

Research Report No.130

# Racial harassment inquiry: survey of universities

October 2019

IFF Research



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# Acknowledgements

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## Executive summary

This report presents the findings from a survey of racial harassment of students and staff in publicly funded Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in England, Scotland and Wales. IFF Research administered the survey on our behalf. The purpose of the survey was to explore how effectively HEIs are responding to the issue of racial harassment.

The survey formed part of our inquiry into racial harassment in British universities, which included a call for evidence from staff and students. The inquiry looked at the effectiveness of HEIs' methods of dealing with racial harassment. We launched the inquiry in response to mounting evidence of harassment of ethnic minority staff and students in the higher education sector.

In total, 141 of the 159 HEIs that received public funding in the academic year 2018/19 completed the survey – a response rate of 89%.

Overall, HEIs had received tiny numbers of formal complaints of racial harassment from staff and students. Despite this, many were confident that all incidents were being reported. Surprisingly, those that had received no complaints at all tended to be more confident about this. HEIs felt that they had robust systems, policies and practice in relation to racial harassment. They generally felt that they had dealt with racial harassment complaints in an appropriate manner.

However, many other HEIs were not confident that all racial harassment incidents were reported to them. Most did not monitor informal complaints. Respondents felt that the main barriers to reporting were the fear of negative repercussions for the complainant and a lack of confidence that the HEI would take any action. HEIs also acknowledged that it often took a long time to resolve complaints.

The following sections explore the key findings in more detail.

## **How prevalent is reported racial harassment against HEIs' staff and students?**

- Institutions received an average of 2.3 complaints of racial harassment of staff and 3.6 complaints of racial harassment of students between the start of the 2015/16 academic year and January 2019. This equates to around 360 complaints from staff and 560 from students. British universities employ 670,000 staff and teach 2.3 million students. Across GB, based on 2017/18 population figures, there was roughly one complaint for every 1,850 university employees and one complaint for every 4,100 students since the start of the 2015/16 academic year.
- Of reported complaints, the most common type of racial harassment of both staff and students was 'experiencing derogatory comments and/or behaviours'.
- As highlighted above, the views of HEIs were mixed as to how confident they felt that all incidents of racial harassment were reported to them. Overall, they were less confident that all incidents affecting students were reported (43% felt confident) than all incidents affecting staff (56%).

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## **How do HEIs deal with complaints of racial harassment?**

- HEIs offered a number of different 'routes to redress' for students and staff. Almost all stated that it was possible to make a formal complaint at an institutional, corporate level. Most, also, provided complaints processes at a sub-institution level such as within a faculty or via a third party such as a student union or trade union.

- It was less common for HEIs to offer a conciliation/mediation service, although most still did so. Institutions were less likely to provide this to students (60% of HEIs offered it) compared with staff (86%). HEIs also tended not to offer specific ways to report less overt forms of harassment<sup>1</sup> or opportunities to make complaints anonymously. They tended to offer either a formal route or informal support networks that did not enable incidents to be formally reported or recorded. An intermediary channel for recording incidents of racial harassment without invoking the full force of the formal process was often lacking.
- Institutions said that they had a number of different policies in place to provide guidance on racial harassment, most commonly a code of conduct that specifically covered race. They also offered support for victims of racial harassment.
- In open-ended survey responses, institutions said that they were confident in the robustness of their policies. However, awareness of the policies among staff and students was limited.
- Universities often took a long time to resolve cases – in some cases over a year. Resolving complaints made by students was generally a quicker process than resolving complaints made by staff.

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<sup>1</sup> Less overt forms of harassment include subtle derogatory comments / behaviours, such as excluding people from activities. These are sometimes referred to as 'microaggressions'.

## How can HEIs' racial harassment policies and procedures be improved?

- The most common priority areas for addressing racial harassment were raising awareness of acceptable conduct, building trust with ethnic minority staff/students and ensuring that those subjected to harassment felt empowered to report it.
- Around four-fifths of HEIs collected data on the 'culture of inclusion' (or lack thereof) of students and staff – that is, the extent to which people from ethnic minorities felt included and engaged in university life. For example, many HEIs conducted research, such as staff surveys, to better understand race issues at their institution. The purpose of this was to inform and improve policies. A similar proportion said that they used data gathered from recorded complaints to improve practice. In open-text responses, HEIs frequently mentioned that their application to, or accordance with, the Race Equality Charter<sup>2</sup> was central to ensuring that their policies were in line with best practice.
- HEIs saw awareness raising and staff training as important ways to prevent racial harassment. They saw less need to change their existing policies. Some HEIs were looking into developing processes for anonymous reporting of racial harassment.

In summary, some HEIs recognised that there was likely to be a large gap between the number of reported cases of racial harassment and actual incidents. Many were confident in their approaches to handling complaints but felt that they needed to do more to raise awareness of, and build trust in, the various forms of redress available.

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<sup>2</sup> The Race Equality Charter (REC) is run by Advance HE and aims to improve the representation, progression and success of minority ethnic staff and students within higher education.

# 1. Introduction

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## 1.1 Background to the inquiry

This research has been undertaken as part of our wider inquiry into racial harassment of staff and students at British universities.

The overall inquiry focuses on five areas:

1. To understand the types of racial harassment experienced by staff and students at publicly funded higher education institutions (HEIs) and where these incidents take place.
2. To understand the extent to which publicly funded HEIs provide routes to redress through which staff and students can report incidents of racial harassment and the extent to which these are available and accessible.
3. To understand what constitutes effective action in response to a report of racial harassment and the extent to which the routes to redress which are available to students and staff in publicly funded HEIs result in effective action.
4. Where the routes to redress through which staff and students in publicly funded HEIs can report racial harassment are not available or accessible, or do not result in effective action, to recommend improvements to better enable staff and students to obtain redress.
5. To assess whether the statutory and other legal responsibilities of publicly funded HEIs to staff and students at those institutions that experience racial harassment are adequate to ensure the provision of available, accessible and effective routes to redress.

For the purposes of this inquiry ‘racial harassment’ has been taken to mean when someone engages in unwanted behaviour which is related to a person’s perceived or actual race, and which has the purpose or effect of:

- violating that person’s dignity, or

- creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that person.

Racial harassment includes harassment which relates to race and another protected characteristic set out at section 4 of the Equality Act 2010, i.e. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

For the purposes of the inquiry, ‘race’ has the same meaning as set out at section 9 of the Equality Act 2010. Race includes: colour; nationality; and ethnic and national origins.

The inquiry is looking at racial harassment occurring in all the following ways:

- university staff on student harassment
- university staff on staff harassment
- student on student harassment
- student on staff harassment, and
- third party on student or staff harassment.

It focuses on a time period from the start of the 2015/16 academic year to the date of survey completion in 2019.

Organisations within the scope of the inquiry are those that received public funding through the Office for Students, the Scottish Funding Council and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales in the academic year 2018/2019. However, we expect the findings to be applicable to the HE sector more widely.

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## 1.2 About this survey

This report details findings from a quantitative survey of higher education institutions (HEIs) in scope of the inquiry (that is, those that received public funding in the 2018/19 academic year).

It provides evidence across all the areas of focus for the inquiry but particularly:

- the routes of redress available for students and staff to make complaints of racial harassment that they experience at university and the extent to which these routes are available, accessible and effective.
- what action is effective in handling complaints of racial harassment.

More specifically the report responds to the research questions set out in table 1.1:

**Table 1.1: Research questions**

Main research question	Sub questions
<p>What are universities doing to understand and tackle racial harassment against staff and students in each of the three nations?</p>	<p>How prevalent is reported racial harassment against HEIs' staff and students? What types of complaints of racial harassment have recently been reported? How confident are HEIs that racial harassment is reported at all?</p>
	<p>What systems, procedures and policies do HEIs have in place to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Ensure staff and students are aware of how to report racial harassment?</li> <li>– Respond to specific complaints of racial harassment?</li> <li>– Ensure the data they hold on racial harassment is robust, as well as analyse it properly in order to understand racial harassment?</li> <li>– Prevent racial harassment occurring in the future?</li> </ul>
	<p>Where can examples of good and bad practice in the HE sector be found, in relation to the above? How can policies and procedures be improved further?</p>

### 1.3 Methodology

The survey of universities was conducted online using a questionnaire jointly designed by IFF Research and the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

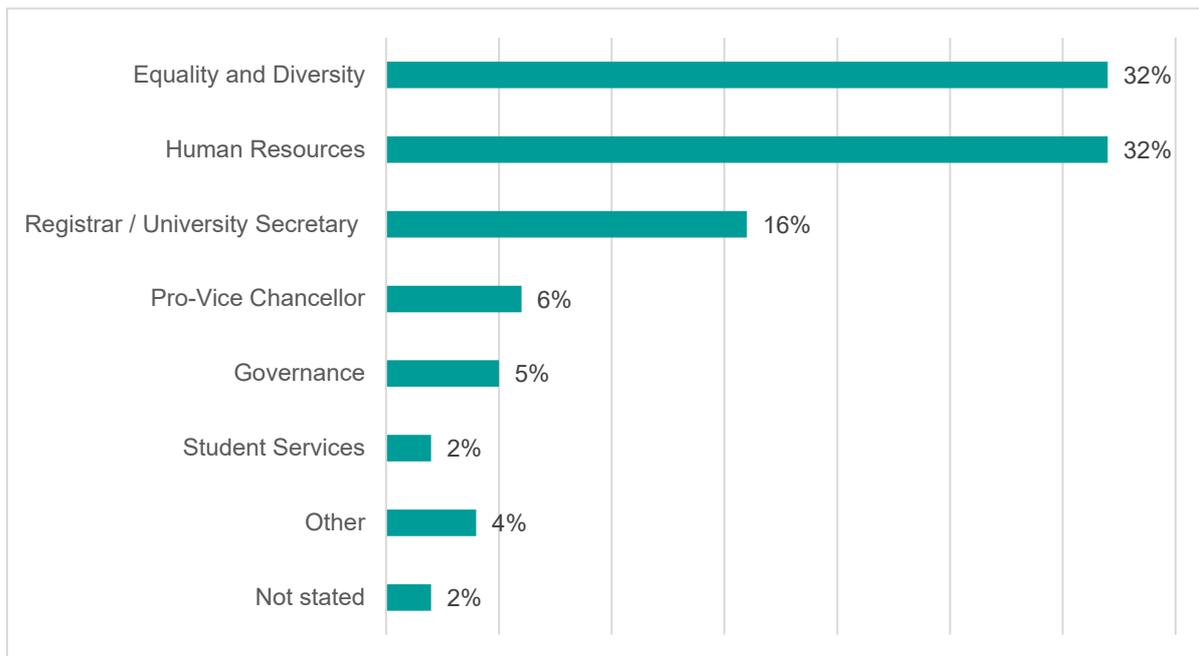
The approach to administering the survey is outlined below. We made sure HEIs were aware of the survey and regularly contacted them to remind them of the deadline. We also responded to HEIs' queries. The steps were as follows.

- Initial email contact and advance letter sent to the vice chancellor's office to provide information regarding the inquiry and forthcoming institutional survey in the new year (December 2018).
- Unique survey links emailed to the vice chancellor's office email address (January 2019)
- Telephone contact to confirm receipt of survey link (January 2019)
- Two reminder emails to remind universities of the deadline for submission (January-February 2019)
- Second round of telephone calling to confirm that the survey had been passed to the appropriate member of the institution and to confirm the institution expected to respond prior to the deadline of 22 February (January-February 2019).
- Final email reminder (February 2019).

The survey was sent to all publicly funded HEIs across England, Scotland and Wales (159 institutions). All 159 institutions acknowledged receipt of the survey. The total number of completed responses for the survey was 141, representing an 89% response rate. The full list of institutions that responded and did not respond to the survey is shown in the Appendix of this report.

The broad areas of responsibility of the individuals who submitted survey responses is shown in figure 1.1. From discussions with a number of HEIs during the fieldwork, it was apparent that several individuals were involved in compiling the institutional response. Therefore, figure 1.1 may not be a completely accurate reflection of all who contributed to the survey. In particular, it appeared to be relatively common for completion of the survey to be divided between staff who were responsible for racial harassment complaints from staff, and those who were responsible for racial harassment complaints from students.

**Figure 1.1: Respondents' general area of employment at their HEI**



Base: all institutions (141)

## Statistical significance

Studies often survey a relatively small number of people randomly selected from a large population. Standard formulas for calculations of measurement error and accuracy assume that a sample is drawn from an infinite population. Where a study surveys a large proportion of a population, effectively a census, this has a very positive effect on increasing the precision of the results achieved. The finite population correction (FPC) is a number between 0 and 1, which quantifies the degree to which the standard measurement of survey error can be reduced when surveying a large proportion of the total population based on a random sample. In this study all institutions were invited to take part and the survey achieved an overall response rate of 88.7%. FPC is calculated using the formula:

$$\text{FPC} = \sqrt{1.0 - 0.887} = 0.34$$

The standard error of any estimate would be multiplied by this figure. This means that the level of standard errors would be reduced by 65% compared with a survey sampled from a very large population, if this were a random sample. This means that although some of the bases reported on are relatively small, we can still be reasonably confident that they are unlikely to have occurred by chance. An important caveat is that the FPC is based on the assumption that the missing responses occurred at random. Since respondents were those institutions which decided to respond, it is not possible to know whether this is the case. However, the high response rate suggests that any bias in the results is likely to be small.

Despite the increased precision, however, we still need to ensure that we are confident in what we report, particularly when it comes to analysing differences between country and institutional tariff.<sup>3</sup> Where such differences are reported these have been tested to ensure they are statistically significant. Where differences between these groups are not discussed it is because we cannot be sure that the differences are statistically significant, i.e. that there are genuine differences. Where base sizes become very small, we have reported numbers rather than percentages, particularly where there are findings of note, but based on small numbers.

### **Use of HESA data in analysis**

In this report we have included analysis of 2017/18 data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). HESA data was used to designate HEIs in our sample a 'high', 'medium' or 'low' categorisation based on the percentage of ethnic minority staff and students at the institution. Categories were assigned as follows:

#### **Proportion of staff from ethnic minorities<sup>4</sup>**

- low levels: <7% (45 institutions)
- medium levels: 7%–13% (49 institutions)
- high levels: >13% (46 institutions)

The proportion of ethnic minority staff at HEIs ranged from none to 38%. The mean proportion was 12% and the median was 10%.

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<sup>3</sup> In some sections of the report, reference is made to the tariff of a HEI as being high, medium or low. Where HEIs have been assigned a tariff, the categories are defined as follows: 'high tariff institutions' are defined as those in the top third of average UCAS tariff rankings, 'medium tariff institutions' are those in the middle third, and 'low tariff universities' are defined as those in the bottom third.

<sup>4</sup> Please note that HESA data could not be supplied for one HEI that completed the survey. Hence the number of institutions noted as high, medium or low in relation to the proportion of ethnic minority staff or students they have is 140, rather than 141 (total number that completed the survey).

## Proportion of students from ethnic minorities

- low levels: <9% (41 institutions)
- medium levels: 9%-16% (48 institutions)
- high levels: >16% (51 institutions)

The proportion of ethnic minority students at HEIs ranged from 1.5% to 58%. The mean proportion was 17% and the median was 12%.

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## 1.4 Report structure

The remainder of this report presents findings from the survey of institutions in the following structure:

- **Section 2** presents an overview of the total number of complaints of racial harassment of staff and students received from 2015/16 to the date of survey completion in early 2019. It also analyses how far complaints were progressed and the most common channels used to report complaints.
- **Section 3** analyses the most recent complaint received by institutions. It addresses the type of complaint made, other protected characteristics associated with the complaint, and the most common employment/studying status of the alleged victim and alleged perpetrator.
- **Section 4** discusses the range of outcomes of the most recent complaints received by institutions, the time it has taken to resolve the complaint and any remedial action that was taken. It also looks at institutions' perception of their success in dealing with racial harassment complaints from staff and students, and the reasons behind that perception.
- **Section 5** examines the routes to redress offered to victims of racial harassment. It explores the systems, safeguards and processes that HEIs currently have in place, and any plans for addressing racial harassment better in future.

- **Section 6** looks at how, if at all, HEIs collect information on the ‘general culture’ of inclusion of ethnic minorities, and how they use that information to inform policies and process. It also addresses how institutions use information gathered through their complaints process to improve practice.
- **Section 7** investigates whether institutions have systems available to capture informal complaints.
- **Section 8** looks at institutions’ level of confidence that all incidences of racial harassment of staff and students are reported and opinions on what they consider to be the main barriers that staff and students face in reporting incidences of racial harassment.
- **Section 9** discusses the plans that institutions may have to prevent and improve their methods of responding to racial harassment of staff and students in the near future.
- **Section 10** examines where institutions look to for support on delivering robust policy around racial harassment, and if there are any gaps in the support currently available.
- **Section 11** considers what plans, if any, institutions have to better prevent and address racial harassment.
- **Section 12** presents some conclusions from this research.

## 2. Overview of complaints of racial harassment of staff and students

This section looks at the overall numbers of complaints reported, the nature of the complaints and the channels used for reporting complaints. It also considers the status of ongoing complaints and how closed ones were concluded.

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### 2.1 Number of reported complaints

We asked HEIs how many formal complaints of racial harassment of staff and students they had received since the start of the 2015/16 academic year (a period of around three and a half years). Formal complaints were those that had been brought to the attention of the institution's authorities and an outcome recorded. This typically included the decision on whether or not to investigate, depending on the substance and nature of the allegations.

The definition of racial harassment given to institutions in the survey was as follows:

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an incident or a series of incidents having the effect of intimidating, offending or harming an individual or group because of their perceived ethnic origin, race or nationality. This includes verbal and/or physical abuse, insults and name-calling, bullying, threatening behaviour, damage to property, displaying and/or sharing racially offensive material and encouraging others to commit racist acts. Many of these incidents may take place online.

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Table 2.1 shows details of the number of complaints reported. Based on the survey responses, across all British HEIs around 360 complaints of racial harassment have been reported by staff and around 560 by students over a period of around three and a half years. These figures have been calculated by applying the mean score to 19 HEIs that did not take part in the survey and adding this to the total number of complaints reported by institutions that completed the survey (318 staff complaints and 491 student complaints: see table 2.1).

The average number of complaints of harassment of staff, as defined by the mean, was 2.3. This is lower than the mean number of 3.6 complaints from students. The median number of complaints was 1 for staff and 2 for students, reflecting the skew towards zero for both groups. The mean number of complaints for HEIs with low levels of ethnic minority students and staff was lower: 1.1 complaints of harassment of staff and 2.1 complaints of harassment of students. HEIs with a high proportion of ethnic minority students had a higher mean number of student complaints (4.6). The range was slightly larger for complaints of racial harassment of students than of staff (0–22 compared with 0–20).

**Table 2.1: Aggregate number of racial harassment complaints of staff and students (from start of 2015/16)**

	Total number reported in survey (n=141)	Estimate of number for total population (n=159)	Mean (based on total number reported in survey)	Median (based on total number reported in survey)	Range (based on total number reported in survey)
Staff	318	362	2.3	1	0–20
Students	491	559	3.6	2	0–22

**Table 2.2: Aggregate number of racial harassment complaints of staff and students (estimate per year)**

	Total number reported in survey (n=141)	Estimate of number for total population (n=159)	Mean
Staff	91	103	0.6
Students	140	160	1.0

Around four in ten institutions (38%) reported having received no complaints of racial harassment of staff. The figure was lower for students, with around three in ten (29%) saying no students had reported being the subject of racial harassment. Of the 141 HEIs in our sample, 88 had received complaints from staff and 102 had received complaints from students. Almost one in five institutions (18%) reported receiving no complaints of racial harassments from either staff or students.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, HEIs with low numbers of ethnic minority staff were more likely to have received zero complaints. Over four in ten (44%) of these HEIs reported no racial harassment complaints of students, with 60% reporting no racial harassment complaints of staff. A similar trend was found for HEIs with low numbers of ethnic minority students. Almost two-thirds of these HEIs (63%) received no complaints of racial harassment of staff, with 44% receiving no complaints of racial harassment of students. Ninety-one per cent of HEIs with a low level of ethnic minority staff also had a low level of ethnic minority students.

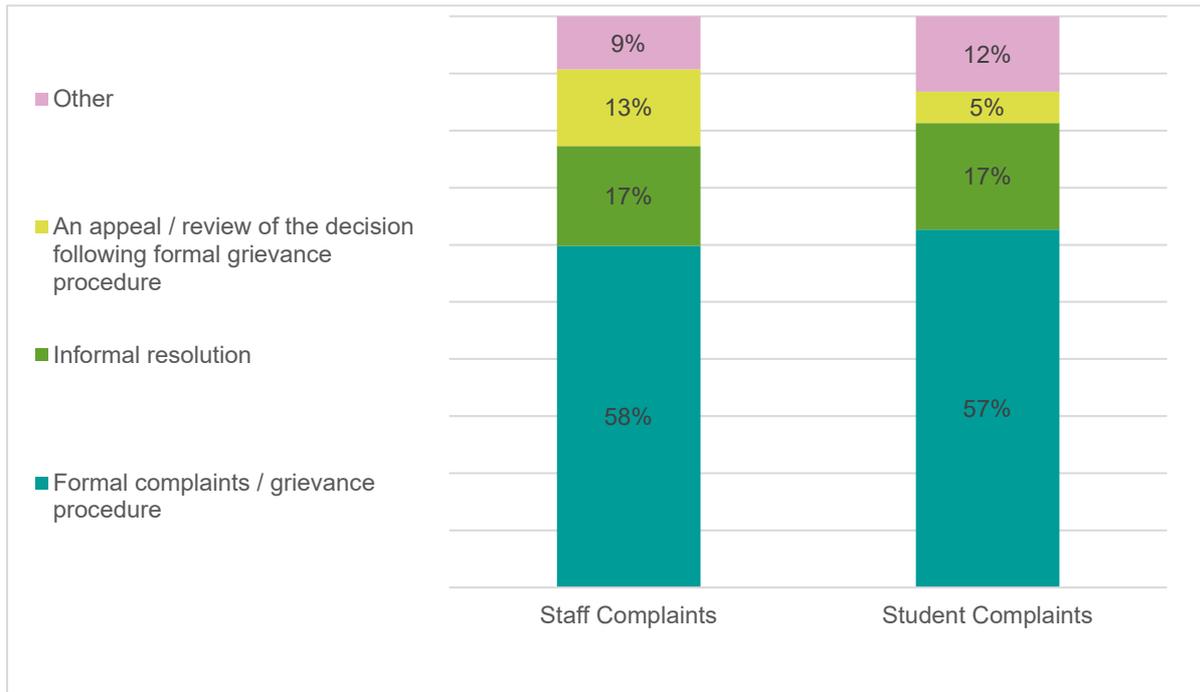
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## 2.2 How complaints were resolved

Institutions that received complaints of racial harassment over the last three and a half years were asked how cases were dealt with. The most common form of resolution was via the formal complaints/grievance procedure, with almost six in ten cases for both staff and students (58% and 57% respectively) resolved in this way. A further one in six cases (17%) were resolved by informal means, for example via a verbal apology; this was true for both staff and student cases.

One in eight cases (13%) reported by staff went to an appeals process compared with just one in twenty student cases (5%).

**Figure 2.1: Processes used to handle complaints of racial harassment<sup>5</sup>**



Base: of all complaints staff (318), all who have had some complaints from students (491), any other status less than 5% grouped with 'other'

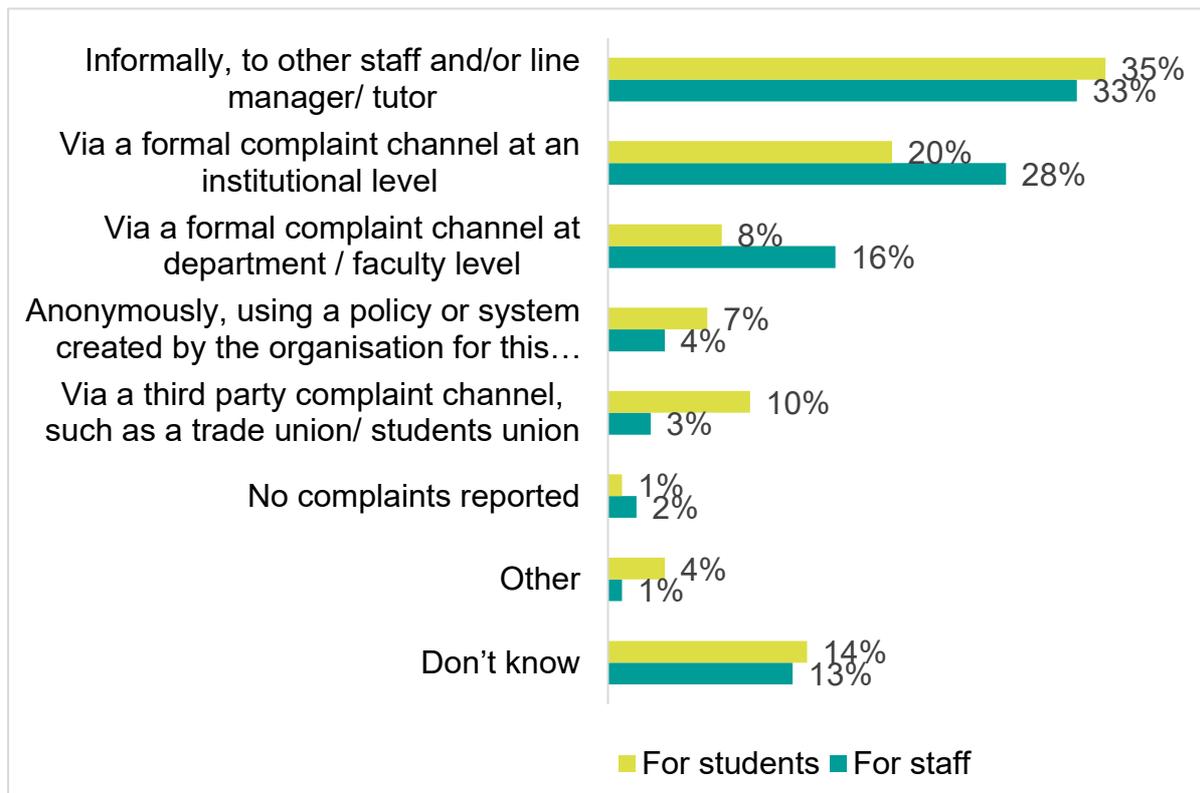
## 2.3 Channels of complaints

Institutions were asked to state which channel they felt that individuals were most likely to use to report a racial harassment complaint.

<sup>5</sup> The high proportion of 'other' responses here is due to institutions reporting numerous other resolution processes, that were different in the cases of student and staff complaints. No single process was reported by more than 7% of all institutions.

Informal channels of communication via other staff or, in the case of students, a tutor, was reported by institutions as the most common channel for reporting cases of racial harassment (33% for staff and 35% for students). Around three in ten institutions (28%) suggested racial harassment of staff was most likely to be reported through a formal complaint channel. This fell to one in five (20%) for students.

**Figure 2.2: Most commonly used channels for making complaints**



Base: all institutions (141)

## 2.4 Informal reporting of racial harassment of staff

Institutions that stated that informal channels were the most likely method for reporting complaints from staff were asked to elaborate on the type of informal channels used, and if they had evidence as to whether these channels were effective. Analysis of open-ended comments found that a common thread running through the responses was speaking to a line manager and/or a member of HR.

Raised with line manager in the first instance then brought into formal procedure if serious and/or unable to resolve.

**(England)**

Regular one to ones with line managers – considered effective where established practice; peer disclosure – considered effective as we have a culture of good informal networking.

**(England)**

Informal issues are able to be raised via HR Managers, Line Managers and/or the Equality Policy Unit. We understand these to be effective approaches as the evidence reported in section A [earlier in the survey] suggests that informal and quick investigations can be carried out, appropriate action taken, quick dialogue can be established between the parties and matters are often quickly resolved. If this is not felt satisfactory, the victim can escalate their complaint through the formal route.

**(England)**

A number of institutions said they had equality champions or advocates to oversee these issues and provide complainants with a source of support. Other third party representatives, such as trade unions, were also cited:





We are aware that informal complaints are shared and discussed within small groups of BAME staff and are frequently not shared with White colleagues and are not reported to line managers and HR. Results of our staff surveys indicate that BAME staff do not report racism and racist incidences because:

- they lack confidence in current reporting systems
- are uncertain about how to report; and how procedures work
- concerns exist over the transparency of reporting incidences such as microaggressions<sup>6</sup> and incidences of cordial racism and whether these will be taken seriously, and
- the fact that the current system does not bypass those in more senior positions (such as line managers) sometimes deters staff from making complaints.

**(England)**

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## 2.5 Informal reporting of racial harassment by students

Institutions that said that racial harassment of students was most likely to be reported via informal channels were asked to elaborate on what these channels were, and their perceived efficacy. The most common theme in open-ended comments was student support services, either formal, such as the student union, or informal, such as Nightline (an overnight support/listening service):

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<sup>6</sup> Microaggressions are statements, actions or incidents regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group such as a racial or ethnic minority.

Informal channels for students to report complaints of racial harassment include: talking to the university's Student Experience and Equalities Manager, based in Student Operations and Support, who advises students about their options for reporting and resolving incidents of bullying and harassment; or talking to their Academic School's Student Support and Guidance Tutor who provides a first point of contact and support for students on a range of issues, including bullying and harassment.

**(England)**

The following are informal channels that the student could use – student advice centre, student association, academic members of staff or other members of staff. We cannot comment on effectiveness as we are unaware of any such complaints.

**(England)**

Nightline, residence assistants (students who live in student accommodation who have responsibility for community building), student support services, personal tutors, peer support.

**(England)**

Many respondents explained the purpose of these support services but felt unable to comment on their effectiveness. This was because the support was generally provided on a confidential and/or informal basis, and would not be documented. One institution did, however, draw a link between the number of formal complaints and the effectiveness of informal mechanisms:

The low number of formal complaints would suggest that the informal mechanisms work.

**(England)**

Tutors were also mentioned regularly as a source of support and informal guidance for students.

Students would be most likely to speak to their personal tutor in the event of any concerns about racial harassment.

**(England)**

Verbally to a tutor, member of student support, student union or chaplaincy.

**(England)**

Students are most likely to speak with a member of academic staff or their personal tutor to raise their concerns. The personal tutor scheme is used widely across the institution.

**(England)**

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## 2.6 Status of complaints

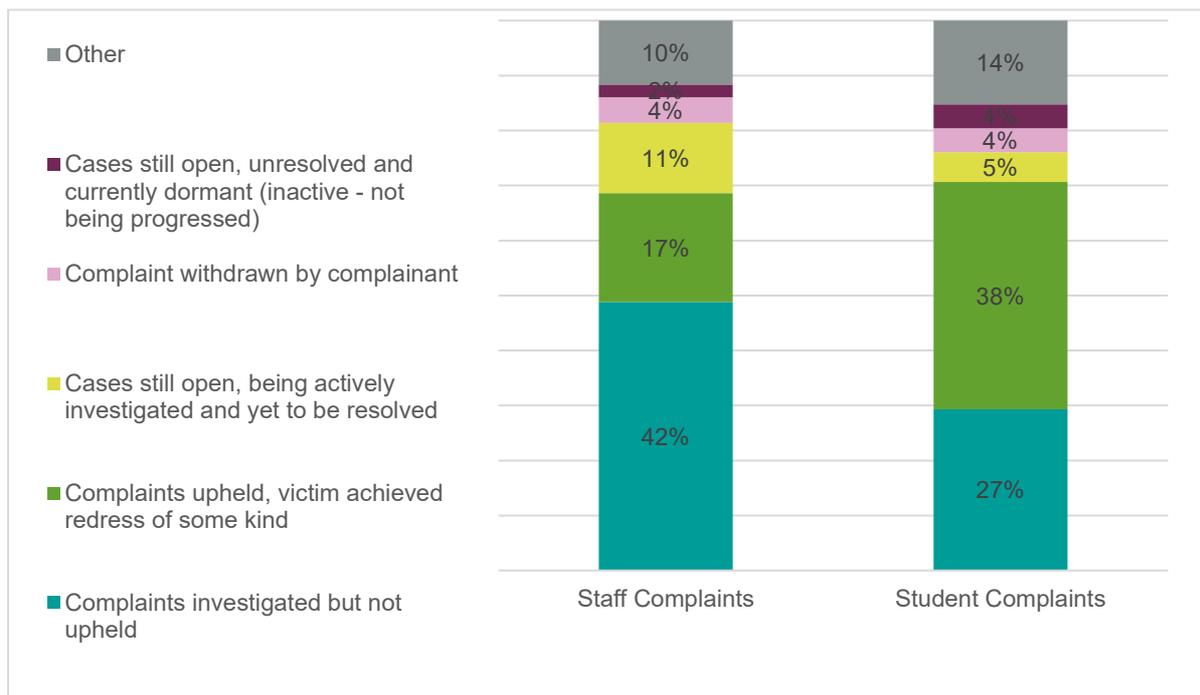
Institutions were asked to provide the current status or outcome of all the complaints that they had received since the start of the 2015/16 academic year. More than two in five (42%) cases of racial harassment reported by staff were investigated but not upheld. This compares to one in four (27%) cases reported by students.

One in six (17%) staff who reported being the victim of racial harassment had their complaint upheld and were offered some kind of redress. The same is true for almost four in ten (37%) complaints of racial harassment by students.

Around one in ten (11%) of complaints reported by staff were still being investigated at the time of the survey and were yet to be resolved; this compares with just one in twenty (5%) cases reported by students.

Reasons given for the current status 'other' included cases having been dealt with informally, cases having been passed to an external agency, the complainant having resigned or the alleged perpetrator having resigned.

**Figure 2.3: Current status of complaints**



Base: All complaints from staff (318), all complaints from students (491), any other status less than 5% grouped with 'other'

## **2.7 Additional complaints featuring race as an alleged factor**

In addition to the volumes of complaints of racial harassment, institutions were asked about other, separate complaints that they had received which had featured race as an alleged factor even if the complaint itself was not specifically about racial harassment. A quarter of institutions (28%) had received such cases in relation to staff and a similar proportion (30%) had received them in relation to students. For complaints from students, institutions were asked whether any of these cases related to academic appeals. These cases were in the minority, accounting for only about a fifth of all cases where race was an alleged factor.

## 3. Type and context of racial harassment complaints

This section explores the details of HEIs' most recently closed case of racial harassment, firstly against staff and secondly against a student or students. It also considers whether these complaints concerned other protected characteristics, such as sex or disability. This is followed by information on the employment and education status of complainants and the status of alleged perpetrators.

The focus is on the most recently closed formal complaint as it would have created too great an administrative burden on institutions to ask them to provide full details on all cases that they had handled since 2015/16.

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### 3.1 Type of racial harassment complaints

Figure 3.1 shows the type of harassment reported in the most recently closed complaints received by institutions.





Staff	Numbers	Students	Numbers
Pregnancy/ maternity	1	Pregnancy/ maternity	1
Nationality	1	Transgender status	1
Other	1	Other	1

Base: all those who stated that most recently closed racial harassment case involved other protected characteristics, staff (28), students (21)

### 3.3 Employment/studying status of alleged victim

Figure 3.2 shows the employment status of alleged staff victims. More than half (52%) of the most recent alleged staff victims were classed as middle ranking employees of the institution. Around one in three (31%) were junior members of staff; and less than one in ten (7%), senior staff. HEIs with high levels of ethnic minority staff and students were more likely to report that the most recent alleged victims were junior members of staff (46%).

Institutions reported that around two in five (39%) alleged victims of racial harassment were teaching/academic staff, one in three (34%) were professional services staff and one in six (17%) were in other categories of support staff. Alleged victims in most recent cases at HEIs with high levels of ethnic minority staff and students were more likely to be in professional services roles (46%). Based on 2017/18 HESA data, across the entire sector, two-thirds of university staff are in non-academic roles while the remaining third occupy academic positions.

**Figure 3.2: Employment status and role of alleged staff victims**

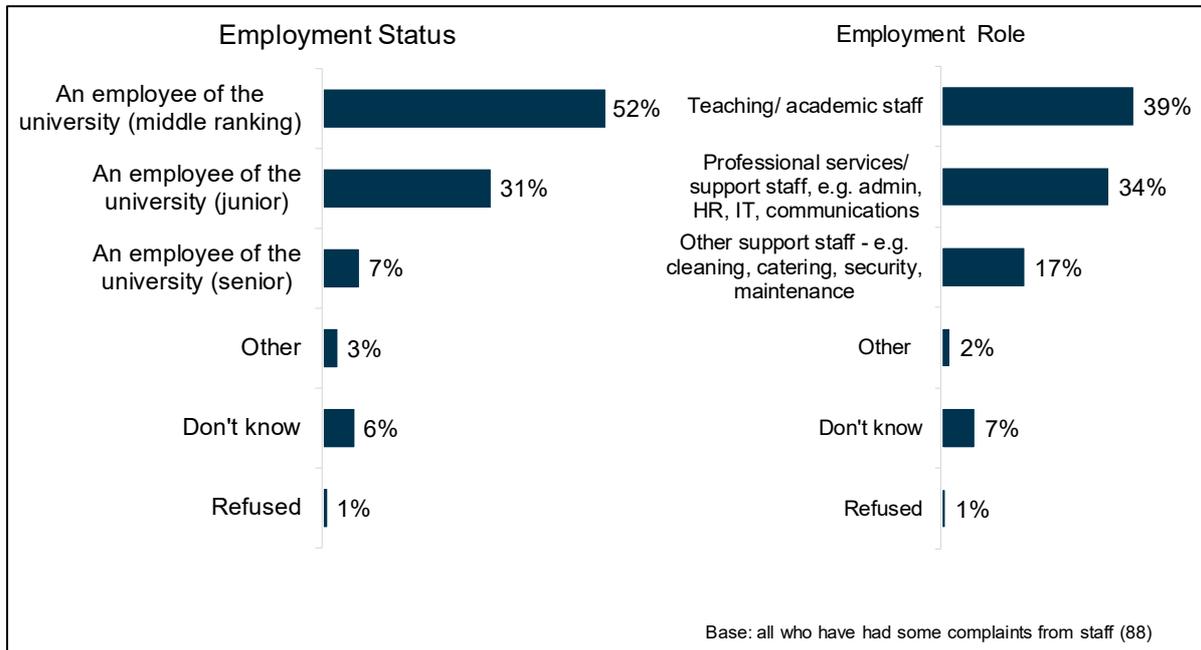
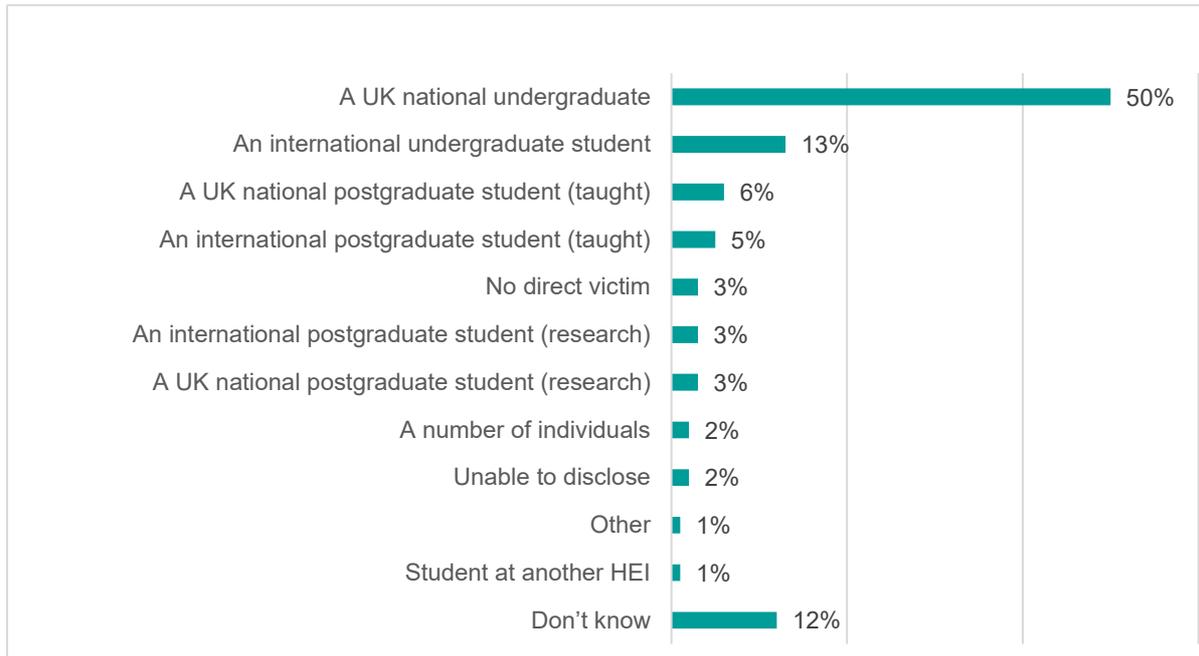


Figure 3.3 shows the status of alleged student victims for the most recently closed cases. In half of all cases (50%), the alleged victim was reported to be a UK national undergraduate. This figure was higher among HEIs with high levels of ethnic minority students (63%). One in five alleged victims (21%) were international students. In 12% of cases the status of the alleged victim was unknown.

**Figure 3.3: Education status of student alleged victims**



Base: all who have had some complaints from students (102)

### 3.4 Employment/student status of alleged perpetrator

Figure 3.4 shows the status of alleged perpetrators for the most recently closed cases for staff and students. In over half (53%) of cases reported by students, the alleged perpetrator was a fellow student, with around one quarter of cases (27%) involving an employee of the university. In 2% of cases, the alleged perpetrator was reported to be an employee of a contracted agency.

Institutions reported that the most recent cases of racial harassment of staff also tended to involve harassment from colleagues, with 86% of perpetrators noted as other employed university staff.

**Figure 3.4: Status of alleged perpetrators**

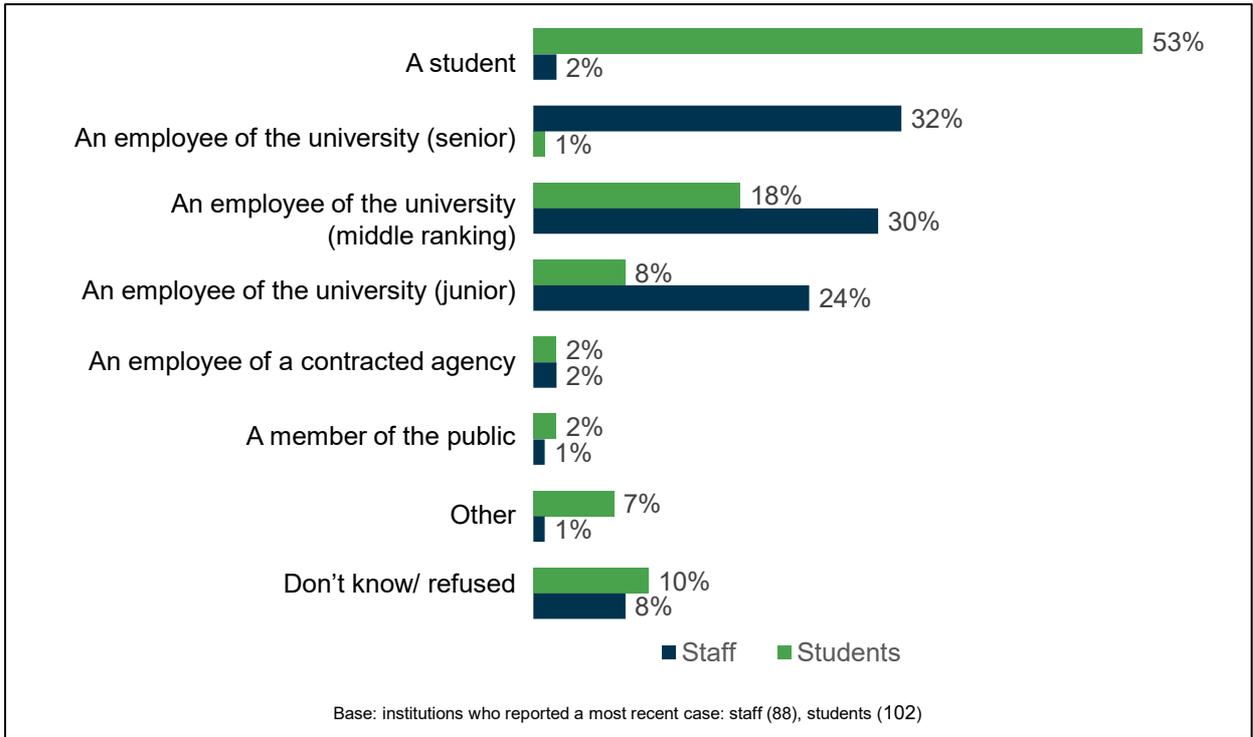
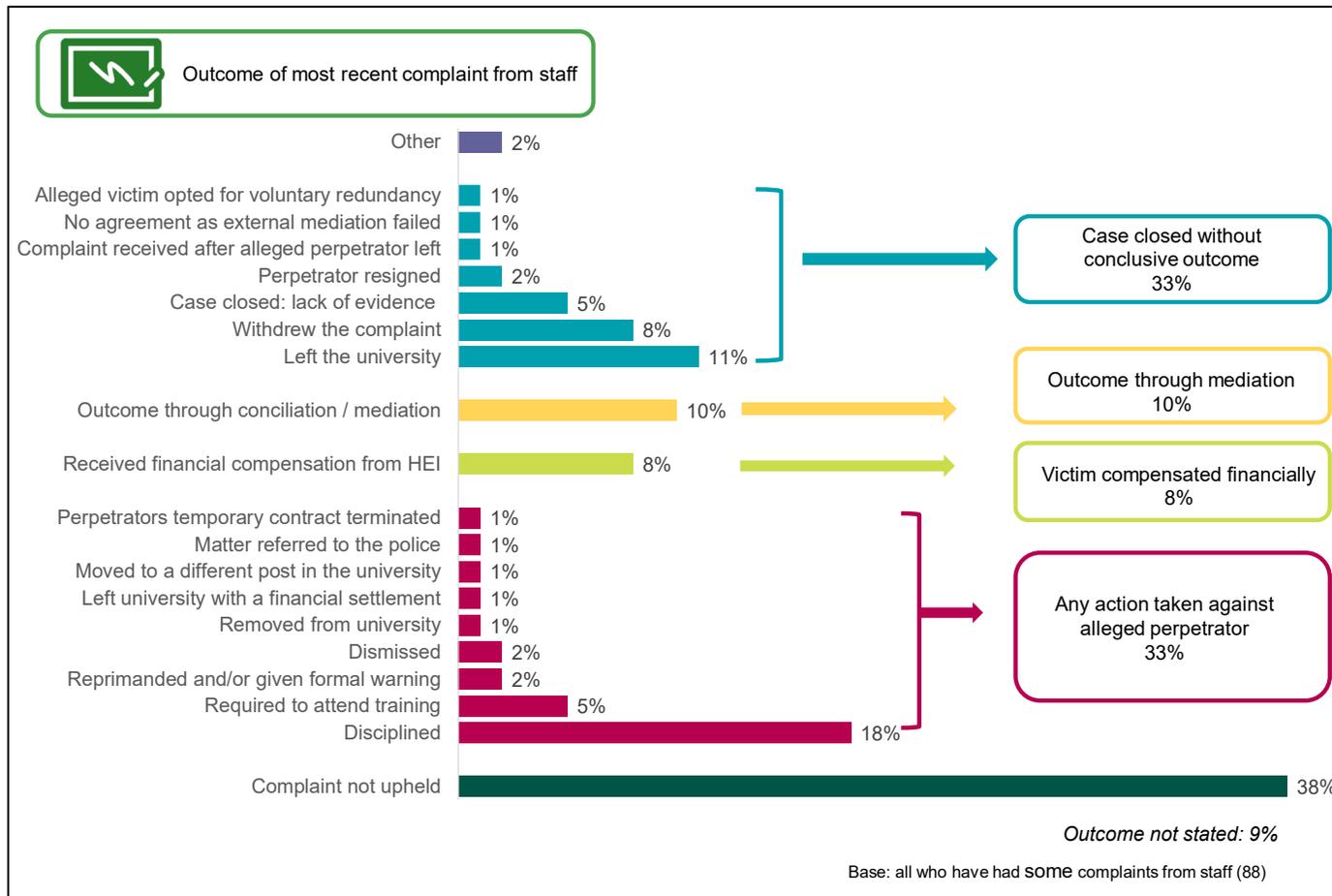




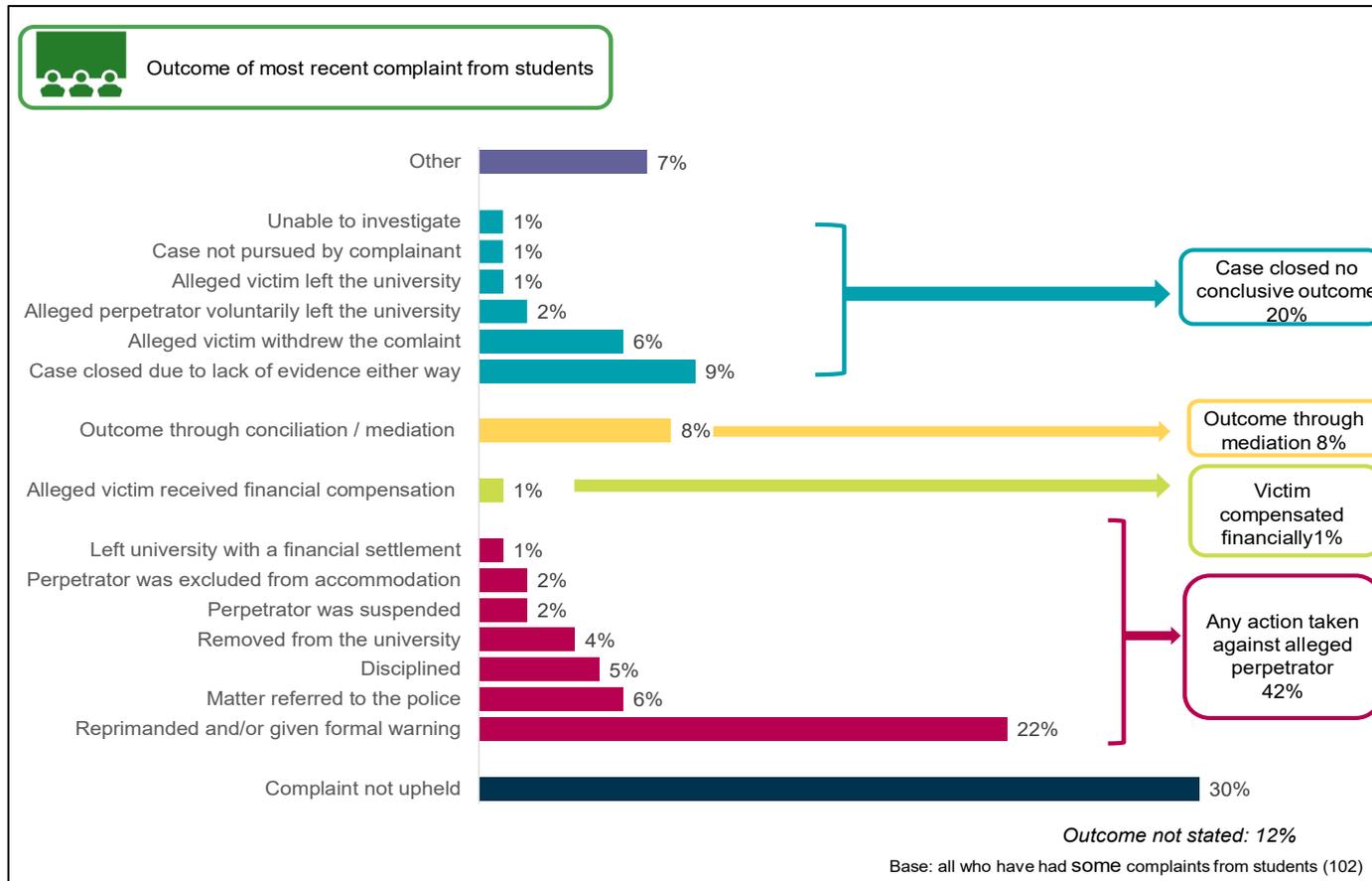


Figure 4.1: Outcome of staff complaints



Please note that the total percentage of responses does not equal 100 in figures 5.1 and 5.2, as respondents were able to select more than one response.

Figure 4.2: Outcome of student complaints



A large proportion of outcome of complaints were grouped as 'other' as these outcomes were often only reported by one institution.

In a third of reported cases of staff harassment (33%), action was taken against the alleged perpetrator. The most common outcome, where action was taken, was that the alleged perpetrator was disciplined by the institution (18%). For institutions with higher levels of ethnic minority students, this was a less common outcome (8% of alleged perpetrators were disciplined). In one in five (22%) of student cases, the alleged perpetrator was reprimanded and/or given a formal warning and in 4% of cases they were removed from the university. In 6% of student cases, the matter was referred to the police. This was less common for staff cases, of which only 1% were referred to the police.

Student reported racist language from unknown members of the public towards them. After reporting to the University, our security team supported the student to report the matter as a hate crime to the police.

**(England)**

Staff complaints of racial harassment were more likely than student complaints to be settled with financial compensation. In 8% of staff cases, the complainant received financial compensation from the university (compared to 1% of student cases). In 1% of both staff and student complaints, the perpetrator left the university with a financial settlement.

An outcome through conciliation/mediation was achieved in around one in ten cases of harassment for both staff and students.

Some cases were unresolved either due to a lack of evidence (9% of student cases and 5% of staff cases) or through the withdrawal of the complaint (6% of student cases and 8% of staff cases).

A student alleged another student had made negative racial remarks in a PC lab. Investigations were made, the student was spoken to and outcome was no further action based on lack of evidence and dispute in accounts of what happened and no witnesses. Alleged perpetrator was provided with advice and guidance regarding being mindful of future behaviour.

**(England)**

In the descriptions of cases provided by institutions, some examples were given of complaints that had been upheld, but it was decided that race was not a motivating factor for the complaint.

In the period indicated by this survey, the University received one complaint, of racial harassment from a member of staff against another member of staff. An investigation was carried and concluded that the complaint is upheld but that the incident was not racially motivated.

**(England)**

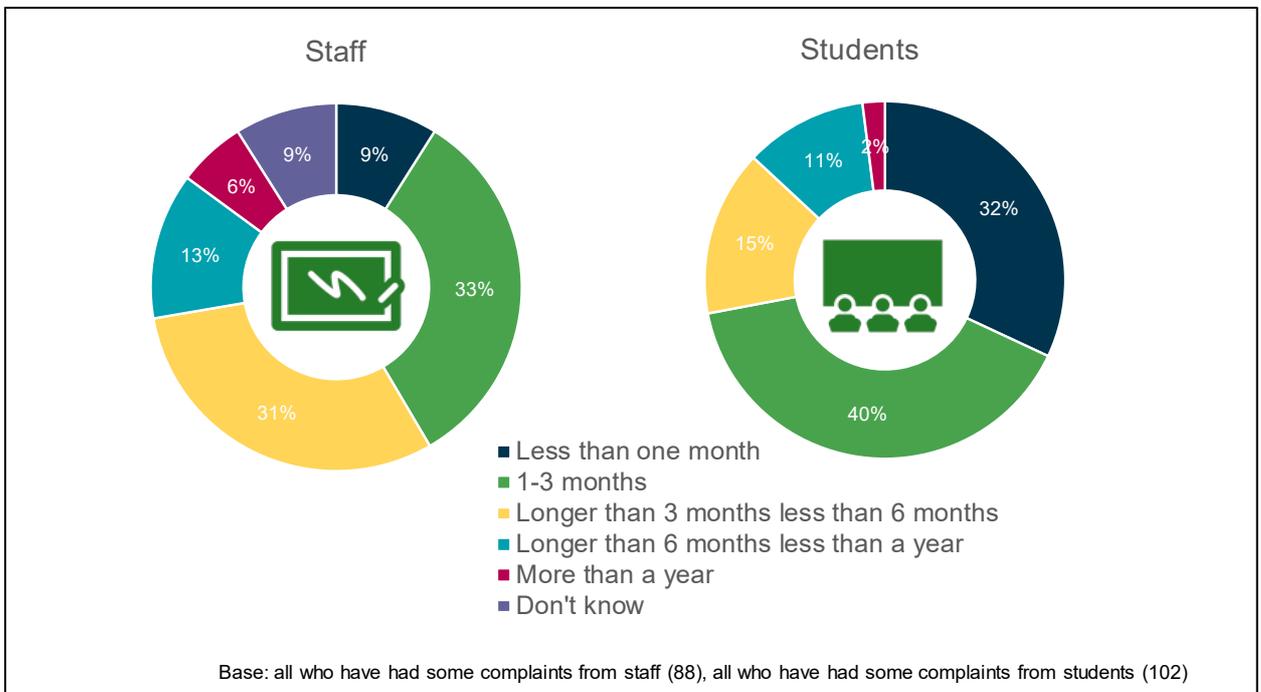
The grievance was investigated and the outcome was partially upheld accepting that the supervisor spoke in a derogatory manner but there was no evidence to suggest that the manager treated the individual differently because of the colour of their skin. There was no evidence on the third aspect as it was concluded all staff were issued the same instruction relating to accuracy of the recording of their times of work. The supervisor was disciplined in relation to the first matter and received training.

**(England)**

## 4.2 Time taken to close complaint

In general, racial harassment cases were not dealt with quickly. Around a fifth of staff complaints (19%) and more than one in ten student complaints (13%) took over six months to resolve. A further third of racial harassment complaints of staff (31%) were reported as having taken between 3 and 6 months, as were 15% of student cases. The breakdown of time taken to close most recent cases is shown in figure 4.3.

**Figure 4.3: Time to resolve complaints**

































































































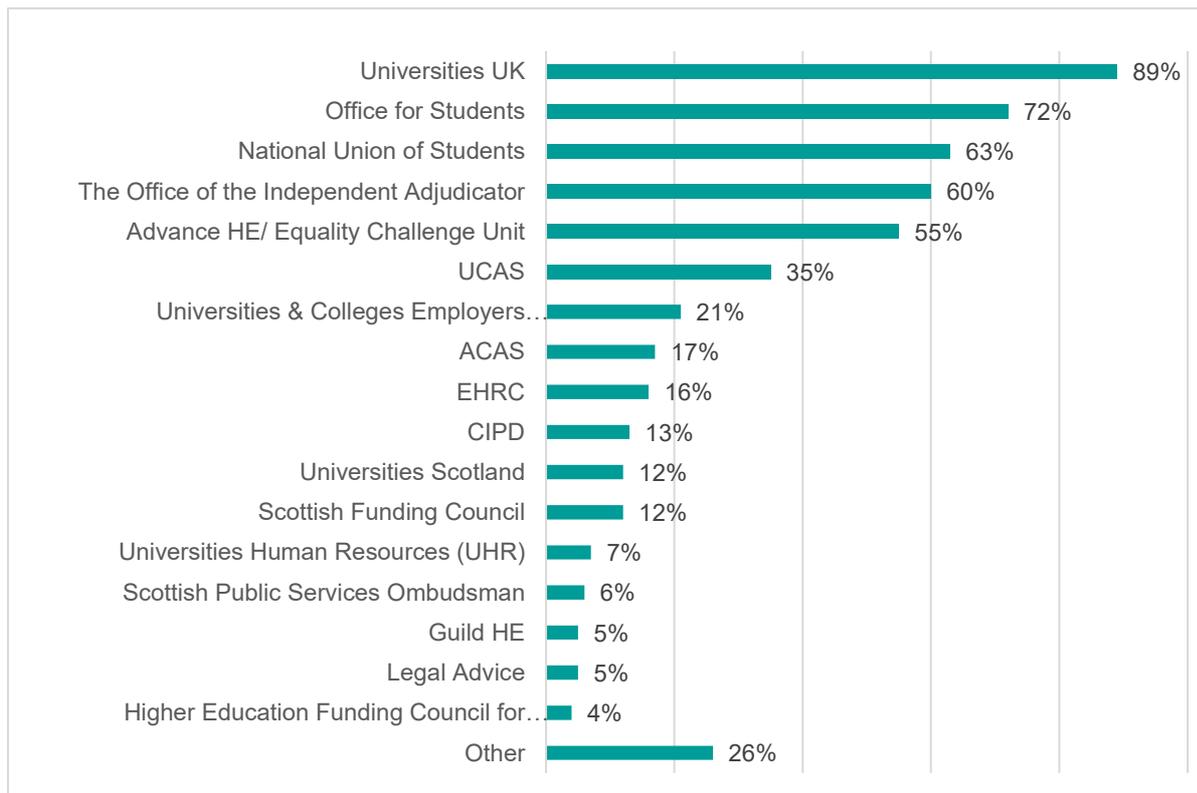






Most Scottish universities referred to Universities Scotland (15 out of 17) and the Scottish Funding Council (14 out of 17), while Welsh universities sought advice from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (5 out of 7).

**Figure 10.2: Organisations from which HEIs sought advice and guidance on the issue of racial harassment**



Base: H3: Which of the following organisations does your institution draw advice and guidance from in this area? (141).

When asked what further guidance would be useful, HEIs commonly raised the sharing of examples of best practice across the sector. Others indicated they would value case studies demonstrating how policies or principles had been successfully applied.

Case studies which provide an overview of steps that other institutions and wider non-HE sector bodies have taken which has had a positive effect in this area, beneficial as a source of insight and benchmarking.

**(England)**

We believe there is sufficient, appropriate guidance in this area but would welcome more support around its interpretation and application perhaps, for example, through the sharing of best practice case studies.

**(England)**

A small number of HEIs also said examples of bad or failed practice, or things that have not worked well, would also be of use.

It was also suggested that the existing guidance, along with future changes or additions, could be collated into a central source for ease of access, as it is currently spread across multiple locations.

We suspect that rather than further guidance a single source of [collated guidance], similar in status and standing to an ACAS Code of Practice, might be helpful.

**(England)**

A handful of HEIs said it would be useful to have guidance on how to deal with microaggressions or lower level, subtle instances of racism or harassment. A small number said they would value guidance on when to escalate incidents to the police, how to deal with issues around data protection and how to address any conflict with free speech.

Some HEIs said that there was enough guidance already. Of these, some said that although they didn't think any further guidance was needed, they would still value case studies or further support with how to interpret and apply the guidance.

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## Prevention

When discussing the actions universities, the government or other organisations could take to prevent racism in higher education, the most common themes raised by HEIs were raising awareness and staff training. Comments on training tended to focus on standardising it and making it mandatory for certain roles. Some respondents said that they would appreciate new training and educational materials.

Other common themes were the provision of funding for training or initiatives, and the need to create a supportive, inclusive culture in higher education and beyond. Some HEIs felt that the government had a role to play in the latter, as well as in supporting equality measures and initiatives. Several respondents suggested that education or intervention was needed at an earlier stage, before students even reached higher education. This ought to take place in schools or colleges and across society as a whole.

A few HEIs felt that there needed to be greater diversity in both the staff and student body. Appointing people from ethnic minorities to senior positions, it was thought, would inspire others to succeed. A handful of HEIs suggested setting clearer expectations of a 'zero tolerance' approach to racial harassment. They also felt it was important to share examples of good practice and instil a more joined-up approach across organisations.

## 11. Future plans

This section looks at whether or not institutions had plans to take further steps to prevent racial harassment and improve their methods of responding to it in future.

Over four in five HEIs (82%) stated that they did have plans. We asked these respondents to describe them in brief; the answers were quite varied. The main themes were:

- adherence to the Race Equality Charter
- training development, and
- anonymous reporting.

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### Adherence to the Race Equality Charter

HEIs' most frequently cited a strategic plan that was linked with their application to, or in accordance with, the Advance HE Race Equality Charter:

The university has signed up to the Race Equality Charter and will have a clear action plan to improve the reporting, recording and methods of responding to and minimising racial incidents.

**(England)**

We are undertaking a Self-Analysis within the context of [our] Race Equality Charter application and a key outcome of the analysis is identification of any gaps and action points from senior staff to address these.

**(England)**

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## Training development

Some institutions also outlined plans for implementing training programmes for staff, and in fewer cases for students as well. Some felt that it was important to provide all staff with basic equality and diversity training. Others had plans to provide tailored training programmes on how to manage complaints of racial harassment (for equality and diversity staff), identifying microaggressions and how to be an 'active bystander':

We have just held a session delivered by Advance HE on student microaggressions, and we wish to roll this out over the next few months.  
**(England)**

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## Anonymous reporting

Some respondents said that they had plans to take further steps to prevent and improve their methods of responding to racial harassment of staff and students in the near future. They were doing this by launching (or considering launching) a process for students and staff to report incidents anonymously:

We are launching a campaign in March 2019 to allow students to report an incident anonymously or report an incident and get support. This will help directly with our harassment and support network.  
**(England)**

## 12. Conclusion

**Overall, universities had received few complaints of racial harassment.** Over the three and a half year period for which universities were asked to provide information, a total of around 560 complaints were received from students and around 360 from staff. British universities employ 670,000 staff and teach 2.3 million students. Across GB, based on 2017/18 population figures, this equates to roughly one complaint for every 1,850 university employees and one complaint for every 4,100 students since the start of the 2015/16 academic year.

**In keeping with this, universities were not always confident that all incidents of racial harassment were reported.** Forty-three per cent of universities felt that all student incidents that took place were reported to them and 56% said that all staff incidents were reported. One key barrier to reporting was potential complainants' concerns about both the effectiveness of the reporting system. Another was possible repercussions for the complainant should they pursue their case. When asked about their main priority in addressing racial harassment, universities were most likely to report that their focus was on building trust and ensuring that all incidents were reported. This was particularly important in relation to staff. As for students, universities were equally likely to focus on both ensuring all cases were reported and raising awareness of acceptable conduct.

**University practices in handling informal complaints was mixed.** Under half of institutions had processes for collecting data on informal reporting (43% for students and 44% for staff). Some of these said that all complaints brought to their attention were treated as formal. Others had instructed staff to log all reports of any form of racial harassment that were brought to their attention, even if raised informally. A small number had structures in place to allow for anonymous reporting

**Universities acknowledged that fear of cases not being appropriately handled was acting as a barrier to reporting.** It is difficult to draw concrete conclusions about how effectively universities have handled complaints in recent years. However, a relatively high proportion of cases resulted in appeal. Only a minority of cases were upheld (and a lower proportion for staff than for students).

**It was relatively uncommon for racial harassment complaints to be resolved through the use of mediation.** Although three-fifths of universities stated that mediation was available, most cases were pursued through the formal complaints procedure, without the involvement of mediation.

**The handling of racial harassment cases was often very slow.** Universities often took a long time to resolve cases – in some cases over a year. Resolving complaints made by students was generally quicker than resolving complaints made by staff

**Institutions felt that they were handling complaints of racial harassment well.** Across all the measures of complaints handling that the study considered, only a small minority of universities felt that they were definitely not handling complaints well. Nearly all institutions that had received a complaint felt that they had dealt with complaints fairly and without bias (92% in relation to student complaints and 89% in relation to staff complaints).

**However, most institutions were not confident that they were able to prevent racial harassment.** HEIs recognised that they needed to do more to embed policies and procedures on preventing and dealing with racial harassment. Most had mechanisms in place for monitoring the culture of their institution, including experiences of racial harassment. However, some HEIs did not provide training on how to report and/or tackle racial harassment. In particular, it was quite uncommon for universities to have systems in place for addressing more subtle forms of racial harassment.

**Most universities were clear about their responsibilities to address racial harassment.** The majority said that they analysed their complaints data to look for evidence of how they could improve (although not all had actually received any complaints). Eighty per cent of respondents had plans to take further measures in this area.

# Appendix: respondents and non-respondents to the university survey

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## Respondents

Abertay University

Aberystwyth University

Anglia Ruskin University

Arts University Bournemouth

Aston University

Bangor University

Birkbeck College\*

Birmingham City University

Bishop Grosseteste University

Bournemouth University

Brunel University London

Buckinghamshire New University

Cardiff Metropolitan University

Cardiff University

City University of London

Conservatoire for Dance and Drama

Coventry University

Cranfield University

De Montfort University

Edge Hill University

Edinburgh Napier University

Falmouth University

Glasgow Caledonian University

Goldsmiths' College

Guildhall School of Music & Drama

Harper Adams University

Heriot-Watt University

Imperial College of Science Technology and Medicine

King's College London

Kingston University

Leeds Arts University

Leeds Beckett University

Leeds College of Music

Leeds Trinity University

Liverpool Hope University

Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts

Liverpool John Moores University

Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine

London Business School

London School of Economics and Political Science

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Manchester Metropolitan University

Middlesex University

National Film and Television School

Newman University

Norwich University of the Arts

Nottingham Trent University

Open University

Oxford Brookes University

Plymouth College of Art

Queen Margaret University

Queen Mary University of London

Ravensbourne University London

Robert Gordon University

Roehampton University

Rose Bruford College of Theatre and Performance

Royal Academy of Music

Royal Agricultural University

Royal Central School of Speech and Drama

Royal College of Art  
Royal College of Music  
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland  
Royal Holloway and Bedford New College  
Royal Northern College of Music  
School of Oriental and African Studies  
Sheffield Hallam University  
Solent University  
SRUC  
St Mary's University Twickenham  
St. George's Hospital Medical School  
Staffordshire University  
Swansea University  
Teesside University  
University College Birmingham  
University College London  
University College of Osteopathy  
University for the Creative Arts  
University of Aberdeen  
University of Bath  
University of Birmingham  
University of Bolton

University of Bradford  
University of Brighton  
University of Bristol  
University of Cambridge  
University of Central Lancashire  
University of Chester  
University of Chichester  
University of Derby  
University of Dundee  
University of Durham  
University of East Anglia  
University of East London  
University of Edinburgh  
University of Essex  
University of Exeter  
University of Glasgow  
University of Gloucestershire  
University of Greenwich  
University of Hertfordshire  
University of Hull  
University of Keele  
University of Kent

University of Lancaster

University of Leeds

University of Leicester

University of Lincoln

University of Liverpool

University of London

University of Manchester

University of Newcastle upon Tyne

University of Northampton

University of Northumbria

University of Nottingham

University of Oxford

University of Plymouth

University of Portsmouth

University of Reading

University of Sheffield

University of South Wales

University of Southampton

University of St Andrews

University of St Mark & St John

University of Stirling

University of Strathclyde

University of Suffolk

University of Sunderland

University of Surrey

University of Sussex

University of the Arts London

University of the Highlands and Islands

University of the West of England

University of the West of Scotland

University of Wales Trinity Saint David\*

University of West London

University of Westminster

University of Winchester

University of Wolverhampton

University of Worcester

University of York

Wrexham Glyndŵr University

Writtle University College

York St John University

\*University's survey submission was received too late to be included in the analysis

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## Non-respondents

AECC University College

Bath Spa University

Canterbury Christ Church University

Courtauld Institute of Art

Glasgow School of Art

Institute of Cancer Research\*

London Metropolitan University

London South Bank University

Loughborough University

Royal Veterinary College

Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

University of Bedfordshire

University of Cumbria

University of Huddersfield\*

University of Salford\*

University of Warwick

\*University offered to participate in the research but submission could not be accepted beyond the deadline.