

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team**

Guide to Race Related Terminology

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# Document overview- Guide to Race Related Terminology

This is a summary of the Guide to Race Related Terminology document which has been developed by the Race Equality Action Group to promote a common vocabulary and a shared understanding of the terminology which may be used in relation to race and ethnicity.

In recognising the diversity of our staff and students, and to protect [freedom of speech](https://le.ac.uk/policies/codes-practice/freedom-speech) and [academic freedom](https://uniofleicester.sharepoint.com/sites/staff/information-for-managers/contracts/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2Fstaff%2Finformation%2Dfor%2Dmanagers%2Fcontracts%2FShared%20Documents%2FOrdinance%20on%20Academic%20Freedom%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2Fstaff%2Finformation%2Dfor%2Dmanagers%2Fcontracts%2FShared%20Documents), the University supports the use of a range of race related terminology, dependent on the context in which they are being used. Individuals should always remain mindful of the impact that any chosen term may have and should take action to raise their awareness of race equality more generally, such as completing the available [EDI, Unconscious Bias and Dignity and Respect training modules](https://uniofleicester.sharepoint.com/sites/staff/performance-appraisal/SitePages/mandatory-training.aspx?OR=Teams-HL&CT=1667815752714&clickparams=eyJBcHBOYW1lIjoiVGVhbXMtRGVza3RvcCIsIkFwcFZlcnNpb24iOiIyNy8yMjEwMjgwNzIwMCIsIkhhc0ZlZGVyYXRlZFVzZXIiOmZhbHNlfQ%3D%3D).

Ethnicity and race are sometimes used interchangeably and it is important to note the difference. The term race is often used in relation to overarching initiatives, activities and policies and is not used to refer to specific ethnic groups, for example, ‘race groups’ or ‘racial groups’ should be avoided. ‘Advancing race equality’ is often used in recognition of the problematic roots of the term race which is considered as a social construct rooted in the racial inequalities that were created to supporting colonialism and empire building. Ethnicity is a term which is used to identify the people or groups who have a shared history, culture, tradition and often a common language and who come from a common geographical region. In communicating about individuals and groups the University promotes the use of the term ethnicity rather than race as this is considered as a more relative and inclusive approach to identifying the different ethnic groups.

Whilst every effort should be made to refer to specific ethnic groups, where this not possible, or where a general term may be useful, the University will primarily use the term ‘minority ethnic[[1]](#footnote-2)’ when referring to groups other than white. The term “minority ethnic”, can be used in a wide range of contexts including for the purposes of data reporting to other organisations which use this term, when discussing race and ethnicity, in written communications about race and also as an alternative for Black Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME).

The University uses the term Black[[2]](#footnote-3) to refer to those who identify as being from an African, Caribbean or other Black background. The term Black[[3]](#footnote-4) should be capitalised in recognition of the continued structural and societal racism experienced by Black communities. Identifying a common vocabulary for use by the University is intended to create a shared understanding and accelerate our progress of work to eliminate racial inequalities and create inclusive spaces for all.

In some contexts, for example, for data collection required by external organisations who use the term BAME, the term BAME may be used by the University in its correspondence with that external body for consistency. If the term “BAME“ is used by the University in its correspondence, then there should be a note recognising it is a contested and limited term, and that the University recognises that the terms used to refer to racialised minority ethnic people who are disadvantaged by systemic racism may need to be pluralised, in a way which fits the context and the use of the term.

We recognise that introducing or coining a completely new term, or prohibiting the use of “BAME” completely may increase a nervousness and insecurity that already exists in areas across the University, around race-related language. Any new term will not have universal approval and may risk creating new debates about its acceptability. Therefore, using a range of terminology, and elaborating or modifying existing terms in a way which best fits the main purposes of their use – namely to recognise and celebrate diversity and to redress systemic and institutional racism is the agreed approach at this time.

We encourage all staff and students to familiarise themselves with this document.

# Purpose

This guidance intends to provide our staff and students with an overview of terms which may be used in writing about or discussing race and ethnicity. It is intended for use by all staff and students across the University and has been developed and approved by the Race Equality Action Group, which includes staff and student representation from key areas across the University.

The University recognises that terminology relating to race is rapidly evolving and that whilst there is not a universally supported term for referring to minority ethnic communities, the University recognises the importance of engaging with our staff and students to agree a common vocabulary when the communicating about race, such as the Race Equality Charter Mark, and to:

* Outline the University’s use of terms in various contexts.
* Develop a shared understanding around race.
* Promote awareness of terminology and the background to the use of terms.
* Facilitate on-going discussions related to race and ethnicity.
* Facilitate and progress an understanding, awareness and engagement towards advancing race equality.
* Support individuals to avoid misunderstandings through raising their awareness of key terms.
* Clarify what is being inferred by the use of certain terms.

Whilst discussions relating to terminology must remain under continuous review, in agreeing to these institutional common terms we endeavour to accelerate our efforts in moving beyond language to undertake action to address racial inequalities.

This document should be used as a guide and it is crucial that there is consideration to the context in which race related terminology may be used. It is important to recognise that groups or individuals will have preferences for the use of these terms to describe their own ethnic identity. It is always best to check or gain consensus to use any given terminology rather than assuming that it would be considered as acceptable.

Whilst the University will seek to review this document annually, any uncertainty should be clarified by contacting the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team on equalities@le.ac.uk. If you would like further resources to develop your understanding and awareness of race equality please visit the [Race Equality webpages](https://uniofleicester.sharepoint.com/sites/staff/equality-diversity/SitePages/RACE.aspx?OR=Teams-HL&CT=1667815873935&clickparams=eyJBcHBOYW1lIjoiVGVhbXMtRGVza3RvcCIsIkFwcFZlcnNpb24iOiIyNy8yMjEwMjgwNzIwMCIsIkhhc0ZlZGVyYXRlZFVzZXIiOmZhbHNlfQ%3D%3D).

# Agreed University Terminology: Summary

Whilst every effort should be made to refer to specific ethnic groups, where this not possible, or where a general term may be useful, the University will primarily use the term ‘minority ethnic[[4]](#footnote-5)’ when referring to groups other than white. The University uses the term Black[[5]](#footnote-6) to refer to those who identify as being from an African, Caribbean or other Black background. The term Black[[6]](#footnote-7) will be capitalised in recognition of the continued structural and societal racism experienced by Black communities.

As part of our commitments towards creating an equitable space for all, and to avoid being drawn into “culture wars”; when referring to people or groups from a minority ethnic background, the University supports the use of a range of terminology in place of a singular term, based on the context of use. In some contexts, for example, for data collection required by external organisations who use the term BAME, the term BAME may be used by the University in its correspondence with that external body for consistency. The use of the term “minority ethnic”, can be used for the purposes of data reporting to other organisations which use this term, and also as an alternative for “BAME” for organisational/group monikers where those groups prefer “Minority Ethnic” to be used (notably the University’s Staff BAME Forum). If the term “BAME“ is used by the University in its correspondence, then there should be a note recognising it is a contested and limited term, and that the University recognises that the terms used to refer to racialised non-White people who are disadvantaged by systemic racism may need to be pluralised, in a way which fits the context and the use of the term.

Our staff BAME Forum, they recommended the continued use of the term “BAME” to mean “Black, Asian and *Majority* Ethnic”. This is with the caveat of ensuring that any ensuing communications and activity always focusses on intersectionality, as well as on the specific issues and cultural events that the different groups represented within the term have.

We recognise that introducing or coining a completely new term, or prohibiting the use of “BAME” completely may increase a nervousness and insecurity that already exists in areas across the University, around race-related language. Any new term will not have universal approval and may risk creating new debates about its acceptability. Therefore, using a range of terminology, and elaborating or modifying existing terms in a way which best fits the main purposes of their use – namely to recognise and celebrate diversity and to redress systemic and institutional racism is the agreed approach at this time.

We encourage all staff and students to familiarise themselves with this document.

***Note- wherever possible refer to specific ethnic groups.***

| **Term** | **When** |
| --- | --- |
| minority ethnic | Whilst we encourage referencing specific ethnic groups, where this is not possible the term minority ethnic will be used when referring to all ethnic groups other than white\*. |
| BAME | For consistency, may be used by the University in its correspondence with external bodies regarding data (e.g. Race Equality Charter Mark) |
| Black/Black ethnic background | Used when referring to anyone who is from an African, Caribbean or other Black background. |
| Asian/ Asian ethnic background | Used when referring to anyone who is from a Bangladeshi, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, Any other Asian background. Whilst we encourage reference to specific ethnic groups, where the more general term Asian is being used, it may be helpful to distinguish whether this is related to those from South Asian or East Asian backgrounds (where applicable). |
| mixed ethnic background | Used when referring to anyone who is from an Asian and white, Black African and white, Black Caribbean and white, any other mixed background. |
| white/white ethnic background | Used when referring to anyone who is from a white British or white other\*\* background. |

# Background

Terminology relating to race and ethnicity is constantly evolving and there are a number of terms in use. The use of these terms depends on the context in which they are being used, who is using the term, why they are being used and how the decision to use those terms have been agreed. There have been a number of publications, campaigns and movements nationally and internationally which have introduced and supported the use of new or alternative language around race. Even though there is an increasing spotlight and expectation on Universities to accelerate their work towards race equality there is no sector specific or societally supported race related terminology. This document therefore intends to outline the University’s current position regarding race related terminology; and to raise awareness, understanding and confidence amongst our staff and students to enable them to use race related terminology whilst being respectful and mindful of alternative terms and without the fear of causing offense.

In developing this document, we have engaged and consulted with staff and student representatives who are members of our Race Equality Action Group to ensure that our terminology is understood and relevant to our students and staff body.

This document aims to support discussions relating to ethnicity[[7]](#footnote-8), race[[8]](#footnote-9) and advancing equality in these areas. This includes recognising that race is a social construct related to grouping people by their shared physical characteristics, whereas ethnicity refers to grouping people based on a number of factors including shared culture, language and geographical region.

Recognising that the more these concepts are discussed, the more comfortable people will become in those discussions; the development of this guidance has also considered the relationship of the University’s commitment to protecting [freedom of speech](https://le.ac.uk/policies/codes-practice/freedom-speech) with promoting a culture of [respect and dignity](https://le.ac.uk/about/making-a-difference/equality/dignity-and-respect), where consideration is given to the impact terms may have in causing offense.

# Current landscape

Global events and reports have prompted individuals, organisations and countries to take a much more pro-active approach to addressing racism and advancing race equality. These include events such as the killing of George Floyd in May 2020 and the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on minority ethnic communities. Research into the extent of racial harassment in higher education and the increasing expectation placed on Universities by funding bodies to demonstrate progress toward race equality has accelerated the urgency of this work. Sector data which evidences significant disproportionalities of experiences and outcomes for students based on ethnicity, such as of the awarding gap and satisfaction, provides a clear driver to undertake action to address these disproportionalities.

In March 2021, the [Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/974507/20210331_-_CRED_Report_-_FINAL_-_Web_Accessible.pdf) recommended that the government stop using the term ‘BAME’. This was supported by research commissioned by the Race Disparity Unit, which found that people from ethnic minorities were 3 times more likely to agree than disagree that the term ‘BAME’ was unhelpful.

## 4.1 Black Lives Matter

The University stands in solidarity with our Black staff and students and is taking pro-active steps to stamp out racism and racial injustice through working with our Black students and staff to develop our approaches to ensuring inclusivity in everything we do. The distinct experiences of Black staff and students are often overlooked or referenced as part of the collective experiences of minority ethnic groups. The University recognises that the experiences of our Black staff and students are at times distinct from other minority ethnic groups and this calls for the University to take a much more nuanced and pro-active approach to improving experiences for our Black community. More information on how the University’s response to Black Lives Matter can be found [here](https://uniofleicester.sharepoint.com/sites/staff/equality-diversity/SitePages/Black-Lives-Matter---Support-and-Resources.aspx).

# Race related terms and definitions

*Note: whilst familiarising yourself with the following terms, please be mindful that wherever possible umbrella terms should be avoided to minimise the risk of excluding, limiting or generalising the ethnicity of people or groups.*

## 5.1 Anti-racism

Anti-racism is an active commitment to working against racial injustice and discrimination. It involves making conscious and thoughtful decisions regarding your own behaviours and how they can/might negatively influence and impact your own stereotypes, biases and discriminatory actions.

You do not have to be free of racism or bias to be anti-racist. Part of the role as an anti-racist person is self-reflection and self-improvement.

Whilst everyone has a responsibility to advance equality and stand up to racism, the University also supports appointed staff Diversity Champions who have a specific remit to pro-actively support the University and our staff and students to advance race equality. The University is committed to develop and implement anti-racist policies, practices and environments for all of its staff and students.

## 5.2 BAME and BME

BAME is an acronym for Black, Asian and minority ethnic whilst BME stands for Black minority ethnic. The term BAME is widely used in reporting and using data across many sectors including government, education and media. Within the Higher Education sector it is also used for statutory returns and national charters such as the Higher Education Statistics Agency and the Race Equality Charter Mark.

Debates in the UK about the appropriateness of using the term ‘BAME’ have increased. In 2021, the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities found that people from ethnic minorities were three times more likely to agree than disagree that the term ‘BAME’ was unhelpful. [UK government](https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/style-guide/writing-about-ethnicity#bame-and-bme) have called to stop the use of the term BAME.

A general argument against its use is that it attempts to include all non-White groups who have been disadvantaged by systemic and institutional racism in the UK, without sufficiently recognising the differences between these groups (namely the distinct issues that correspond to the different ways non-White people are racialised in the UK). For example, using the word Black in the BAME acronym to categories all Black people into one box may homogenise the different challenges faced by Black people who have been born and/or raised in the UK, with Black people who have migrated to the UK from across the globe.

Both terms have their limitations, including:

* They imply that BME/BAME individuals are a homogeneous group.
* BME/BAME was not proposed and is not universally accepted by those who are assumed to fall within it.
* It others those who do not identify as white and re-enforces white as the norm.
* Many individuals from minority ethnic groups do not identify themselves as BAME.
* Both BME and BAME single out specific ethnic groups, this can be divisive and exclusionary.
* They can be perceived as convenient labels that are placed on minority ethnic groups of people, rather than identities with which people have chosen to identify.
* They ignore the fact that Black, Asian and other visible minority ethnic groups in the UK are actually part of a global majority of non-white people.
* They have a tendency to be perceived as referring to non-white people, which does not consider [white minority ethnic groups](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/your-questions/should-we-report-on-white-minority-ethnic-groups).

The University recognises the limitations in using these terms and intends only use the term BAME (as the more inclusive of the two) only for the purposes of ensuring consistency when working with external organisations who use this term. The University intends to limit the use of the term BAME for data analysis and benchmarking, and only when the data refers to aggregated ethnic groups such as Asian, Black or Mixed.

The staff BAME Forum are supporting the continued use of the term “BAME” to mean Black, Asian and *Majority* Ethnic. This is with the caveat of ensuring that any ensuing communications and activity always focusses on intersectionality, as well as on the specific issues and cultural events that the different groups represented within the term have.

When using the term BAME, the University refers to all ethnic groups other than white. If the term “BAME“ is used, then there should be a note recognising it is a contested and limited term.

**To avoid generalisations and/or homogenising of experiences of specific groups, wherever possible considerations and references should be made to specific ethnic groups.**

## 5.3 Ethnic

Bhavnani et al. (2005, p. 213) point out that it is common in language used in areas such as the media, for 'ethnic' to be synonymous with not-white or not-western, for example with 'ethnic clothes' or 'ethnic restaurants'. This is not the case and it is important to remember that everyone has an ethnicity and white British is an ethnic group.

Furthermore, there are many different white ethnic groups, and their experiences of higher education can differ.

Both staff and students may identify with white minority ethnic groups, for example, Jewish, Arab, Gypsy/Roma/Traveller, Irish, other European. In recognising this the University is working to develop our systems to support the integration of a ‘white other’ option of disclosure for staff and already offer this for students.

## 5.4 Ethnically Diverse

The use of this term to refer to minority ethnic groups is incorrect because ethnically diverse refers to the ethnic diversity of any given population which would also include white groups and individuals. Stating that the University is ethnically diverse doesn’t mean the same as stating the University has a high representation of minority ethnic communities. A frequent error is when individuals are referred to as ethnically diverse.

## 5.5 Ethnicity, Ethnic Origin, Ethnic Background

[Universities Scotland](http://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/raceequalitytoolkit/terminology.htm) refer to a 1983 House of Lords’ decision that suggests an ethnic group would have the following features:

* a long shared history of which the group is conscious as distinguishing it from other groups and the memory of which it keeps alive
* a cultural tradition of its own including family and social manners, often but not necessarily associated with religious observance
* a common, however distant, geographical origin
* a common language and literature

When referring to a person or groups ethnic background, the University promotes the use of the term ethnicity rather than race as this is considered as a more relative approach to identifying the different ethnic groups.

## 5.6 Ethnicity and Nationality

There are some key considerations relating to the intersectionality of ethnicity and nationality:

* Whilst it is recognised that some ethnic groups are also nationalities such as Pakistani, Chinese and Bangladeshi and are naturally capitalised due to this reason, it is important to ensure other minority ethnic groups are capitalised to ensure the same status is given, this includes Black.
* Whilst the groups white and Black infer colour, Black is capitalised to ensure that it is given the same status as other minority ethnic groups as well as the reasons given in section 4.1.
* The term minority ethnic is largely only relevant in a UK and European context, where white communities represent the largest ethnic group. Therefore many international staff and students may not recognise or identify as minority ethnic because in their country or continent of origin they are the majority ethnic group.
* **When the term ethnic minority is used within the University it includes staff and students from both UK and non-UK background unless otherwise stated.**
* [Sector specific data analysis](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/guidance/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/using-data-and-evidence/statistics-reports) into the varying experiences of individuals based on the intersection of their ethnicity and nationality have demonstrated that nationality has a significant impact on the experiences and outcomes for minority ethnic staff and students. It is therefore important that when differential outcomes and experiences based on nationality and ethnicity are identified that explicit reference is made to distinguish this. For example- UK or Non-UK minority ethnic groups.
* To recognise the distinct experiences of those who identify as white other, the University is currently undergoing consultation with key stakeholders regarding the inclusion of white other as a minority ethnic group. Where white other is included as a minority ethnic group this should be explicitly referenced.

The nationality of those from the same ethnic background contributes to the varying experiences they may have. We therefore encourage that a distinction between UK and non-UK status is made when using the term BAME and minority ethnic. We recognise that this is not always possible due to data limitations or confidentiality, therefore unless otherwise stated, reference to BAME or minority ethnic groups refers to both national and international students and staff.

**To avoid generalisations and/or homogenising of experiences of specific groups, particularly in relation to nationality and ethnic, wherever possible considerations and references should be made to specific ethnic groups and UK or non-UK.**

## 5.7 Global Majority

The term global majority is increasingly being used to refer to those from non-white ethnic communities because it is considered a more positive affirmation of the majority representation of these groups in a global context. This term may be considered as better understood and supported by international staff and students who are not a minority ethnic group in their country or continent of origin. The term is not considered helpful in progressing work towards race equality within a UK higher education context because it does not distinguish the varying experiences of staff and students based on the intersection of their nationality and ethnicity, amongst other factors such as socio-economic status.

## 5.8 Intersectionality

The concept of Intersectionality proposed Professor Kimberley Crenshaw recognises that outcomes for individuals are the result of more than one dimension of their identity. A person may face multiple disadvantages or advantages because of the coincidence of two or more of their characteristics. In a critical article Professor Peter Hopkins observes:

Intersectionality is an approach ……. that focuses upon mutually constitutive forms of social oppression rather than on single axes of difference. Intersectionality is not only about multiple identities but is about relationality, social context, power relations, complexity, social justice and inequalities

(Hopkins, 2019)

## 5.9 Institutional Racism

Institutional racism is the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. Such collective failure is detected in processes, attitudes and behaviours which amount to discrimination.

For example, the MacPherson report in 1999, an enquiry into the police's handling of the Stephen Lawrence murder in London, found that the police's policies (as well as some of its officers) disproportionally discriminated against Black communities.

Thus, institutional racism proposes that racial inequalities are also a product of social thought and power relations that are deeply entrenched within the fabric of society globally, its structures and institutions'

## 5.10 Minority Ethnic

Minority ethnic is considered a more positive term compared with ethnic minority because the term 'ethnic minority' places the emphasis on ethnicity as the main issue. There can be a tendency in our media and language to see 'ethnic' as synonymous with not-white and so the term could be perceived as implying the issue is with people being not-white, or non-white people being the issue.

As a consequence, the term tends to be reversed to refer to minority ethnic groups to highlight the fact that everyone has an ethnicity and the issues being referred to relate to minority groups in a UK context and the discrimination and barriers that they face.

However, that in itself can be an issue, as referring to people as being from a minority group carries its own additional connotations and can problematise those groups. Particularly when referring to international staff and students who may be the majority ethnic group within their country or region of origin.

Whilst recognising the limitations of the term minority ethnic, the University considers this as the most appropriate term as it stands. The use of the term within the University will refer to all ethnic groups other than white[[9]](#footnote-10). This position will remain under open review until a more supported and relative term is identified.

## 5.11 People of colour (POC) and Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC)

The terms People of Colour and Black, Indigenous and People of Colour are increasingly used as an alternative to minority ethnic and originated from the United States. The terms move away from the use of *minority* and benefit from the ability to self-define and be part of an empowered collective. The terms are more popular amongst student communities and often used when addressing minority ethnic communities internationally.

However, these terms still potentially present ‘people of colour’ as against the white population, which becomes inadvertently homogenous. Historically the use may be seen to enforce the Black/white divide. The terms also fails to recognise groups such as white other who may also classify elements of their identities similar to POC.

## 5.12 Race

 ‘Race’ is understood as a social construct:

“Its changing manifestations reflect ideological attempts to legitimate domination in different social and historical contexts. Racism is therefore not about objective measurable physical and social characteristics, but about relationships of domination and subordination.”

(Bhavnani, Mirza and Meetoo. 2005)

The concept of race is rooted in colonisation and empire building, closely linked to the justification of differential treatment of human beings, for example through slavery.

Despite there being no biological merit in the concept of race, racism is still prevalent in UK society, and racial discourses persist. Character traits are still very much linked to racial groups and seen as being biologically and genetically inherent, without recourse to cultural and geographical explanations.

Section 9 of the Equality Act states that race includes:

1. Colour
2. Nationality
3. Ethnic or national origins
4. Caste

It defines race as being a protected characteristic which is:

1. A reference to a person who has a particular protected characteristic is a reference to a person of a particular racial group;
2. A reference to persons who share a protected characteristic is a reference to persons of the same racial group.
3. A racial group is a group of persons defined by reference to race; and a reference to a person's racial group is a reference to a racial group into which the person falls.
4. The fact that a racial group comprises two or more distinct racial groups does not prevent it from constituting a particular racial group.

Whilst there are clear limitations with the origins and use of the term, it is a term which is widely used when talking about race equality. The term race is used in equalities legislation and national charters which seek to address inequalities related to ethnicity (see definition of ethnicity below).

The term is often used in relation to overarching initiatives, activities and policies and is not used to refer to specific ethnic groups, for example, ‘race groups’ or ‘racial groups’ should be avoided. Advancing race equality is often used in recognition of the problematic roots of the terms race and the continued fight to eliminate the inequality which exist as a result of such concepts.

## 5.13 Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity are often used interchangeably, largely due to the use of the term race in law and policy and the use of ethnicity to identify individuals’ identities. The use of the term ‘race’ within an institutional context does not predicate this but it is useful to be clear about the difference. Race is a socially constructed term without biological merit that has historically been used to categorise different groups of people based on perceived physical differences.

**Race** refers to a person's physical characteristics, such as bone structure and skin, hair, or eye colour. **Ethnicity**, however, refers to cultural factors, including nationality, regional culture, ancestry and language.

An example of race is brown, white, or black (all from various parts of the world), while an example of ethnicity is Asian Indian or Black African. Your race is often determined by how you look while your ethnicity is determined by the social and cultural groups you belong to. You can have more than one ethnicity but you are said to have one race, even if it's "mixed race".

The University recognises that classifying groups and individuals by ‘race’ can exacerbate racism and related inequalities. Wherever possible, the University will seek to identify individuals and groups by their ethnic background. The term ‘race’ will only be used when referring to our commitment and action to overcome race-based inequalities. The University recognises a person’s right to self-identification of their ethnicity and race, which enables individuals the opportunity to reflect their unique experiences and outcomes to their identified ethnic group.

## 5.14 Racial harassment

All members of the University community are expected to behave with respect and courtesy at all times. This demonstrates due regard for the feelings and rights of others and in turn creates an environment where dignity can be preserved and enhanced.

Racial harassment is unacceptable. It violates a person or group’s dignity and creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment based on actual or perceived race or ethnicity. The University’s [Dignity and Respect framework](https://uniofleicester.sharepoint.com/sites/staff/equality-diversity/SitePages/Dignity%20and%20Respect%20at%20Leicester.aspx) outlines the University’s commitment and approach to tackling racial harassment. This includes commitment to an on-going anti-harassment campaign which seeks to raise awareness, educate and support the University community.

## 5.15 Racialised Minorities

Racialised minorities is a term which draws attention to the racialisation of people of colour and serves to highlight the discursive power of whiteness. As such the term is a critique of whiteness and therefore a form of resistance.

## 5.16 Racism

Racism is the belief or ideology that ‘races’ have distinctive characteristics which gives some superiority over others. Racism can manifest in a number of ways and is not always overt. Whilst racist behaviours and incidents are usually recognised as direct and indirect discrimination and harassment, there is an increasing body of work to better understand racism existing as an entrenched systemic reality. Leading academics in this area propose that simply linking racism to individual acts of prejudices and discrimination fail to recognise that these acts are facilitated by a complex, multi layered and intersectional existence of systemic racism which are present in institutions across society.

Systemic racism is defined as a set of interconnected policies that combine to produce differential outcomes. As a concept, systemic racism refers to various policies, practices, and social norms that serve to unfairly advantage one group, while unfairly disadvantaging another group (Jones, 2001).

Systemic racism is increasingly recognised to be the result of a culture of white supremacy, which is a construct that can be evidenced as far back as colonisation that was based on race related power dynamics that benefit those who are white at the detriment of those from minority ethnic backgrounds.

A culture of white supremacy upholds processes, systems and practises that benefit those from a white background at the detriment of those from a minority ethnic background. It is a culture in which those within the institution (white and minority ethnic) display attitudes and behaviours which seek to maintain the status and power as outcomes of systemic racism, through considering norms and standards which have a detrimental impact on those from a minority ethnic background as acceptable.

*“White supremacy culture is inextricably linked to all the other oppressions - capitalism, sexism, class and gender oppression, ableism, ageism, Christian hegemony - these and more are all interconnected and intersected and stirred together in a toxic brew that is reflected in our devastation of the air and water and land and living beings we have and are destroying and disregarding in the name of profit and power. This brew is a cancer, a dis-ease, an addiction, an infliction and it infects everything with and without our awareness. The miracle is that we have survived as well as we have, the miracle is our ancestors who have fought to remember who we really are, the miracle is the earth and wind and water that restores itself in soft and fierce determination to keep us all whole.

And we are all impacted. And we are all impacted uniquely. And we are all impacted collectively. And we are all impacted differently.”*

Okun.T (www.whitesupremacy culture.info)

This construct of white supremacy is far removed to white extremist racist groups to which it is sometimes linked, and is better understood to recognise the historical roots of intended racial divisions that were created through all aspects of society in order to maintain power and privilege for white communities. Therefore systemic racism is not a new construct however its manifestation has evolved and is better recognised thanks to the on-going advocacy and challenge to the existence of systemic racism.

The manifestations and constructs of racism are multi-faceted and nuanced. To develop a culture of anti-racism we are all need to be able to recognise and challenge racism. To do this we need to develop a level of understanding and awareness of constructs which inform racism, such as white privilege, whiteness, white supremacy, systemic racism, intersectionality, white fragility. To begin with, it is recommended that you ensure that you have completed the [online EDI training modules](https://uniofleicester.sharepoint.com/sites/staff/equality-diversity/SitePages/EDI-Events-%26-Training.aspx). To extend your knowledge we recommend that you take the time to undertake [further reading](https://uniofleicester.sharepoint.com/sites/staff/equality-diversity/SitePages/RACE.aspx#title3) relating to construct of racism.

The University accepts that racism is an everyday facet of UK society and that racial inequalities manifest themselves in everyday situations, processes and behaviours, which also exist at our University. The University is committed to dismantling racial inequities to promote a culture of anti-racism. The University has a zero tolerance policy relating to any incidents of racism, and will take swift and firm action regarding any all race related incidents.

## 5.17 Visible Minority

The term visible minority relates to the shared experiences that minority ethnic groups face oppose to the white majority. The term may be seen as problematic because it relates to individuals and groups who have a ‘visible ethnicity’ which can be seen such as their skin colour. This also excludes people from minority ethnic backgrounds who appear to be from the white majority.

## 5.18 White Privilege

The term White Privilege is used to describe the societal privileges that benefit people identified as white beyond what is commonly experienced by non-white people under the same social, political, or economic circumstances. White privilege is a key concept within Critical Race Theory, which proposes that white privilege operates across all levels and areas of society. These privileges favour those who identify as white with better outcomes and experiences over those who do not identify or are not identified as white. The University is committed to raising awareness of white privilege and the impact that this has on the experiences and success outcomes of minority ethnic staff and students.

# Guidance on using terminology

## 6.1 Use of the term Black

The term Black is often used to refer to all minority ethnic communities or African, Arab, Asian and Caribbean communities. This is often to demonstrate solidarity to the shared historical and contemporary experiences of racism. The use of the term Black in that context is often known as ‘politically Black’. The University has not adopted this definition, and uses the term Black to refer to anyone who is from an African, Caribbean or other Black background.

To recognise the shared sense of history, identity and community among people who identify as Black and as a recognition to the continued structural and societal racism experienced by Black communities, the University will capitalise the use of Black when referring to our Black communities.

## 6.2 Use of the term Caucasian

The term Caucasian has historically been used to refer to a white person from North Africa, Europe and western Asia. The use of the term Caucasian to refer to a white person is considered inappropriate as it was created on the basis of racist classifications of human races based on their features and skin colour. In 1785, Christoph Meiners, a German philosopher divided humans into two groups; Caucasian, which is referred to as “white-skinned and beautiful”, and Mongolians, which he referred to as “dark-skinned and ugly”. Meiners used these physical and racist classification of humans to define their superiority, with those having white skin as superior.

In 1795, Johann Blumenbach a German Anthropologist extended Meiners classifications of superiority based on physical characteristics by differentiating five human races which he also stratified by perceived beauty and societal status; Caucasian, Mongolian, Malayan, American and Ethiopian. Blumenbach’s considered his definition of the Caucasian “variety” to be “God’s original creation” and referred to humans who had white-skin, rose cheeks and narrow noses.

Eugenicists in the 1920s further divided the Caucasian group into sub-races; Nordic, Alpine, Mediterranean, and Semitic. The term Caucasian is inherently imprecise and inaccurate, as it encompasses a huge breadth of possible genetics ancestry and cultural influences which are deemed to be rooted in upholding racist societal ideologies. The University strongly discourages the use of the term Caucasian to refer to people from a white ethnic background.

## 6.3 Referring to specific ethnic groups

When referring to specific ethnic groups such as ‘people from a Black Caribbean background’, or, ‘the Black ethnic group’ or ‘those who identify as Asian’, are all acceptable phrases. ‘Blacks’ ‘coloured’ ‘whites’ are not. It is preferable to avoid using the term people, for example ‘Black people or White people’ as this use is likely to be based on biased views relating to groups.

Similarly ‘people from a white British background’, ‘the white ethnic group’ and ‘those who identify as white’, are all acceptable.

‘Mixed people’ or ‘mixed race people’ and ‘half caste’ are not acceptable. Instead ‘people with/from a mixed ethnic background’ or ‘people who identify as being from a mixed ethnic background’, should be used.

As language relating to race, ethnicity and nationality are often used interchangeably, the geographical region of groups may be used to identify their ethnicity. This is problematic in the context of race and ethnicity because geographical regions are home to different ethnic groups.

## 6.4 Irish Travellers

The Irish Traveller community are a recognised ethnic group under the Equality legislation. Although Irish Travellers originate from Ireland, their identity is considered independent of the identity and experiences of the general Irish community. The option to declare ethnicity as Irish Traveller is usually within the ‘white other’ category. In recognising the limitations of this the University is working to develop our systems to support the integration of a ‘white other’ option of disclosure for staff and already offer this for students.

## 6.5 Gypsy or Traveller

The category Gypsy or Traveller are used to describe people from different ethnic backgrounds who may have a shared lived experience in relation to their ethnicity and their nomadic way of life. For example a person who identifies as a Roma Gypsy may have shared lived experiences as someone who identifies as an Irish Travellers although the ethnic groups are distinct. The option to declare ethnicity as Gypsy or Traveller is usually within the ‘white other’ category. In recognising the limitations of this the University is working to develop our systems to support the integration of a ‘white other’ option of disclosure for staff and already offer this for students.

## 6.6 Racial slurs, derogatory racial language and racially charged language

Racial slurs, derogatory racial language and racially charged language in all forms and spaces are unacceptable, irrespective of the intended use. The University will take immediate action in the event of such language being observed or reported.

By developing this document the University recognises the importance of the use of language in facilitating discussions about race, ethnicity and racism. Whilst we encourage all staff and students to be pro-active in engaging discussions to advance race equality, it is important that the language we choose to engage in these discussions is reflective and acknowledges the lived experiences of our minority ethnic communities.

The use of racial slurs, derogatory racial language and racially charged language has significant negative impacts for all those involved, particularly minority ethnic staff and students. The University is committed to creating an environment which is free of hostility and where dignity and respect can be preserved and enhanced.

We discourage all staff and students from using language which involves racial slurs, including instances where the racial slur may be used to quote or reference a text or discussion.

## 6.7 Good practice

This section is intended to provide some examples of good practice when engaging in discussions or actions relating to race and ethnicity.

1. Consider which racial or ethnic groups you're talking about and ensure that the terms you're using accurately reflect them.
2. Avoid using umbrella terms like BAME or BME unnecessarily and remember they do not refer to a singular homogenous ethnic group. We encourage the use of specific ethnic groups and the use of the term BAME only for data reporting purposes..
3. Avoid using BAME when other terms like race or ethnicity may be more appropriate, for example: avoid saying ‘BAME inclusion’ when you can say ‘inclusion of minority ethnic’.
4. Avoid using collective terms such as BAME or Asian when talking to someone from a specific minority ethnic background about their own experiences, for example, do not say, ‘As a BAME or Asian person you…’. Instead seek confirmation from the person regarding what ethnicity they identify with. Never assume someone’s ethnic background.
5. Consider how reference to groups of people from the same ethnic background are referenced. For example instead of Black people use Black communities, Black ethnic background, Black ethnic groups, or those who identify as Black.
6. Always explain acronyms in full in any writing, particularly at first use, and avoid pronouncing or writing as words, for example, BAME.
7. Seek more detailed data and insights wherever possible so you can better recognise, understand and reflect the experiences of different minority ethnic groups.
8. Accept and acknowledge that ethnicity is an integral part of a person’s identity and treat it as such; avoid describing a person’s identity as BAME.
9. Think carefully about whether it's relevant to refer to someone’s racial or ethnic identity, for example, news stories sometimes refer to an individual’s minority ethnic background when it's not relevant and they would not do so if speaking about a white person.
10. Respect people’s preferences and allow options to self-describe and self-identify.
11. In the right context and when ethnicity is relevant, it can be ok to clarify how people describe their identity, but first, question why you need to know and avoid making comments such as “where are you from?” or “You speak English really well”.
12. Continue to educate yourself, listen and learn as language continually evolves.
13. If you use language which is inappropriate, apologise and immediately seek to rectify any consequences of this and make a note to learn from this experience. In some cases this may not be appropriate or adequate and you may need to seek support and advice. Refer to the [Dignity and Respect](https://uniofleicester.sharepoint.com/sites/staff/equality-diversity/SitePages/Dignity%20and%20Respect%20at%20Leicester.aspx) guidance related to racial harassment for more examples and information on the use of language.

# Ethnicity categories for staff

The University uses the following definitions for the purposes of data provision and analysis. Whilst we recognise the limitations in using these terms they are in accordance with the Census, HESA, Advance HE and national benchmarks.

The University uses two levels of ethnic categorisation- major and minor categories. The major categories include all minor categories within that ethnic group. Where minor categories are referenced specifically, this information is restricted to the minor ethnic group.

The University promotes self- declaration for ethnicity to facilitate the individual’s choice to identify in the ethnic group which reflects their ethnicity.

## Asian or Asian British (major category)

Includes the minor ethnic categories of Bangladeshi, Chinese, Indian, Pakistani, any other Asian background. Where the term **Asian** is used this includes all the above minor categories.

## Black or Black British (major category)

Includes the minor ethnic categories of African, Caribbean, any other Black background. Where the term **Black** is used this includes all the above minor categories.

## Mixed (major category)

Includes the minor ethnic categories of Asian and White, Black African and White, Black Caribbean and White, any other mixed background. Where the term **Mixed** is used this includes all the above minor categories.

## Other Ethnic Group (major category)

Includes the minor ethnic categories of Arab, any other background. Where the term **Other Ethnic Group** is used this includes all the above minor categories.

## Prefer not to say

This refers to individuals who do not wish to disclose their ethnic background. The University respects an individual’s choice to prefer not to disclose their ethnicity. The University recognises the limitations of the options for disclosing ethnicity and will work closely with staff and students to develop and refine these options to be representatives of our student and staff body.

## Not declared

This refers to individuals for which the University does not currently hold any information relating to ethnicity.

## White or White British (major category)

Includes the minor categories of white, any other white background, Gypsy or Traveller. Where the term ‘white’is used this includes all the minor categories referred to above.

# Ethnicity categories for students

The University uses the following definitions for the purposes of data provision and analysis. Whilst we recognise the limitations in using these terms they are in accordance with the Census, HESA, Advance HE and national benchmarks.

The University uses two levels of ethnic categorisation- major and minor categories. The major categories include all minor categories within that ethnic group. Where minor categories are referenced specifically, this information is restricted to the minor ethnic group.

The University promotes self- declaration for ethnicity to facilitate the individual’s choice to identify in the ethnic group which reflects their ethnicity.

## Asian or Asian British (major category)

Includes the minor ethnic categories of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, any other Asian background. Where the term **Asian** is used this includes all the above minor categories.

## Black or Black British (major category)

Includes the minor ethnic categories of African, Caribbean, any other Black background. Where the term **Black** is used this includes all the above minor categories.

## Mixed (major category)

Includes the minor ethnic categories of White and Black Caribbean, White and Black African, White and Asian, any other mixed background. Where the term **Mixed** is used this includes all the above minor categories.

## Other (major category)

Includes the minor ethnic categories of Arab, any other background. Where the term **Other ethnic Group** is used this includes all the above minor categories.

## Information refused

This refers to individuals who do not wish to disclose their ethnic background. The University respects an individual’s choice to prefer not to disclose their ethnicity. The University recognises the limitations of the options for disclosing ethnicity and will work closely with staff and students to develop and refine these options to be representatives of our student and staff body.

## Not known

This refers to individuals for which the University does not currently hold any information relating to ethnicity.

## White (major category)

Includes the minor categories of White, White – Scottish, Irish Traveller, Gypsy or Traveller, any other White background. Where the term ‘white’is used this includes all the minor categories referred to above. To recognise and support our understanding of the varying experiences based on the intersectionality of ethnicity and nationality, the University is undergoing consultation with key stakeholders regarding the inclusion of white other as a minority ethnic group. Whilst consultation in underway, wherever white other is included within minority ethnic, there should be explicit reference to this.

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# Additional Reading & Further Resources:

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1. See 5.10 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. See 6.1 and 7.2 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. See 6.1 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. See 5.10 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. See 6.1 and 7.2 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. See 6.1 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. See 5.5 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. See 5.12

\*/\*\*- the University is undergoing consultation with key stakeholders regarding the inclusion of white other as a minority ethnic group. Where white other is included as a minority ethnic group this should be explicitly referenced. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. The University is undergoing consultation with key stakeholders regarding the recognition and inclusion of white other as a minority ethnic group. Where white other is included as a minority ethnic group this should be explicitly referenced. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)