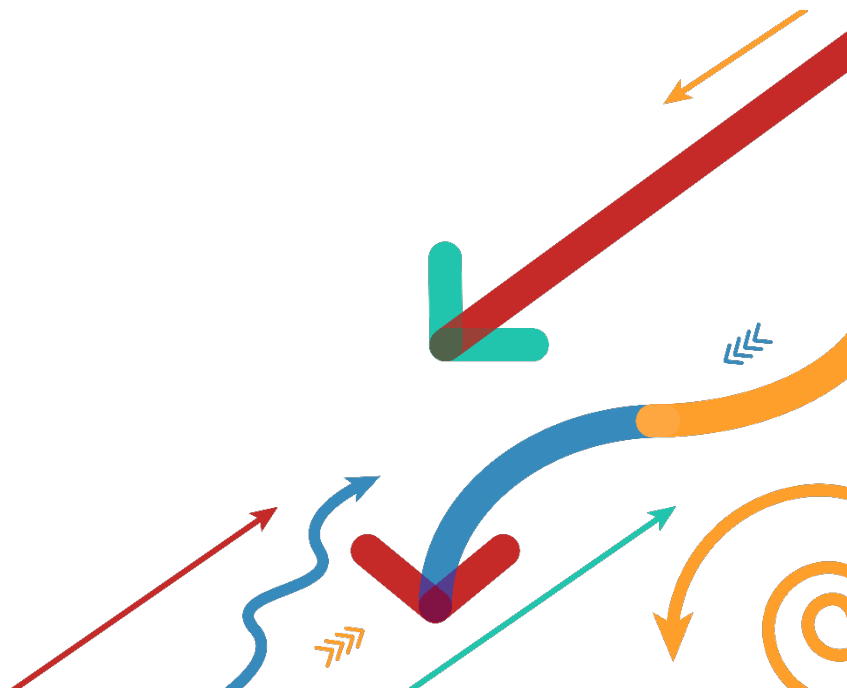# Reimagining Higher Education: journeys of decolonising

Wednesday 8th November
De Montfort University, Leicester

# Session Summaries

# Conference Programme

| Time | Session | Location |
|---|---|---|
| 9am | **Registration** | VP, Fletcher Suite |
| 10am | **Welcome**<br>*Kaushika Patel, Deputy Dean Health and Life Sciences, Decolonising DMU Project Lead*<br>*Dr Katie Normington, Vice Chancellor, DMU* | VP4.05 |
| 10:20am | **Keynote – Decolonising against a backdrop of colonial amnesia … challenges, barriers, and finding a way forward**<br>*Dr Javeria Khadija Shah, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London* | VP4.05 |
| 11am | **Refreshments** | VP, Fletcher Suite |

| 11:15am | **Parallel Streams** | | | | | | Bede House |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | A<br>Institutional Change | B<br>Institutional Action Planning | C<br>Culture Change | D<br>Library and Learning Services | E<br>Staff Development | F<br>Co-creation | |

| Time | Session | Location |
|---|---|---|
| 12:45pm | **Lunch** | VP, Fletcher Suite |

| 1:30pm | **Parallel Streams** | | | | | | Bede House |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | G<br>Student Voice | H<br>Sharing Practice in Health and Life Sciences | I<br>Decolonial Research | J<br>Sharing Practice in Humanities and Social Sciences | K<br>Sharing Practices in Computing | | |

| Time | Session | Location |
|---|---|---|
| 3pm | **Panel Session - Journeys of Decolonising - where to next?**<br><br>*Donna Jones, Manchester Metropolitan University*<br>*Dr Iwi Ugiagbe-Green, Manchester Metropolitan University*<br>*Dr Omar Khan, TASO*<br>*Rachel Davies, De Montfort University* | VP4.05 |
| 4:10pm | **Closing Reflections and Thanks**<br>*Kaushika Patel, De Montfort University* | VP4.05 |
| 4:30pm | **Drinks Reception and Networking** | VP, Fletcher Suite |

N.B: VP = Vijay Patel Building, De Montfort University Campus

## Conference Papers

# Conference Abstracts

## Keynote

## Decolonising against a backdrop of colonial amnesia … challenges, barriers, and finding a way forward

Dr Javeria Khadija Shah
Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London

Vijay Patel Building, 4.05

In recent years there has been a rising trend in UK HE to push towards a decolonisation of the curriculum as an active response to addressing racial inequity. However, the articulation, outcomes, and impact of decolonising practices remains ambiguous. This ambiguity is perhaps in part fuelled by a nationwide curricular omission of Britain's colonial past which leads us to question the effectiveness of decolonisation to a backdrop of a nationwide colonial amnesia.

In this keynote, Dr Javeria Khadija Shah draws on her original theories of a whiteness ecology and socialised performativity (Shah, 2021) to present original critique exploring the barriers to meaningful decolonisation alongside a consideration of how these challenges might be overcome.

# Decolonising People, Performance and Culture in British Higher Education

Dr Simon Obendorf, Tracey Laing and David Rugara
University of Lincoln

Bede House

**Workshop**

Many universities have recently moved to embed decolonial perspectives in their teaching materials, pedagogies and curriculum design. Yet far less attention has been bringing these perspectives to bear on functions of the university outside of the classroom. This session shares the early experiences of colleagues at the University of Lincoln working on one such project: bringing the logics of decoloniality to bear on the University's approach to human resources, organisational development, and institutional culture. Some of the most enduring – and unquestioned - colonial logics have been the expectations, beliefs, value-sets and processes that have surrounded the world of work. This is particularly acute within Western universities who have long been key players in the production, institutionalisation and naturalisation of Western knowledge forms. This has taken place not just in classrooms, libraries, laboratories or research centres, but in boardrooms and management suites, in the processes of faculty committees and recruitment panels and in the framing of key concepts such as "research excellence", "world-class standards", "internationalisation", "impact" and "performance appraisal." The focus on human resources (or, in the terminology adopted at Lincoln, "people, performance and culture") builds on the recognition that decolonial approaches challenge us to critically probe the often Euro- or Amerocentric nature of prevailing assumptions around recruitment, belonging, culture, values and contribution. The session will explore some of the experiences, successes and challenges the team has encountered in the following key areas:

- Embedding decoloniality and decolonial processes in broader discussions of institutional values.
- Balancing institutional commitments to decoloniality with legal, regulatory and sectoral frameworks and requirements.
- Working with professional services staff to mainstream decolonial approaches in policy, practice, and culture.
- Key process interventions: recruitment, induction, organisational development, performance appraisals, promotions.
- Differentiating decolonial work from work done elsewhere in the institution on equality, diversity and inclusivity.
- Managing dissent and pushback.

# The empty wheelbarrow... and the riddle of EDI policy

Dr Molly Bellamy, The University of Law

Bede House

**Presentation**

Much EDI policy seeks to represent marginalised communities or categories of people in ways that signify their inclusion in society. We are encouraged by the inclusive language of legislation such as that of the Equality Act 2010 which lists many 'protected characteristics'; and by those Universities which recognise race in their recruitment and admissions strategies; and by the increasingly diverse staff demographic of sectors such as Higher Education and Law – as these are processes which flesh out the policies of EDI with a view to attaining social cohesion.

The question we have to ask however, is to what extent these initiatives effect change at a structural level as against a surface level. And what are the benefits and limitations of inclusive representation as an approach to decolonising the curriculum?

I would like to use the allegory of the empty wheelbarrow, as told by the Slovenian philosopher Slavoy Zizek, to explore some of the discursive practices of EDI policy.

Recall the old story about a worker suspected of stealing. Every evening, when he was leaving the factory, the wheelbarrow he was rolling in front of him was carefully inspected by the guardians of the work site, but it was always empty – what was being rolled out were the wheelbarrows themselves.

# STREAM B - INSTITUTIONAL ACTION PLANNING

## Race Inclusion Action Plan Workshops: a department-level approach to inequities

Claire Ashdown, University of Leicester

Bede House

**Workshop**

The University of Leicester has a target of eliminating our awarding gap between Black undergraduate students and their White peers by 2025/26. We, the Student and Education EDI Team, are working with teaching departments and student-facing professional services teams to plan their approach to improve aspects of the awarding gap that we can change.

We are currently delivering Race Inclusion Action Plan workshops, providing departments/teams with an opportunity to discuss their practices and identify improvements for more inclusive environments, curricula and student support. While we prioritise race inclusion, we encourage colleagues to consider broader aspects of inclusivity, student belonging and satisfaction, as we emphasise the importance of intersectionality and individual needs.

Each workshop starts by reflecting on our diverse student body, at departmental level and within the context of super-diverse Leicester. We provide examples of good practice and barriers our students may experience. We also promote Dr Paul Campbell's Racial Inclusivity Toolkit. Each session's content and subsequent action plans are tailored to the priorities and work within each department.

Following the workshops, we support departments/teams in developing a Race Inclusion Action Plan to outline actions they will take to address their priorities and how they will be evaluated. Actions mainly focus on enhancing existing activities and business as usual support, though can include new ideas that will be embedded into ongoing provision.

I propose to run a workshop providing an overview of the workshops and action plans, while also engaging the audience with some questions we ask in the workshops, with the opportunity for delegates to reflect on challenges/approaches of presenting a similar session within their institution.

# Forging an Inclusive Future: The Decolonisation journey for improving the Student Experience

Dr Giuseppe Cantafio and Chris Macallister, University of Sunderland in London

Bede House

**Workshop**

The concept of decolonization has been developed by a range of progressive articles ((Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (1989) Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2009), Walter Mignolo (2011), Gurminder K. Bhambra (2017) and Sultana (2019). These publications themselves have also spawned a wealth of documents and policies primarily aimed at "decolonising the syllabus".

The authors propose that "decolonising the syllabus" is an important, but not exclusive aspect of the student journey and the propose the alternative terminology of "decolonising the student experience". This requires a holistic rather than constrained approach that involves the consideration and identification of potential barriers to all students based on ex-colonial paradigms throughout the complete student journey.

The complete student journey (see attached diagram) includes, but not limited to the application processes, programme induction, library and accommodation and catering facilities, etc. The challenge becomes the development of a unique decolonisation culture within each University so that it permeates and embraces every aspect of the governance, strategic and operational premise of the institution.

The proposed workshop will require participants to form groups (of a maximum of 6) and they will be presented with the attached document to choose the area of the University operations (except the curriculum) they wish to examine in terms of decolonisation initiatives.

Once they have had time to brainstorm for ideas they will be presented with summarised research (if available) to help develop their ideas further. The authors will move between the groups and act as facilitators and encourage deeper thinking with regard to decolonisation.

At the end of the workshop, participants will have a fresh appreciation of the ingrained and established barriers that BAME students which face with regard to the particular service/facility as part of their student journey.

The proposed format will be:

1.      Workshop Introduction and Aims (10 mins)

2.      Formation of Groups and Initial Brainstorming (15 mins)

3.      Introduction of summarised research and secondary brainstorming (15 mins)

4.      Plenary Session – presentation of ideas by each group (15 mins)

5.      Networking opportunity for participants (5 mins)

The plenary session will allow participants to learn and share ideas and approaches for different 'parts' of the university operations.

## STREAM C - CULTURE CHANGE

# Creating and Implementing a Roadmap for Culture Change in Curriculum Development and Support

Dr Kathy-Ann Fletcher, Abertay University

Bede House

**Workshop**

We are proposing an interactive workshop that will introduce attendees to the Abertay University roadmap for creating a curriculum that embeds equality, diversity and inclusion. This process requires a culture change in many organisations (e.g. HE) to ensure that the curriculum in teaching, practice and support is inherently anti-racist. Participants will discuss, using case studies especially Abertay's project, factors that facilitate and block culture change. The aim of the workshop is to help participants develop their culture change plans for their institutions by learning from Abertay and each other. By examining the roadmap presented by Abertay, we will learn about the pace of change and tangible steps that are needed in motivating that cultural change. The workshop will explore how policy, procedures, training (cultural sensitivity, curriculum development etc), dialogue between divisions and among academic and support services are vital in motivating long-lasting cultural change beyond the tick box that turns people away from such initiatives. The workshop will also examine the best practice in engaging with stakeholders and therefore building buy-in from staff and student complements, current and alumni as well. The roadmap is focused on creating an accessible place of belonging for all staff and students. Therefore, the interactive workshop will explore some of what Abertay has done in the past few years to create that place of belonging for all regardless of background and discuss how those areas of good practice are being leveraged to influence wider practice in the institution. We will explore the power co-creation in supporting that culture that approaches anti-racism from an intersectional lens to ensure that all feel welcomed and supported equally within the university. In the workshop, the audience will provide feedback on Abertay's roadmap and scenario plan methods for incorporating the development process within their own institutions.

# Developing a Decolonising Curriculum Card

Jaqueline Smart and Alison Lahlafi, University of Bradford

Bede House

**Workshop**

The workshop draws upon the work of two of the University of Bradford's enabling groups, created to support the implementation of the University's Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy 2021-26: the Curriculum Architecture and Decolonising Groups.

The Curriculum Architecture Group developed the Bradford Curriculum, which has four dimensions of student engagement, including the dimension of "Liberated Learning", defined as: welcoming and valuing all students by enabling access, choice, self-expression, and potential for success regardless of starting point, personal circumstance, culture or context. In consultation with a range of academic and professional services staff and other enabling groups, a set of 'curriculum cards' was developed as a practical tool for programme teams to use in evaluating the alignment of their programmes to the new Bradford Curriculum. The cards are intended both to stimulate discussion and to prompt action in relation to the dimensions.

In this workshop, we will explain how we worked with academics and professional services staff from the Decolonising Enabling Group to develop a Decolonising Curriculum Card as part of the Liberated Learning dimension. The card has 5 practical questions for staff to discuss and will be used over the next two years in review of current programmes and design of new programmes. We will facilitate workshop participants to work together in small groups to create their own 2-3 practical questions for a Decolonising Curriculum Card. There will then be opportunity to compare their questions with other groups and with the 5 questions that form the Bradford Curriculum Decolonising Card.

# STREAM D - LIBRARY AND LEARNING SERVICES

## Decolonising the academic library: opening the library doors

Kaye Towlson, De Montfort University

Bede House

**Presentation**

In a recent workforce mapping exercise sponsored by the Chartered Institute of Information professionals (CiLiP) less than 5% of the survey sample (4336) identified with a "non-white" ethnicity. The overwhelming whiteness of the library sector is well established. Decolonising DMU offered opportunities to address this issue. Experience of this has been positive for post incumbents and library staff.

At DMU our library staff profile reveals 17% identify as a person of colour. This figure fails to reflect the local demographic profile (57% Leicester City population is of a minoritised ethnicity) or the DMU student cohort, approximately 50% students of colour:50%white students.

Research shows a sense of belonging and connectedness with the institution will encourage help seeking and a diverse staff profile to be beneficial (NUS 2011). Although usage statistics reveal the LLS typical user to be a female of colour and more students of colour engage with learning support services, there is a social justice imperative to enable diversity and cultural representation within the library and information service workforce. Mindful of barriers to entering this sector the delivery of a Library Traineeship funded through Deolonising DMU and the uptake of institutional paid internships is offered as a slow burn path to decolonising libraries.

This session charts the development and delivery of a Library Trainee role within De Montfort university Library and Learning Services 2021 –2023. Opportunities afforded to and by the Library Trainee role will be noted and ways of maximising work opportunities through institutional paid internships will be discussed. The positive impact these roles have on the experience of staff within the institution and the role holders, the learning that flows from this approach are offered as a positive, although incremental way forward to making the academic library workforce more diverse.

NUS (2011*) Race for equality: a report on the experience of black students in higher education . NUS.* [Onlne]. Available at Race for Equality: a report on the experiences of Black students in further and higher education (2011) @ NUS Connect Access 6/9/23

# The importance of decolonising archives and how it serves to benefit communities

Hafsa Hersi, De Montfort University

Bede House

**Presentation**

This discussion will focus on the significance of decolonising archives and how it plays a significant role in disseminating communities' history, uncovering individuals and their forgotten histories, along with the purpose it serves for people. It will also highlight the value of community archives and how they are the foundation that empowers and fosters a sense of cohesion. With case studies that consider regional and national archives.

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# Broaden my Bookshelf

Kate McGuinn and Alison Sharman, University of Huddersfield

Bede House

**Presentation**

Broaden my Bookshelf (BMB) is an initiative to increase the range of authors represented in the University of Huddersfield Library. The main focus is on books written by marginalised people (e.g. from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background and/or who identify as LGBT+). It was launched in October 2018 and is delivered in collaboration with the University of Huddersfield Students Union (UHSU).  It grew out of our desire to work with UHSU on improving the quality and breadth of reading lists, along with a growing awareness of issues raised by the Why is my curriculum White? Campaign.

BMB also aims to encourage and assist lecturers to diversify their reading lists. This led to the creation of a Reading List Toolkit in 2020. The Toolkit provides a rationale for decolonising and diversifying reading lists with testimonies from minoritized students. It also includes a checklist for lecturers to self-assess their lists, also access to the BMB book collection and relevant journal collections as well as less traditional resources, including video playlists and podcasts.

Throughout the period since 2018 the BMB team has worked to raise awareness of the campaign by organising events such as panel debates and an author event with the author and photographer Johny Pitts. We have also taken BMB out to the schools of the university with "roadshow" events and gathered feedback from students about their experiences of the curriculum from a diversity perspective. We have also promoted BMB each new academic year using a variety of print and social media, including videos created by the UHSU Education and Equalities Officers. Our latest promotional event was a Human Library which we ran at the university Teaching and Learning

# STREAM E - STAFF DEVELOPMENT

## Addressing Inequity in Education via Mandatory Staff Development

Terry Finnigan, University of the Arts London
Lucy Panesar, University of Kent;

Bede House

**Discussion**

This session draws on the experience of different institutions and their approach to addressing inequity in education within a HE context. Colleagues from De Montfort University, Kent University and University of the Arts London discuss how they are utilising mandatory staff development programmes, in the shape of Postgraduate Certificates to help academic staff to innovate and transform their teaching practice in light of the decolonising agenda.

Each of these institutions have various levels of experience in adopting this approach. Each will explain their individual approaches and reflect on the strengths and challenges they have encountered. In sharing this practice, we hope to inspire other institutions to also take bolder steps to developing a more equitable and inclusive student learning experience through their PG Certs.

We propose to run a structured plenary discussion providing an overview of the different approaches institutions have taken to bringing issues of inclusive practice, decolonisation and racial and social justice into the key remit of mandatory PG Certs. There will be opportunity for delegates to reflect on challenges/approaches of presenting a similar approach within their institution.

# Disrupting Places and Spaces: Steps Towards Anti-Racist and Decolonised Curricula

Dr Laura Key, York St John University

Bede House

**Presentation**

York St John University has a bold statement within its Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy 2026 that it will 'decolonise […] curricula to increase representation of scholarship from across cultures and diverse experiences and perspectives'. This presentation will delineate steps that have been taken thus far by the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Team and Anti-Racism and Decoloniality Working Group towards this aim. First, the presentation will introduce a series of events established to encourage colleagues to consider approaches to anti-racist pedagogy and decoloniality, and their relationship to their own disciplines and practice. This aspect of the talk will outline attempts to disrupt the politics of space and typical power dynamics at academic events to create more open, honest spaces where potentially difficult issues can be discussed and interrogated in settings that move away from the traditional expert speaker/passive learner hierarchy (Sethi, 2011; Budd et al., 2015). Second, open-ended, collaborative online materials created for internal CPD purposes and as externally facing resources will be presented as vehicles via which to engage colleagues with anti-racist and decolonial approaches to the curriculum. Again, the goal is for these materials and spaces to be collective and developing endeavours, allowing for disciplinary differences and continuous learning, and seeking to address the risk of such work becoming a didactic and policy-driven tick-box exercise. In the spirit of co-production and spatial disruption (Bovill, 2019; Kinloch 2018), attendees will be invited to provide their views on the approaches and materials presented as a means to facilitate community sharing and learning. This co-creative approach will symbolise the ongoing nature of such projects, stressing that the institution's (and, indeed, the wider sector's) anti-racist and decolonial work will never be 'finished', and encouraging a commitment to ongoing inter-institutional discussions and collaborations.

# Raising Awareness, Changing Culture and Behaviour: One university's story

Professor Adeela Shafi and Debbie Reel, University of Gloucestershire

Bede House

## Presentation

Increasing representation and decolonising university curricula are a key endeavour of universities across the UK and in many other countries. For smaller universities located geographically in less diverse locations, such initiatives must take a more proactive approach.

This research explores the work in one relatively small, post 1992 university, situated in the Southwest of England. This institution attracts a student population that reflects the region's ethnic diversity where 87.8% are racialised as white. A predominantly white student population, coupled with a predominantly white staff population, has raised the impetus for an understanding of how the university can better itself in challenging, promoting and actioning the concept of decolonising. The aim was:

To create new academic spaces that allow students to engage with a curriculum that better represents a range of intercultural voices.

With pockets of excellence already developing across the university, this initiative and associated research began at the local School level with key events from local but prominent speakers in the field as well as collaborative events with universities well established, and indeed pioneering, in the work of decolonising. The purpose was to hear voices and share often personal experiences of others, to exemplify the importance of exposure, to build a culture and to document the university's decolonising journey. However, the work to date has been challenging; more challenging than anticipated and the core team leading the initiative, passionate to help shape a different direction for practice, instead found themselves challenged in their drive to raise awareness, change culture and behaviour.

This research now therefore documents not only the journey in improving representation and its successes but some of the difficulties, some of which come from the proximal and contextual demands on colleagues, but also those which appear to reflect some deep-seated resistances to change.

# STREAM F - CO-CREATION

## Decolonisation in Action

Fadekemi Adeleye, Gabrielle Nieuwoudt and Rio Judson
King's College London

Bede House

**Presentation**

Dr Ricardo Twumasi, a lecturer in Organisational Psychiatry and Psychology at King's College London, has designed and piloted a revolutionary new module: Decolonising Mental Health Research. Students who studied this module were invited to share ideas and experiences around the impact of power and colonialism on society and academia, and what we felt could be done differently around King's, in the mental health professions, and more. In a departure from traditional, top-down teaching, classes took the format of open discussions based on prompt material, using Socratic questioning and yarning circles to place student voices at the forefront of learning. The module culminated with a self-marked assessment, in which students produced a variety of submissions relating to the theme of Decolonisation in Action. These submissions were then presented to the KCL community and beyond in a student-led symposium (see our website).

Under the theme of Equity in Education and Research, we would like to give a presentation of the Decolonising Mental Health Research module and the resulting symposium as a novel approach to teaching in higher education. As students of the module and members of the organising committee for the Decolonisation in Action symposium, we would provide an overview of the teaching approach and its underlying principles, the assessment of the module and the symposium, the future of the module, and our own views on what decolonisation means, particularly in the context of higher education. We believe that this module aptly demonstrates the potential for decolonisation in academic settings and hope to share this approach with our peers at De Montford University.

# Curriculum co-creation as a decolonising tool: Reflections from student and staff co-creators

Dr Blessing Marandure, Yusraa Maryam and Dr Rosi Smith
De Montfort University

Bede House

**Panel**

Over the 2022/23 academic year, a group of student and staff co-creators from DMU, led by Dr Rosi Smith and Dr Lamia Nemouchi, have been collaborating to develop a Level 5 Inclusion and Diversity module on the BA (hons) Education Studies. The overarching aims of this project have been to a) Develop co-creation strategies compatible with the limitations of block teaching; b) Help address awarding gaps (40% for our BAME students 2019-2020) by foregrounding topics prioritised by diverse students; c) Develop cross-departmental, multi-disciplinary working to improve quality; and d) Develop pedagogical and anti-oppressive skills, supporting students' emerging practitioner identities. The Inclusion and Diversity module was selected because of the emphasis on lived experience in key inclusion theory and practice, and because of student voice requests for greater curricular representation of certain groups, especially South Asian women and students with strong faith identities. There was also a recognition that the small module teaching team cannot represent the complex, intersectional identities of our students (or their future pupils) but that a wealth of specialist knowledge exists across DMU. Consequently, this project has involved 6 students from BA (hons) Education Studies who proposed topics of interest and relevance to them, which they then developed into teaching content together with academic and professional services staff from Education, Psychology, and Library and Learning Services, together with the co-chairs of DMU's Disability and Wellbeing Network (DAWN).

For the Reimagining Higher Education Conference, we are proposing a panel discussion of our student and staff co-creators to reflect on their involvement on the project. We will begin with a brief presentation introducing the background of our project, followed by the panel discussion. We will reflect on co-creation as a means through which decolonization, as a practice, can be introduced and enabled within academic environments. We will discuss the centring of student voices from marginalised backgrounds, processes of mutual learning and challenging preconceived power dynamics within educational contexts.

# Enabling inclusive spaces to decolonise the curriculum: student-centred zine-making workshops

Dr Michael Kilmister, Mathew Haine and Victoria Grace-Bland
University of Reading

Bede House

**Presentation**

Can student-created 'zines' (small-circulation/self-published magazines) help decolonise the curriculum? Are they a way of collecting information and views that other forms of student voice-gathering activities, like the focus group or the research survey, might not capture? Further, might zines mobilise and empower marginalised and underrepresented groups in higher education contexts? These questions seeded a cross-unit staff-student partnership project at the University of Reading. This talk will offer reflections on the authors' experience of facilitating a series of zine-making workshops with students and publishing the resulting zines. Observations and preliminary analysis of student evaluation data finds creative exercises (and spaces) engender an informal and rewarding atmosphere in which students can freely share authentic views and enjoy themselves. A creative and responsive medium with vast possibilities in format, design and substance, the authors find that zines are polar opposites of the glossy publications and toolkits typically produced and valued in institutional settings; therefore, they appear to offer new audiences and possibilities for decolonising the curriculum scholarship. Overall, the paper will present the case that zine-making workshops offer inclusive and creative spaces where complex theory can be explored and applied to lived experience, and where conversations about sensitive topics like racism in higher education can be supported and productively advanced.

## Barriers faced by international students on understanding the spoken content of in-person lectures - a student perspective

Anna LLewellyn-Smith, Harper Adams University

Bede House

**Workshop**

There is evidence to show that transnational students face barriers to understanding the spoken content of their lectures. A limited number of studies suggest changes that lecturers can make to mitigate the hurdles, but almost none capture suggestions from students themselves. Since transnational students bring many benefits to universities, there is a need to address low levels of comprehension. Through a mixed method approach the study aimed to determine the nature of perceived barriers, the role lecturers' delivery style played in hindering comprehension, the role students' own proficiency played and what changes in spoken delivery students themselves were seeking. The study concluded that lecturers can make a number of stand-alone modifications to delivery but that continual inter-department collaboration would also be beneficial. The study adds to our understanding of what modifications can be made from the students' perspective.

## Conversations about race

Tajah Hamilton, King's College London

Bede House

**Presentation**

We believe that the Conversations About Race programme should be highlighted at this conference, because our successes are based solely on the fact that we have students and staff members engaging with us. So our successes are actually theirs. We believe that this would be an amazing opportunity for the work of the King's student and staff body to be platformed on this non-hierarchical stage.

The Conversations About Race programme was created in partnership with Citizens UK, a community organising group based in South London, and it exists to be able to limit and then completely eradicate the ethnicity awarding gap at King's College London. It invites students and staff to enter a space where they can speak candidly about race, in the classroom, within assessments, and on the Campus as a whole. We allow students and staff members to talk about their experiences and in doing so we can highlight problems that are faced universally and talk together about how we can break those obstacles down completely, ensuring that students here, and students to come, can have a more inclusive time at King's.

# An Exploration of Student Loans as a Barrier to Higher Education for Muslims

Yusraa Maryam and Professor Richard Hall, De Montfort University

Bede House

**Presentation**

Student loans containing interest is a barrier to education for some Muslim students, as Islam prohibits interest (Malik and Wykes, 2018, pp.8-9). Despite this being an issue explicitly recognised by successive UK governments (DfBIS, 2014, p.6), a funding solution that supports access and participation for impacted individuals and communities has yet to be implemented. Moreover, there is limited research available on the impact of this system on Muslims who are trying to adhere to Islamic teachings. This paper explores student-led research into the ways in which student loans form a barrier to higher education for Muslims. It is predicated upon two research questions. First, what are the impacts of interest-based student loans on Muslims academic and career aspirations? Second, how are Muslims' work-life balance impacted by the student loans system? Qualitative, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 5 Muslim participants, who have experienced the loan system as a barrier, in order to explore their views and perspectives. This was aligned with the auto-ethnographic perspective of the student-as-researcher, in order to explore issues of positionality in the research. The emerging results found that the current student loans system caused participants to change academic and career aspirations to shorter and cheaper routes, in order to avoid engaging with interest-based loans. Beyond this, there was indicative evidence of an intersection between religious belief and class, which impacted study. Some Muslim students, especially those from lower-income backgrounds, had to work to fund their education leading to an unhealthy work-life balance, and this created a complex, educational experience. The results of the study highlight the inequalities Muslim students can face inside higher education in the UK, reinforcing the need for an alternative finance system in line with Islamic principles.

# STREAM H - SHARING PRACTICE IN HEALTH AND LIFE SCIENCES

## Building education through and for social justice: lessons from co-creating anti-racist practices in a Life Sciences curriculum

Dr Amy Maclatchy and Dr Moonisah Usman, University of Westminster

Bede House

**Workshop**

'The academy is not a paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created' (hooks, 1994). Universities are sites of struggle and do not always lead to equitable outcomes. National degree awarding gaps highlight the disparities in outcomes of higher education for racially minoritized students. This ongoing issue has been described as a 'wicked problem', directly related to structural racism, or policies and practices that continually disadvantage racialised students (Ugiagbe-Green and Ernsting, 2022). Movements to decolonise the curriculum bring hope and the tools to rebuild more socially-just institutions and societies, however, this path is challenging.

It is sometimes questioned whether the field of science, with its guise of objectivity, needs decolonising, or what that process might look like. As decolonising of science gains momentum across the sector, we see it to involve challenging prejudice and bias, shifting from eurocentric epistemology and recentring marginalised voices. Ultimately, shifting our relationship to and practice of science by being actively anti-racist, may help us tackle problems like health inequalities, which affect minoritised groups the most and with which we've grappled for too long (Raleigh and Holmes, 2021).

In this collaborative workshop, we will consider how to reimagine higher education, through building student and staff relationships to co-create decolonial learning spaces that allow anti-racist dialogue and practices. We will share lessons from our journey of using co-creation, critical thinking and storytelling to humanise the classroom and tend to issues of race and their intersection with the discipline of life sciences, on the core foundation module 'Critical Thinking for Academic Professional Development' in the Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation, University of Westminster.

# Decolonising Midwifery Education, creating an educational toolkit

Bernadette Gregory and Dr Zaheera Essat, De Montfort University
Maxine Chapman, University of Leicester

Bede House

**Presentation**

The need to decolonise midwifery education is supported by the stark statistics of the recent MBBRACE Report (Knight et al 2022) which provides evidence of the difference in maternal outcomes for global majority women when compared to white women in the UK. Black women are 3.7 times more likely to die in pregnancy, childbirth and up to a year postnatally than white women; South Asian women are 1.8 times and mixed-race women are 1.3 times more likely to die (Knight et al 2022). These statistics required action.

Large scale reports from Birthrights (2022) and Five X More (Peter and Wheeler 2022) made recommendations for midwifery education to increase teaching and learning about the needs and care of racialised minority women.

Responding to these calls to action, the RCM has now collaborated with midwives, academics, clinicians, students, maternity support workers, sociologists, service users and representatives from support groups across the UK to co-produce a toolkit that has now been sent to every UK University that runs a Midwifery course.

It aims to provide a checklist of considerations for midwifery educators when recruiting for, planning, delivering and assessing midwifery education. It offers suggestions for best practice and questions to reflect on one's own and an institutions' practices in its' recruitment processes, the content and delivery of the curriculum: how to create inclusive assessments and, as midwifery students spend as much as 40-50% of their course in clinical practice, it also offers recommendations how these clinical practice areas, as well as University settings, to create a welcoming community and a sense of belonging for students and staff to learn and work in.

It is hoped that by improving racial literacy and decolonising midwifery education it will lead to a greater understanding of the needs of women from all races, ethnicities, cultures and backgrounds.

# Decolonising Nursing and Midwifery: Our Journey So Far

Claire Stringer, Geoffrey Amoateng and Ntsoaki Mary Mosoeunyane
Buckinghamshire New University

Bede House

**Presentation**

Responding to unequal health outcomes, ranging from significantly higher perinatal mortality rates for black women to the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on minoritised ethnic groups, as well as to unequal staff and student experiences epitomised in pay and award gaps, BNU's School of Nursing and Midwifery has embarked on a process of decolonising its curricula. This includes the adoption of a decolonisation statement and pledge, something which is becoming increasingly common across HE as institutions seek to address the legacy of colonial cultural practices woven within existing systems. In the session, representatives from the teams will discuss specific initiatives in their respective areas, with the intention of sharing their learning with other practitioners. Recognising that the identification of morbidity and clinical deterioration is often based on changes in skin colour and that much of this knowledge is derived from the care of women with light skin tones, which can contribute to unequal health outcomes, the Midwifery team designed a curriculum to ensure Midwifery students are educated to assess skin changes in all skin tones with confidence using clinical judgement. The new Midwifery curriculum also includes assessments specifically focused on holistic care identifying cultural needs and adaptations; employing guest lecturers who identify as global majority ethnicity; and a pedagogy that is not Eurocentric and goes beyond traditional Western epistemologies. The Nursing team's decolonial initiatives were given impetus in 2020 by the pandemic and the global Black Lives Matter activism in response to the murder of George Floyd, which focussed attention on the lived experiences of racism and the need to create transformative change. The team will present a critical overview of their multifaceted interventions to reduce award gaps, which include redesigning module assessment strategies and fostering an inclusive culture and sense of belonging for staff and students.

# STREAM I - DECOLONIAL RESEARCH

## Re-imagining the international student experience: anti-racist perspectives

Sumeya Loonat, De Montfort University

Bede House

**Presentation**

This presentation provides an underpinning of Critical Race Theory and Post/Decolonial Theory as tools to highlight the intersectional experiences of international students. I discuss the influence of literature from these theories on the minoritised student experience and will analyse how the minoritised student is orientalised, for example, in terms of the way the international student is marked and defined.

## Aiming for Decolonial Research – how my reflections become the most insightful chapter

Melanie Welaratne, Nottingham Trent University

Bede House

**Presentation**

My recent Masters's dissertation research is titled *'Decolonising UK Higher Education and its Intersections with Global Learning'*. The study investigated the understanding, rationale and pedagogical point of view of staff within different UK HE institutions towards their efforts to decolonise education. It also examined if their efforts to decolonise education align with best practices in global learning.

My presentation will start with my aim to use decolonial research principles and the struggle to consider these alongside the need to produce robust and markable research. I had always expected my findings to be the most insightful part of my research, but it wasn't until I had reached the end of the process that I realised that my reflections chapter was more eye-opening. I will be sharing the feelings of frustration, joy, defeat and realisation throughout my experience of aiming to design, conduct and write decolonial research.

# An absence of racial equity is the presence of racism: Dismantling the 6 REP in UK education

Dr Chris ~~Jones~~, Durham University

Bede House

**Presentation**

The aim of this article is to explore the ways in which racial inequity in UK education affects resilient minority (ReM) - i.e., racially minoritised - students. Scholars argue racist policies simultaneously produce and normalise the lack of opportunities given to ReM students, shown within six key processes: (i) pre-university educational attainment, (ii) university application choices, (iii) university admissions process, (iv) the racialised student experience, (v) degree completion and achievement, and (vi) graduate career prospects. Each of these processes afford opportunity but are vulnerable to external factors (e.g., race/ethnicity and class), thus students' futures are ultimately constrained to uncontrollable – and unfair - aspects of their being. This is because racism manifests in both overt and subtle ways leading administrators to believe a colour-blind and meritocratic system is beneficial for students, in turn creating deficit narratives towards ReM students. Thus, the author has called these stages the six Racism in Education Processes (6 REP). Research has highlighted the impact of these processes, but few have amalgamated them altogether. Therefore, this paper provides a Critical Race Theory (CRT) analysis to critically examine the 6 REPs impact on ReM UK students, and the counter-racist initiatives currently in place for educational institutions to create an equitable racial climate. The conclusion illustrates institutions championing equity, diversity, inclusion, and love (EDIL) for all stakeholders, must prioritise counter-racist policies.

# STREAM J - SHARING PRACTICE IN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

## A departmental commitment to promoting inclusive work cultures

Dr Zoë Gallant, Dr Leda Kamenopoulou and Dr Zachary Walker
University College London

Bede House

**Presentation**

Our department is committed to raising awareness and changing culture and behaviour when it comes to race and racism. Over the past 2 years, we have been engaging in projects focused on promoting more inclusive work cultures and greater belonging in academia, through creating an environment where conversations about race and racism are supported and progressed. In this presentation, we will share some of our department's current projects related to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) that aim to decolonise higher education and to make it more inclusive of under-represented groups. Examples of the work that we will present include: 1) our Epistemic Justice Seminar Series, a free online series open to the public, that aims to challenge the various imbalances in knowledge production and sharing, in which speakers share their work on different areas, such as decolonising curriculum and assessment, establishing equitable research partnerships, and making scientific publishing more inclusive; and, 2) our EDI Journal Club, a series of monthly webinars for our staff and students, that aim to offer a safe space for open and honest reflection on a range of topics, including some nominated by students, such as for example increasing representation, race, social inequality, and gender. We will also talk about our wider practices and actions at the strategic level; about what we have achieved and why we think it is critical to our department's success. Whilst we acknowledge that there is still much work to be done, we look forward to sharing our experiences and coming together with others to collectively reflect on our decolonising journeys.

# Raising Awareness and Experiencing Culture through Collaborative Exploration of Understanding and Challenging Racism with Undergraduate Level 6 Students

Nikki Woods, University of Winchester

Bede House

**Presentation**

I am an Asian criminologist with a White name! I came to this institution and noticed how 'White' it is. How am I perceived and interpreted by my White students. I felt intimidated. Do they see my name and make an understanding, or a judgement which may change when I walk into the teaching room. I don't fit my name! Am I 'selling out' my 'culture' by not using my Sikh maiden name. Does this make a new guise when I enter the lecture or the seminar. The purpose of this presentation is to analyse the reconstructing of the meaning of racism and its facets for Racial Inequality in Higher Education: Raising Awareness and Experiencing Culture through Collaborative Exploration of Understanding and Challenging Racism with Undergraduate Students. Most of my teaching takes place in an undergraduate criminology degree, where the cohort of students tend to be mainly White. I am aware of my power position I inhabit. As their lecturer, I hold the position of 'institutional power' (Bondi, 2004) given to me by my institution to teach and assess my students. How was this power received in the classroom. This and my positionality warranted the need to decolonise knowledge and share it by reconstructing the meaning of racism through the shared practice of running a new Module titled, 'Identity, Equality and Crime' for Level 6 undergraduate students. To do this, the Module was designed to include an eclectic group of current topics related to different aspects of racism. It was fundamental to secure a safe environment where conversations of race and racism could be debated to develop a deeper understanding, empathy, and compassion of the 'processes' of experiencing and challenging racism (from the victim's and perpetrator's perspective). It was through this inclusive place and space I was able to secure fascinating and poignant raw, rich testimonies which I would like to share with you. In one evaluation it stated: "we would not have received this invaluable education without you sharing your journey as a person of colour in higher education." It is important to scaffold our learning as educators as the same for our students. Subsequently, I was nominated as a finalist for the Outstanding Lecturer Award 2023. It is the strong recognition of my work that gives me the passion to share this further and develop my teaching of race and racism through shared practice.

# Decolonising Travel Studies

Dr Natalya Din-Kariuki and Dr Guido van Meersbergen,
University of Warwick

Bede House

**Workshop**

The "Decolonising Travel Studies" project led by Natalya Din-Kariuki (English and Comparative Literary Studies) and Guido van Meersbergen (History) seeks to make visible and challenge the indebtedness of both academic and public histories of travel to Eurocentric notions rooted in the colonial past. The primacy long accorded both in formal education and popular narratives (e.g. in museum exhibitions, public commemorations, literature and film) to concepts such as geographic discovery, naval exploration, or scientific advance, bound up with notions of heroism and national pride, has cemented the centrality of the white male traveller with claims to being the first European to set foot in a place or describe it. This systematic privileging of certain forms of travel and its recording to the exclusion of others in the way travel history is commonly understood points towards the structural inequalities of race, gender, and class built into the knowledge we consume as much as the institutions that produce it. The proposed workshop will consist of two parts. The first will introduce the "Decolonising Travel Studies" project as a practical example of an attempt to bring decolonial thought to bear on research, teaching, and institutional culture, the latter referring to our work with a leading British publisher of travel accounts with its own history of colonial entanglement. The second part will encourage participant to identify and reflect on the role colonial travel and travel writing has played in the formation of disciplinary knowledge in different academic fields (e.g. geography, history, literature, anthropology, cartography, natural and earth sciences) as well as the ways in which the practice of travel continues to be shaped by structural inequalities today. The aim will be to expose the erasures enacted in traditional narratives of travel and imagine alternative histories viewed from a plurality of vantage points.

# STREAM K - SHARING PRACTICE IN COMPUTING

## What might a decolonised computing and IT curriculum look like?

Zoe Tompkins, Kate Feliciello and Amaninder Singh
The Open University

Bede House

**Workshop**

Decolonisation is a complex challenge for Higher Education Institutions and no less so for the discipline of computing and IT as there are many ways to frame and imagine what a decolonised technical curriculum would like look.  At The Open University in the School of Computing and Communications we have started to debate new ways of knowing and to explore how to re-focus the teaching of the subject through a large-scale mixed methods survey of students from within School.  17 modules were surveyed with a total of 394 responses (10% response rate).  The JISC online survey consisted of 12 quantitative questions using a five-point Likert scale and drawing on the Challenge Power and Diversity Represented constructs from Thomas and Quinlan's Culturally Sensitive Scales.  There were also 5 qualitative questions using free text.

How the session will be run
Introduction to the survey findings by sharing both qualitative thematic analysis outcomes and quantitative results based on SPSS analysis.

Small group work of addressing three questions:
1. What do you think it means to decolonise computing the computing curriculum?
2. How can we start?
3. What challenges do you foresee?

Short plenary to share group discussion and outcomes.

How the session will engage delegates
Delegates will have access to a selection of student survey responses as a prompt to their group discussion.

An educator resources pack sourced from OU modules and industry wide examples will also be available for critique.

For Question 1, proposed student definitions will be provided and the group will be asked to critically assess and decide which definitions, if any, are fit for purpose.

For Question 2, the group will be provided with internal OU and industry wide examples to critique in terms of their suitability as possible educator resources.  They will be asked to identify other actions and to consider these in terms of timeline and impact.

For Question 3, tutor and student recorded challenges will be shared and the group will be asked to decide what the biggest challenges are and why.
All delegates will be invited to join the network of computing educators in HE focused on developing and sharing thinking and practice in this area.

# Hands-on LLM with Academics: Where Do We Draw the Line on Productivity?

Dr Adebowale Owoseni and Dr Abiodun Egbetokun, De Montfort University

Bede House

**Presentation**

On June 21, 2023, we conducted a workshop in collaboration with the Centre for Academic Innovation and Teaching Excellence (CAITE) at DMU. Unlike previous discussions on the theoretical implications of Large Language Models (LLMs) for academics, this workshop focused on the practical application of ChatGPT (OpenAI, 2023) in teaching and learning. Rather than just considering ChatGPT from a student's perspective and how to ensure students do not game academic quality, we explored how academics can utilize it to enhance their own productivity and streamline administrative tasks associated with teaching and learning. During the workshop, participants engaged with ChatGPT and discovered that it is indeed possible to leverage the tool to reduce time spent on tasks such as creating rubrics, proofreading text, personalizing student feedback, and developing teaching and learning plans.

However, some important questions arise: where should we draw the line between productivity and potential intellectual dependence from an academic's perspective? Whose productivity is being enhanced, that of the LLM or the higher education (HE) professional? In light of ongoing debates around the potential bias associated with AI and the need for its decolonisation (Adams, 2021; Murphy and Largacha-Martínez, 2022), it is also crucial to discuss the ethical applications of AI in higher education teaching and research.

On this premise, we purpose a workshop for Reimagining Higher Education conference to engage a broader academic audience and present practical use cases for LLMs, sparking further conversation and reflection. The feedback gathered could help inform a larger policy framework within the university and beyond, addressing the acceptable use of LLMs for teaching and learning. By exploring these issues and seeking input from academics, we aim to develop guidelines that maximize the benefits of LLMs while ensuring their responsible and ethical integration into educational practices.