical events

Government/outside body-originated

HE/FE specific

Student work

1960s

1970s

1968

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.”

1971

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](#).

1978

Anti-racist movements in Whitechapel and Brick Lane in London hold rallies in protest against racial violence and systemic racism, mirroring similar actions across communities in London and beyond.

View photos and artifacts from these movements [here](#).

1979

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

1980s

1980s

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.

1981

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.

1983

Colin Roach, a Black British 21-year-old, is shot in the entrance to Stoke Newington police station in London. Prior to this, the Hackney Black People’s Association had already been calling for a public inquiry into policing in the area. A full conclusion to the case, which police maintained was suicide despite evidence from the Coroner’s report, was never reached. [Read an essay](#) on the parallels between Roach’s and George Floyd’s murders.

1985

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.

1987

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

1989

Sir Geoff Palmer becomes Scotland’s first Black professor.

KEY:

Historical events

Government/outside body-originated

HE/FE specific

Student work

KEY:

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HE/FE specific

Student work

1990s

1993

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.”

1996

New Gilborn & Gipps research finds that “not all ethnic groups benefit equally from attending apparently ‘effective’ schools”.
Full text [accessible via HathiTrust](#).

1999

The public inquiry into the police investigation of the murder of Stephen Lawrence, known as the Macpherson Report, is published. The report finds the Metropolitan Police to be ‘institutionally racist’, and makes 70 recommendations for reform, including a focus on education:
“...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. 46:34)
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

Government/outside body-originated

HE/FE specific

Student work

2000s

1999

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

1999

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.)

2000

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

2000

The General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC) publishes guidance on Educating for Anti Racism’.
Read the [report](#).

May 2002

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](#).

KEY:

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Student work

2000s

July 2002

The Commission for Black Staff in FE publishes its final report, Challenging Racism: Further education leading the way'.
Read the [report](#).

May 2003

A report commissioned by the Equality Challenge Unit finds that, despite the legal requirement from the Race Relations Amendment Act (RRAA), a disproportionate number of universities have poor or inadequate race equality policies.
Read more [here](#).

2005

In the Foster Review, further education colleges are challenged to do better on race equality.
Read the [review](#).

2006

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

2010s

2010

The Equality Act 2010 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.

August 2011

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.

2011

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](#).

2012

The NUS publishes *No Place for Hate – Hate crimes and incidents in further and higher education: Race and ethnicity*.
Read the [report](#).

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](#).

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2010s

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](#).

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](#).

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](#).

2010s

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](#).

2016

Leigh Patel's book, *Decolonizing Educational Research*, is published, investigating the longstanding traditions of oppression, racism, and white supremacy that are systemically reseated and reinforced by learning and social interaction.
Read the [book](#).

2017

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.

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](#).

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2010s

June 2017

In response to the void left by Rhodes Must Fall, Common Ground Oxford launches with a symposium entitled ‘Imperial Past, Unequal Present’. Built on the principles of pleasure activism, Common Ground is a student movement challenging racism and classism at the University of Oxford and in the city of Oxford, and is designed for longevity. Follow [Common Ground’s ongoing work](#).

June 2018

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’.

2018

Prof. [Olivette Otele](#) becomes the first Black woman appointed to a professorship in History in the UK.

2018

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](#).

2010s

August 2018

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](#).

October 2018

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](#).

November 2018

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](#).

2019

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](#).

March 2019

Meleisa 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 forces students, especially those comfortably in the majority, out of their comfort zones. It forces them to employ critical thinking skills, including in 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](#).

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May 2019

UUK and the NUS publish a set of case studies around the BAME awarding gap.
Read the [Case studies report](#).

2019

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

2016-2019

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.

February 2019

Nicola Rollock publishes *Staying Power* (UCU), a report for which 20 of the 25 Black women professors in the UK were interviewed about their experiences and career strategies.
Read the [report](#).

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](#).

2010s

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](#).

KEY:

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2020s

February 2020

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](#).

25 May 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.

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](#).

June 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](#).

2020s

9 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](#).

11 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.

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](#).

15 June 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 'flimsy', to lead the Commission.

from Summer 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).

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2020s

July 2020

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.

2020

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

August 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](#).

2020s

October 2020

The NUS 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](#) and access the [decolonisers library](#).

November 2020

Osaro Ootobo 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

Universities UK (UUK) 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 Cynefin 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 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](#).

2021

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

2020s

February 2021

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) launches a new Collaborative Cluster, 'Decolonising the Curriculum in the Time of Pandemic', with the aim to 'shape a diverse, Scotland-wide, inter-institutional network exploring what decolonising the curriculum looks like in (post-)pandemic times.'

Read more [here](#).

February 2021

Stephen D. Ashe for the Stuart Hall Foundation & the Centre on the Dynamics of Ethnicity publishes the 'SHF Race Report', a comprehensive review of 589 different recommendations made by 13 previous race and inequality reports and commissions between 1981 and 2017. The findings are striking, with many recommendations yet to be taken up; specific to ARC, the report identifies that concerns about the impact of an "inappropriate" schools curriculum on the performance of Black pupils date back to 1981.

Read the [report](#).

March 2021

Three years on, the Scottish government releases an update to its 2018 report, 'Teaching in a diverse Scotland'. The update notes that the report's original goal of 4% BAME teachers in Scotland will have to be revised, and that 'Black and minority ethnic teachers continue to face structural barriers at every step of their career'.

Read the [update](#).

March 2021

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

Read the [review](#).

March 2021

The Commission set up by Boris Johnson's government in Summer 2020 publishes 'The Report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities', known as the Sewell Report (read [here](#)) which faces strong criticism. Stakeholders cited by the Commission claim they were never consulted and disagree with its findings. **Read a news report [here](#).**

Testimony
"Global colonial exploitation and processes are racialised, gendered and classed and remain a sacred talking point, a taboo, and uncomfortable for some to fathom. There are patterns, conflicts, 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 Sewell Report (2021) is a most recent and prime example."

2020s

31 March 2021

The Runnymede Trust launches 'Sewell Reports: Runnymede Responds', a campaign challenging the Sewell Report's findings. The Trust describes the Report as 'a script that has been written for 10 Downing Street. The people involved in this Commission had no interest in genuinely discussing racism'.

Read more [here](#).

19 April 2021

UN Human Rights experts condemn the UK government Sewell Report:
'In 2021, it is stunning to read a report on race and ethnicity that repackages racist tropes and stereotypes into fact, twisting data and misapplying statistics and studies into conclusory findings and ad hominem attacks on people of African descent... The Report cites dubious evidence to make claims that rationalize white supremacy by using the familiar arguments that have always justified racial hierarchy. This attempt to normalize 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](#).

20 April 2021

George Floyd's killer, former police officer Derek Chauvin, is found guilty of his murder on all three counts. This verdict marks a significant moment in the fight for racial justice, but not justice in itself - activists point out that one guilty verdict will not undo systemic racism or eradicate police brutality.

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 wider 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."

Further Reading

Gbango, E., ‘[The history of anti-racist student occupation movements in the UK](#),’ *gal-dem* (6 January 2020).

Various (letters), ‘[Decolonial and Anti-Racist Student Activism](#),’ *The Sociological Review* (11 February 2021).

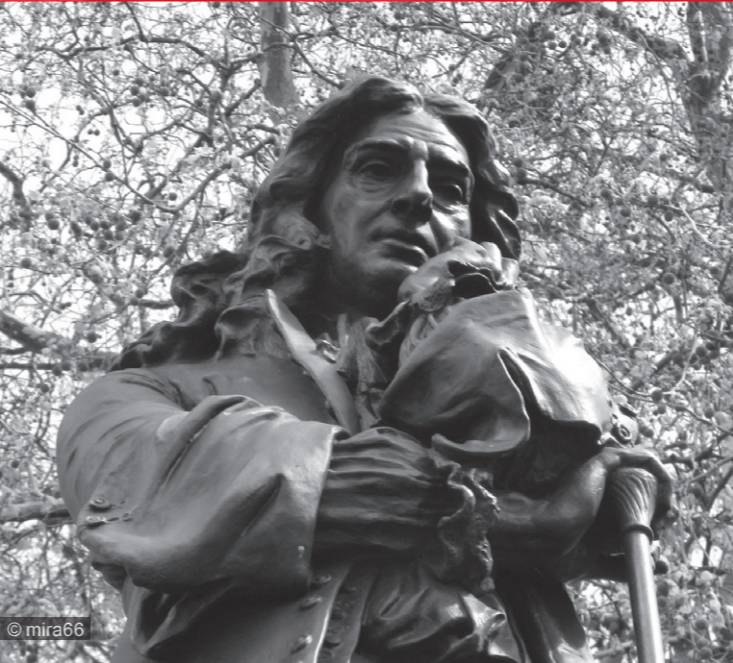
Resources for [tackling the awarding gap](#), Office for Students.

[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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https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dapper_young_Windrush_man_1962.tif



AdvanceHE



QAA



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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