

Should the Students' Union lobby the University to decolonise the curriculum?

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What do you want?

The work of decolonisation is multi-layered and works towards structural change. Decolonising learning helps us to recognise, understand, and challenge the ways in which our world and education is shaped by colonialism (Liyanage, 2020).¹

Decolonisation is an active process of critical scrutiny of our curricula and teaching practices aimed at understanding this legacy and beginning the work of dismantling it.

1. The University should decolonise the curriculum, this should be a part of the usual process of curriculum review and quality assurance.
2. Think critically about curriculum content, the way it is taught and how it impacts on diverse groups of students
3. Developing resources on decolonisation within specific disciplines to decolonial activity within schools and curriculum development
4. Platform the opinions of students particularly BAME student on representation within the curriculum and what a decolonised curriculum can look like
5. Consulting students on the naming of buildings
6. Address the BAME attainment/awarding gap and create meaningful measures to tackle this and support students
7. To lobby that the university must improve diversity among academic staff as BAME staff are poorly represented in both teaching and university leadership roles.

Why do you want it?

Decolonising challenges, resists, and dismantles ongoing colonialism imposed through Western powers.² Universities, including Queen Mary, are urged to address structural inequalities and racism in their practices and confront their colonial legacies.

"Queen Mary University of London seeks to be the most inclusive university of our kind anywhere by 2030".³ There are many universities across the UK including those in the Russell Group that have committed to decolonising the curriculum, established working groups, created toolkits, and have worked with their Students' Unions to work on an inclusive, diverse and decolonised curriculum. As Queen Mary has a very diverse campus with most students coming from BAME backgrounds, however, this is not represented in the delivery of modules and programmes.

What impact will it have?

Through decolonisation, Queen Mary would become more open, racially and culturally aware which will help to make the university a safer space for all. Decolonisation can be understood in many ways and affects many aspects of life. Decolonisation is political and also economical (in the possessions of resources), educational (in the imposition of knowledge), cultural (in the erasure of values, attitudes, language, and beliefs) and psychological (internalisation of oppression).⁴ This would introduce work to identify and overcome barriers associated with the legacies of colonialism, denials about racism, and the time needed to address fundamental questions about knowledge and pedagogy.

¹ <https://decolonisingthecurriculumlsbu.com/about/#history>

² NUS Divest to Decolonise

³ <https://www.qmul.ac.uk/strategy-2020/>

⁴ <https://www.salfordstudents.com/student-voice/black-award-gap/decolonising-the-curriculum>