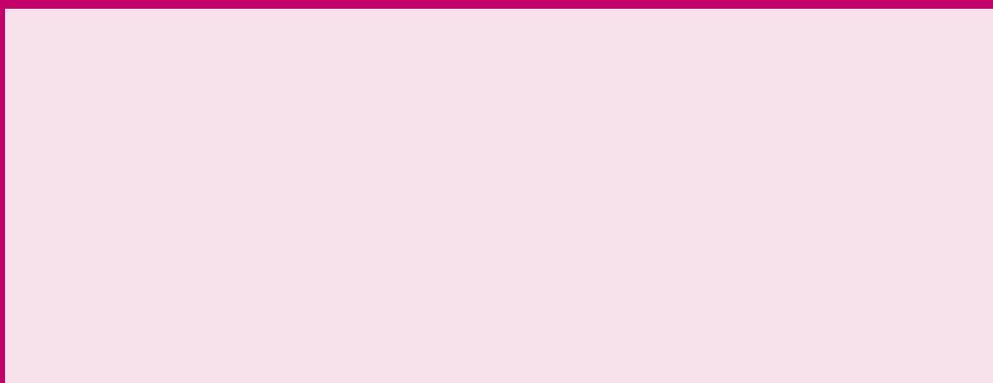
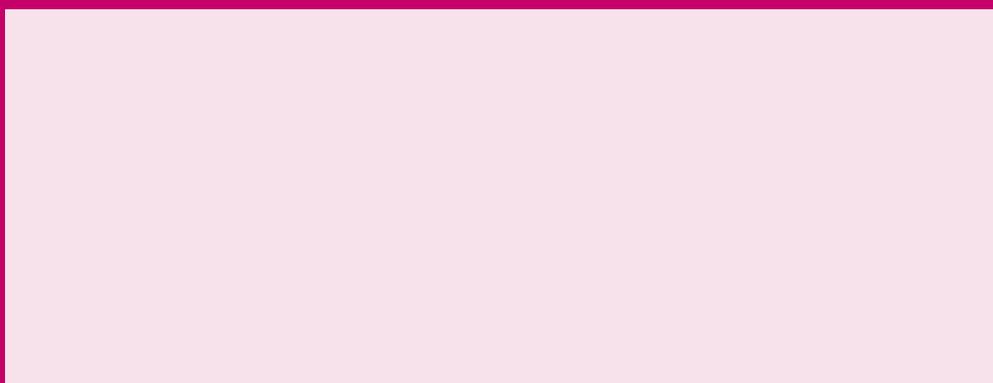


Academic flight: how to encourage black and minority ethnic academics to stay in UK higher education

Summary report



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Foreword from the ECU Chair Janet Beer Vice-chancellor, University of Liverpool



**Janet Beer, Vice-chancellor,
University of Liverpool and
ECU Chair**

ECU's 2011 report *The experience of black and minority ethnic staff in higher education in England* evidenced what was largely already known: UK black and minority ethnic (BME) staff do not have the same experience of our sector as their white UK peers. That research found that BME staff feel under greater scrutiny, have to work harder to prove themselves, are less likely to be encouraged to go for promotion, and are less often successful in applications for promotion when they do apply.

This research follows on from that report and explores one of the potential consequences of those experiences: do UK BME staff move overseas at different rates and for different reasons to their white counterparts?

For me, as a vice-chancellor, the research presents some findings which we should address as a matter of urgency.

First and foremost senior leaders, and the sector as a whole, need to acknowledge and tackle the underrepresentation and specific challenges that face BME staff. In addition we must publicly embrace, support and acknowledge the talent of our BME academics in the UK – and encourage those who have left to return.

We have invested in the development of talent but our competitors overseas are benefitting from UK-grown, UK-educated and UK-funded British talent. It is our responsibility to ensure we retain but also attract back UK BME staff.

This year ECU will be announcing the first successful race equality charter mark awards. We want this to represent a new start and an opportunity to address the issues raised in this research. We cannot shy away from evidence of racial inequalities: we have to tackle the issues and advance race equality to ensure our BME academics not only want to stay at our institutions but inspire those who have left to return.

I would encourage senior colleagues across the sector to reflect on how they can address the issues this report highlights. Let us ensure that UK higher education (HE) is an environment in which anyone can thrive and achieve, and which UK academics only leave temporarily, or for positive, career-enhancing reasons.

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Summary report

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Introduction

Anecdotal evidence suggests that UK black and minority ethnic (BME) academics move overseas to progress their careers in HE for different reasons, and potentially at different rates, to their white UK counterparts.

Considering the implications for the UK HE sector, ECU sought to explore to what extent it is the case that UK BME academics move overseas and why, and most importantly, what can be done to address any issues which exist.

A group of BME academics advised on the shape and scope of the research, which was undertaken by a team from the University of Southampton.

This report provides a summary of findings from the research, with conclusions and recommendations.

The full report is available online: *Academic flight: how to encourage black and minority ethnic academics to stay in UK higher education: Research report*

www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/academic-flight

Research aims

The aims of the research were to:

- = understand to what extent UK academics consider moving to work in HE overseas and determine if there is a difference by ethnicity
- = understand the reasons (both push and pull factors) which contribute to their actual or potential migration to overseas higher education institutions (HEIs) and whether these factors vary by ethnicity
- = establish what UK HEIs can do to retain BME academics, and attract back those who have already left
- = explore if considerations of moving overseas occurred at a particular stage in an individual's career path

This report represents the findings from the research and subsequent conclusions and recommendations for UK HE.

Methodology

A total of 1201 academics responded to a survey which explored various push and pull factors to working overseas. The survey was open to all academics regardless of ethnicity, and was sent to all institutions across the UK for dissemination to their staff. In addition known contacts and networks helped to disseminate the survey, and academics were encouraged to forward the

survey to their own colleagues and contacts. In this way UK academics living abroad were also able to complete the survey.

Responses were analysed for trends by personal characteristics, geographical location, discipline and type of institution.

Following the survey, 41 interviews were carried out with BME academics: 14 with UK experience only, 12 currently working in the UK but with previous overseas experience and 15 currently working overseas (12 with and three without work experience in UK HE).

The full methodology and demographics of the participants results from the survey can be found in the full report of this research: *Academic flight: how to encourage black and minority ethnic academics to stay in UK higher education. Research report.*

Responses

There was positive engagement with the research from the survey respondents, many of whom provided detailed comments in the open text sections, and from the interviewees, who took the opportunity to identify what they felt could be improved in UK HE. Several specifically said that the research area was important particularly in relation to policy recommendations in HE.

It is important to acknowledge that there were both positive and negative experiences of the UK HE sector and, although a number of factors were identified which had or would push BME academics away, there were also positive experiences, including acknowledging the support that some BME academics had received from mentors.

Regardless of any negative experiences, BME academics were contributing to the sector in a whole range of subject areas and in different types of roles. A small number indicated that they had not experienced discrimination in academia, particularly by some who identified as being from a mixed heritage background and who felt they were not visibly identifiable as being from a BME background. However, respondents also reported a significant number of negative experiences which led them to consider moving overseas.

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data

The available HESA data on academic flight is limited due to the low proportion of known destination of academics leaving higher education institutions. For example, of academic staff who left their institution between 2011/12 and 2012/13 only 41.7 per cent of white leavers and 44.5 per cent of BME leavers left to a 'known' destination. This means that already small numbers become even smaller. Even where the numbers are known, they inevitably do not explain why academics were motivated to leave, which is the main purpose of this research.

While the numbers within the HESA data are too small to draw any conclusions, there does seem to be some difference in year-by-year rates of outflow and different spikes in when BME academics and white academics increase in outflow. The data is available in **appendix 1**.

Note on terminology

ECU uses the term 'black and minority ethnic' (BME) throughout our reports and publications in an attempt to be consistent in our terminology and the references we make to external sources and data. However, we recognise the limitations of the term, including the incorrect assumption that BME individuals are a homogeneous group, and the negative implications associated with describing groups as minorities.

Throughout this report where we refer to respondents and to academics we are referring to UK academics specifically. While we realise that international academics also face challenges and barriers within UK HE, this particular research is solely focused on academics who identify as being from the UK and/or who have UK nationality or citizenship.

Findings and recommendations

The research highlights areas of concern for institutions, many of which have been raised in previous research, for example ECU (2011) and Bhopal (2014).

The research suggests that while there may not be statistically significant differences in rates of academics moving overseas, BME UK academics are significantly more likely to consider a move to an overseas university than their white UK counterparts. The statistics also suggest that patterns of migration vary between white UK and BME UK academics, and the rates of academics returning from overseas are different.

Respondents did have some positive experiences of UK HE. Where it worked as it should, individuals were able to progress their careers and acquire the roles and permanent contracts they desired. However, for many this was not the case.

The risk for UK HE is that if the issues outlined below are not prioritised and addressed, UK BME academics will move overseas rather than just considering it.

What is particularly interesting is where a push factor from the UK correlates with a pull factor from overseas. These areas are highlighted below, along with other, more general areas for UK institutions to consider.

Prioritising race equality

‘One of the reasons why there is still such racial inequality in academia is that race equality has never been made a priority. Not a real priority. When you work in academia you know what the priorities are because they are the things that senior and middle managers are monitored on, are assessed by, people’s promotion depends on them. And there is no one in academia, there is no kind of role in academia where your promotion and your progress and your assessment depends on achieving race equality amongst staff... race equality in terms of staffing... have never been priorities. If they were priorities then they would be number one on the agenda at the breakfast meetings of senior staff. They are not there.’
White and Black Caribbean, male, Russell group university (interview)

This view of UK senior leaders contrasted with how respondents viewed some overseas institutions. While there was an acknowledgment that countries such as the United States were far from perfect, there was a sense that race equality was a higher priority than in the UK.

This manifested in areas such as recruitment, promotion, research and the general culture which were all seen as more transparent and inclusive. Respondents felt that not only was there more of a meritocracy overseas, but diversity was actively valued by senior managers. They saw minority ethnic staff as a benefit to their department and institution.

Respondents emphasised that if UK HEIs were explicit in how they valued BME academics, this would encourage them to return. In particular, if they saw an increase of BME academics in decision-making roles and if universities directly addressed race equality and inclusion as priority areas both strategically and practically.

'We have few black professors and we need to be more inclusive about the number of women, white women, we have, but also the number of black women in decision-making roles, which we don't have. So I think that policies have to be really strategic and universities have to be strategic in how they want to keep people, or they are just going to keep losing really good people to overseas or to other universities. And I know that the Athena SWAN charter has been really good in terms of [science, technology engineering, mathematics and medicine] STEMM subjects, and ECU are introducing a race equality charter so I'll be interested in years to come to see if that makes any significant difference.'

Asian Indian, female, Russell group university (interview)

As well as senior leaders within institutions, HEFCE and ECU were both mentioned by participants as needing to prioritise race equality. It is something the whole sector needs to address collectively.

Recommendations

- = Senior leaders in UK HE, including the leaders of sector-representative organisations need to acknowledge that racism exists within the sector and it needs to be tackled.
- = Senior leaders need to prioritise race equality within their institution and within the sector as a whole.
- = Senior leaders need to set a standard within their institution to ensure the cultural direction is inclusive so staff and students can see this is an institutional priority.

- = Senior leaders could set targets for progress and tie these to individual and departmental performance targets which are reviewed regularly by senior management.
 - = Engaging with ECU's race equality charter mark and working towards a bronze award can allow institutions to take stock of their progress and issues to date and plan their intended actions systematically.
-

Valuing diversity

In contrast to the UK, it was felt that at some overseas institutions BME academics were valued because of the different skills, knowledge and background they might be able to offer rather than despite it. It was felt by some respondents that BME staff were utilised in the UK more to fill a diversity quota or to portray an image of diversity which did not reflect the reality.

'At one level there is a need to recognise that black people are also repositories of knowledge. There is an assumption that we are not. We are objects of studies. Unless you are doing what they want, or you are their research assistant, they don't want to hear from you. That's a wider knowledge issue that probably goes across the university sector. As a consequence of that, I think that learning institutions don't recognise the contribution of black people within the academy. And therefore they can't even encourage black students to progress within the academy and they don't recognise the impact that has on the ability of black people to perform.'

Black Caribbean, female, Russell group university (interview)

Some respondents mentioned the importance of introducing courses focusing on black studies in the UK similar to those offered in the United States.

'One of the things I say is, well, ok, you say that you treat white students and black students the same. Well, there is one sense in which we know that is nonsense and that is, white students do not come onto programmes and only encounter writing, concepts, theories, developed by black people. Whereas black students regularly go onto courses and the major theories, the major ideas, the major fields that they encounter have been developed entirely by white thinkers.'

White and Black Caribbean, male, Russell group university (interview)

It was noted that academics who do pursue non-Eurocentric research interests were at a disadvantage for REF submission and career advancement. Respondents considered that the REF prioritises certain journals, which places academics who may be more likely to publish in African and Asian journals at a disadvantage. This also has ramifications for peer review and demonstrating the impact of work which influences funding and promotion decisions.

Recommendations

- = Prioritise race equality within all facets of the UK HE sector, including staffing and issues relating to curriculum, pedagogy and research.
- = As a sector, consider the importance of post-colonial research and study, including departments dedicated specifically to black and Asian studies.
- = The staffing of such departments should also be reflective of the subject matter and dispersed across the country.
- = Consider how the REF (or successor system) ensures academics pursuing non-Eurocentric research interests are not disadvantaged.

'The question would be, if we are to develop things in the UK it cannot just be – here we have a centre in London. I think it would be great if it was also a sense of how black studies, diaspora studies, post-colonial studies is linked to Leeds, Bradford, Sheffield and various places around the UK rather than being institutionalised or support for a growing space for black British intellectuals in London.'

White and black Caribbean, male, overseas (interview)

Addressing micro-aggressions, inequalities and subtle forms of racism

Many respondents wanted universities to take specific action regarding the inclusion of BME academics in HE. This referred not just to the representation of BME staff within the academy, but the inclusivity of the culture, which resonated with aspects of ECU's research *Improving the experiences of international staff in UK higher education* (ECU, 2013b).

'If it is the case that UK higher education wants to have more minority ethnic academics then consideration would need to be given to how race discrimination occurs. Not overt, but in day-to-day micro-aggressions.'

White and Black African, male, overseas (interview)

Respondents provided examples of inappropriate behaviour from their colleagues which highlighted both a lack of awareness that the behaviour was offensive and covert and subtle forms of racism. Respondents noted that it was difficult to challenge such behaviours and/or to report them anywhere.

'One of the students referred to me very positively once. And my colleagues bowed to me but they bowed to me in a way which was an oriental style bow. And I looked at them, and said, "look, that's not on." But the problem is unless it's explicit forms of racism it's very hard to bring it up with your manager.'

Asian Chinese, male, pre-1992 university (interview)

'Another academic once asked one of his colleagues to ask me could I get him a picture of black guy standing on a street corner, for a book on crime and deviance. That's so bad, it's funny.'

Other mixed ethnic group, female, post-1992 university (survey)

Some respondents also referred to micro-aggressions from students, which impacted on their teaching experiences and also on course evaluation, which impacted directly on their career.

Recommendations

- = Staff and students may benefit from a greater awareness of the impact of their behaviour and the behaviour of others.

Training on unconscious bias and active bystander strategies, perhaps as stand-alone sessions, or as embedded elements of existing training could help. Further information can be found on ECU's website: www.ecu.ac.uk/guidance-resources/employment-and-careers/staff-recruitment/unconscious-bias

- = Give emphasis to the value of diversity so that there is greater respect for BME students and colleagues, and all staff and students are exposed to a more diverse knowledge base.
- = Support line managers to be aware of group dynamics and tackling inappropriate behaviour.

Recruitment and promotion

There were numerous examples where recruitment and promotion practice, and the support and encouragement provided when applying for vacancies could be improved. Respondents referred to positions not being advertised and simply given to others, usually less qualified white colleagues. There were also examples of racism in interview situations.

'There were a couple of other candidates. So, I was waiting, all fine. A man came up from where the interviews were taking place, to collect me. So he came up, turned his back to me, and said my name, obviously a female name. I had to tap him on the shoulder and say, "that's me." He said, "are you sure?" And I am telling you, I am not exaggerating anything. So I said "yes, I am [name]." He said, "come down and do your presentation." We had to go down two flights of stairs. In that time he asked me two more times: "are you sure you are [name]." I thought, well, I know I am [name], really you are the one that is not believing it. By now I was really pissed off. And I had to go in and give my presentation and I was thinking: I don't think I want to work here. I thought ok, I am here now, I can't just walk out. My blood pressure is now, you know, rushing to your head. I walked into this room, full of white academics, literally there was a sharp intake of breath. There was this rabbit in the headlights look, really stunned, which stayed like that the whole time of my presentation... And it was following that experience I just decided I am not applying for another job in the UK.'

Black Caribbean, female, overseas (interview)

Respondents also spoke about the constantly moving goalposts for promotion. Some were told that they would be promoted soon, and were still waiting years later, and others referred to changing criteria and constantly being told they were 'a close second'.

In particular the research highlighted particular sticking points for BME academics attempting to get their first permanent post-PhD position, and gaining promotion from senior lecturer to reader and to professorship.

Financial security was highlighted as a both a push and a pull factor to leaving UK HE for an overseas institution. Having a permanent contract prevented academics moving overseas (despite the cultural barriers they face as BME academics). However, where individuals were unable to secure a permanent contract in the UK, it pushed them to seek work overseas where they were more likely to secure a permanent role.

Recommendations

- = Reviewing recruitment and selection and promotion processes will help ensure that they are transparent and consistently followed.
- = Individual departments should ensure they adhere to institutional policies and take the transparency of recruitment seriously.
- = Institutions should consider recommendations for best practice, for example:
 - mandatory training to include unconscious bias training for those involved in recruitment and promotion processes
 - only including criteria which are essential to the job in the person specification
 - agreeing and prioritising job criteria in advance so they cannot be skewed to fit the preferred candidate
 - not requesting references in advance of job offers
 - having a strong chair and agreeing in advance that interviewers will challenge each other if they are felt to be biased in their treatment of applicants
 - conduct audits of recruitment and promotion rounds to ensure due process is being followed
 - institutions should explore particular sticking points for their BME staff, for example securing their first academic post or progressing from senior lecturer to reader to professorship
 - conducting an impact assessment of different contracts to find out if BME staff are more likely to be offered a short-term contract and the benefits of offering permanent ones (for example, job and financial security, demonstrating staff are valued, staff able to focus on their role instead of looking ahead to securing their next post)

Coaching and mentoring

In addition to the racial inequalities within the actual recruitment and promotion processes, respondents referred to different levels of encouragement, mentoring and coaching they were offered compared with white colleagues and peers.

Various types of support such as networking, mentoring and training were mentioned, particularly to retain BME early-career academics in UK HEIs.

'A young scholar really needs to have a network if they are to survive, I think, in the UK academy as presently structured. And you need, and I do know this from my experience at [United States university], and that's why it's so important to have senior racialised scholars who will get your back, who will go to battle for you, who will be noisy. Who will, when you need it, they will come out in force. I am that, and I think UK scholars need that. And it's the everyday things, where you are being denied things. You might be pushed out, that people are questioning your contribution and whether you really should be there.'

Black Caribbean, female, overseas (interview)

'... guidance and mentoring, saying: look, you are good, your CV looks the same as everybody else, there is no reason why you can't go forward now. Black people can be leaders and managers. All of that. You just need convincing. And that's what a good appraisal does. It gives you the right type of advice for the point at which you are at. That might mean moving institutions, that this isn't the best institution for you, that kind of opening might be better for you. But you definitely don't know it, you haven't got that cultural capital that knows how to navigate the higher education system. So you need to be given that tutoring in it.'

White and Black Caribbean, female, overseas (interview)

'I think at a very early stage in recruitment of minority scholars they have to be mentored in a way that makes them feel that their ideas are valued and that their research is going to be. And I am not assuming that all these minority scholars are just going to be researching minority issues. They bring something of value not simply because they are minority but they have come out of experiences that are important and they represent communities that have been historically disadvantaged in higher education. All those things can sometimes be very patronising, and very, oh, it's because you are a person of colour you are at this institution, those kinds of things can be actually almost as damaging as racism – a kind of "sympathetic racism". So it has to be done very sensitively. It has to be really thought out. And it is people of colour who have to be involved in the formulation of it, I have to say.'

Asian Indian, male, Russell group university (interview)

Respondents also spoke of informal networking and mentoring and cliques and in-groups. This impacts on who gets taken for coffee, as well as who gets the best opportunities and exposure. Mentoring is often informal, and while there is nothing wrong with that in itself, as it currently stands, as highlighted by respondents, it seems to benefit white academics more than BME academics.

Recommendations

- = Institutions should review their formal mechanisms for coaching and mentoring and look into how issues of race and ethnicity are considered to ensure good take-up of these programmes from BME academics.
- = In consultation with BME staff, institutions should consider whether there are positive action initiatives which should be implemented.

StellarHE is a strategic executive development programme for diverse leaders (black, Asian and BME) in HE:
diversitypractice.co.uk/events/stellar-he-events

B Mentor is a pilot cross-institutional mentoring scheme for BME academics and researchers. The pilot is currently running in King's College London, Imperial College, Queen Mary, University of London, the Institute of Education and University College London:
www.ucl.ac.uk/hr/equalities/race/BMEntor.php

- = Institutions should consider the impact of sponsorship as well as mentoring: David Thomas (2001) refers to sponsorship being particularly important for BME individuals as it validates them to other colleagues as well as to those who may be recruiting or making a particular decision.
- = Institutions should ensure that opportunities are well advertised and that all colleagues are genuinely given the opportunity to apply for them.
- = Honest and constructive feedback to unsuccessful candidates, especially when they are internal because individuals will benefit from knowing why they were unsuccessful, how they could improve in the future and to remain motivated to apply again.
- = Institutions should continually analyse their recruitment and promotion data by ethnicity to identify any potential issues and

areas where racial biases may be preventing BME individuals from being recruited and progressing in their careers.

Workload and development opportunities

Respondents spoke about their teaching workloads and the level of pastoral care they provided, particularly to BME students. Respondents were happy to provide these roles, particularly pastoral care, but acknowledged that they were time-consuming, and not necessarily prioritised by their institution.

While UK institutions were found to value having BME staff in visible teaching roles, the burden this places on BME staff was not acknowledged and did not assist with career advancement. Conducting research and securing research funding were seen as the key opportunities for REF submission and academic promotion.

In addition to mentoring and coaching, there was also a sense from respondents that allocation of development opportunities and research collaboration tended to happen informally. People may be more likely to collaborate with those they already have a relationship with or whom they unconsciously have a preference or natural affinity with. Psychologists refer to our innate people preferences as our 'in-group preferences', which could disadvantage BME academics.

'The other things are deeply cultural aspects whereby those who are most senior do look for reflections of themselves. And you see this happening, it's so difficult, you see this happening every day at such a micro-level. You see who goes for coffee with whom. You see who gets the informal mentoring. You see who gets the offer of the opportunity to co-write. And these things happen, I am sure a lot of the time the people who are discriminating in this way, because it is a form of discrimination, I am sure most of the time they wouldn't even see it in terms of race and racialisation, because it is "business as usual". It happens at such a micro-level, it does kind of start with who you go for coffee with... All those things add up.'

White and Black Caribbean, male, Russell Group University
(interview)

Recommendations

- = Institutions need to be aware of the impact of teaching and pastoral care and ensure that all academics share the load.
- = Institutions and departments should acknowledge when pastoral care is done well.
- = Heads of department and senior department staff members may benefit from reflecting on how development opportunities and research collaboration happens and consider whether bias (either consciously or unconsciously) is having an impact.
- = Department heads could consider the need for positive action initiatives to ensure all academics within their team feel supported.

Positive action initiatives acknowledge unfair underrepresentation or differential outcomes for different groups of people and seek to address the imbalance. It might be (and this would only ever be in consultation with BME staff) that bespoke mentoring, sponsorship and development is needed for BME academics, in order to overcome the barriers and inequalities which exist. This may be beneficial in the short term, while longer-term systemic change is implemented.

Networking and addressing isolation

Many respondents mentioned a feeling of isolation and not belonging in the academy. This was partly due to micro-aggressions, and partly because of the low numbers of BME academics in UK HE, particularly in more senior grades.

In addition to increasing networking and support for BME staff currently in the UK, there was also a strong recommendation to make more links with UK BME staff who had left. Some respondents highlighted that this research was the first contact they have had with the UK HE sector since they had left, which is not only a wasted opportunity for the sector, but it also discourages those academics from returning to the UK.

Many respondents wanted to maintain their links with UK HE, particularly in relation to presenting seminars and giving lectures. Maintaining links was mentioned as a way in which BME academics could be encouraged back to the UK, especially if they were able to give something back to their particular geographical area. However, many felt that in reality, such links did not exist.

'Would I consider coming back to the UK? I have often considered it. But there is just nothing there. There is nothing to apply for. There is nothing there. Nobody has ever contacted me from any university. I got an email when I was at [United States university]. I got an email from a student at a university I had studied and worked at, looking for my books, and they couldn't find my books in the university library. I am one of the most successful students that they had produced. So, I contacted the library, and I told them, I said: "do you know, I can find my books in the US public university libraries, I can find my books in most libraries across the US. But in my home country you don't have my books in any of the universities." Why would the university not bring me back for a commencement talk? Why wouldn't they celebrate my success with them?'

Any other Black Caribbean/African background, male, overseas
(interview)

'This [interview] is the first time I have had any contact with the academy in England. No one... even my alumni group from my UK university, there are very few of us in this type of work, how come I have not been asked to come back and talk. It's kind of weird. I have always said, if you ever need me to come back let me know. Nothing. I mentor a lot here.'

Mixed ethnic background, female, overseas (interview)

Visiting lecturer opportunities, external examining or holding a visiting post were all mentioned as initiatives that would contribute to attracting respondents back to UK HE.

'Sometimes people get personal invitations to come back and speak. And I think that would be one of the markers for me. If people were saying: "oh, yes, we know you are over there, do you want to come back and speak about that," invitations and things like that would begin to reach out and suggest to people, "we've kept your place". And as institutions internationalise, maybe they are going to think more creatively – I could give a Skype lecture. Those things would begin to pull you back. Research collaborations would pull you back, if you were in a research network and you were working with others, those kinds of things I think would. And I am certain that people would have to feel that there was an opening to take the chance.'

White and Black Caribbean, female, overseas (interview)

'I have always thought it would be really great to be a visiting professor somewhere... Some universities do semesters now, right? If they did semesters that would be great, because that's how I teach here anyway. You know, come for a semester, do an exchange, or just come and teach as a visiting professor for a semester. That would be great, I would love to do that. Come and live in London for a year, it would be great.'

Mixed ethnic background, female, overseas (interview)

Some suggested that universities should think of how they could change their recruitment practices to ensure that they used networks which would attract back to the UK those working in HE overseas.

'I think the UK needs to open itself up to the greatest number of academics who might do the greatest work within London or elsewhere in the country. The recruitment came across very UK-centric, because they didn't utilise any of the dominant networks that exist in the US. I heard about the position in May and I think they wanted somebody in October, whereas the cycle can be somewhat different internationally.'

Black Caribbean, male, overseas (interview)

Recommendations

- = In consultation with BME staff, institutions should consider whether a BME staff network would be useful.**
- = Where networks are established or already exist, ensure they are endorsed by senior managers so that participation is not seen as taboo, and the university benefits from the knowledge and skills of the network.**
- = Also consider providing such networks with budgets to organise training and events for members.**
- = Consider how to work with race-specific networks and initiatives at a national scale, for example Black British Academics, the BME Network of Networks, the Higher Education Race Action Group, National Union of Students Black Students Campaigns.**
- = Consider what other support can be provided to BME staff and students to break down feelings of isolation and ensure they are supported.**

- = Make contact with academic alumni who have gone overseas and explore mechanisms for them to be in contact with the institutions, for example, through guest lectures and courses, either virtually, using Skype, or as visiting lecturers.
- = Develop sector-wide mechanisms and networks for BME academics to remain engaged with UK HE and maximise the use of the networks.

As one example, **Black British Academics** have a network list specifically for overseas academics, which might be useful for both academics and UK institutions: blackbritishacademics.co.uk (please note that Black British Academics is a Community Interest Company which relies on subscriptions and support from institutions and individuals for running costs).

Conclusions

The reasons for BME academics leaving, or considering leaving UK HE are not new.

The lack of permanent contracts and financial security, the lack of transparency in recruitment and promotions, the lack of informal and formal support and mentoring, and lack of black studies departments in the UK are all contributing factors.

There is a systematic perception that race equality is not being prioritised within the sector, which is representative of the culture that is pushing BME academics away, and preventing them from returning. Ensuring that race equality is prioritised within the sector in a meaningful way is not easy, but is the first step to instigating systemic, long-term culture change.

Leaky pipeline

The research suggested that while currently there may not be statistically significant differences in rates of academics moving overseas by ethnicity, BME academics are significantly more likely to consider a move to an overseas university than their white British counterparts. The statistics also suggest that patterns of migration vary between white and BME British academics, and the rates of academics returning from overseas are different.

This is a risk for UK HE. Talented individuals are being lost to competing international institutions. This has an impact on the diversity of the HE workforce, as well as the diversity of what is being researched and taught in the UK. There is little point in attracting a diverse group of students into the academy to study and then allowing them, or arguably, pushing them to move overseas in order to progress in an academic career.

The leaky pipeline for women in academia has been considered for some time, and we need to address the equivalent phenomenon for ethnicity. Those interviewed highlighted finding their first permanent academic contract and gaining promotion from senior lecturer upwards as key transition points.

Where BME academics were barred from making these transitions, they were more likely to consider a move overseas. Financial security through permanent contracts and transparent recruitment and promotion processes are a necessity.

It is also worth considering female, BME academics who potentially face dual discrimination and increased barriers to their academic careers.

International reputation

The reasons why people are moving overseas are just as important as the number of people leaving. UK academics working overseas should be ambassadors of UK HE, encouraging international collaboration, spreading the reputation of UK HE and potentially encouraging international staff and students to pursue opportunities within the UK HE sector.

However, if staff are leaving and moving abroad as a last resort because they feel blocked from succeeding, they are likely to be taking a very different message and interpretation of UK HE with them.

In addition to the possible perception of UK HE that BME academics will communicate, there is a high chance that they will be in contact with some academics still working in the UK, and could also act as encouragement for them to follow them overseas.

Time for change

The issues highlighted within this report are flagged repeatedly in research into racial inequalities within HE, and it is time for change. It is important to remember that these issues are not isolated to any one institution, or indeed the HE sector specifically, but it is the responsibility of individual institutions to act.

ECU is currently trialling a race equality charter mark specifically for the HE sector. Its purpose is to improve the representation and success of BME staff and students in HE. ECU's aim is to tackle the issues identified in this report and to advance race equality so that no academic feels pushed away, and our sector is able to thrive and make use of all its talent.

The charter mark is not an end in itself, but it provides a framework for institutions to work through to conduct a comprehensive self-assessment of what issues might exist, and what the institution can do to tackle them.

For more information on ECU's race equality charter mark, visit: www.ecu.ac.uk/equality-charter-marks/race-equality-charter-mark

A full version of this report is available online: *Academic flight: how to encourage black and minority ethnic academics to stay in UK higher education: Research report*
www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/academic-flight

Appendix 1: HESA data on academic flight

Year	No. UK white academics	No. UK BME academics	Total academics	UK BME % of academics	UK white % of academics	White outflow to overseas HEI	BME outflow to overseas HEI	Total outflow to overseas HEI	BME outflow %	White outflow %
2003/04	96220	5995	102215	5.9%	94.1%	110	10	120	6.7%	93.3%
2004/05	105300	6425	111725	5.8%	94.2%	75	5	80	7.5%	92.5%
2005/06	106955	6735	113690	5.9%	94.1%	70	5	75	4.1%	95.9%
2006/07	110075	7195	117270	6.1%	93.9%	75	5	85	8.4%	91.6%
2007/08	111435	7610	119045	6.4%	93.6%	90	10	100	10.2%	89.8%
2008/09	113690	8155	121845	6.7%	93.3%	80	5	85	6.0%	94.0%
2009/10	115945	8750	124695	7.0%	93.0%	95	5	105	5.8%	94.2%
2010/11	114800	9155	123955	7.4%	92.6%	90	10	100	9.9%	90.1%
2011/12	115010	9545	124555	7.7%	92.3%	115	20	135	15.4%	84.6%
Total	989430	69565	1058995	6.6%	93.4%	800	75	875	8.7%	91.3%

Equality Challenge Unit

ECU works to further and support equality and diversity for staff and students in higher education across all four nations of the UK, and in colleges in Scotland.

ECU works closely with colleges and universities to seek to ensure that staff and students are not unfairly excluded, marginalised or disadvantaged because of age, disability, gender identity, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity status, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or through any combination of these characteristics or other unfair treatment.

Providing a central source of expertise, research, advice and leadership, we support institutions in building a culture that provides equality of both opportunity and outcome, promotes good relations, values the benefits of diversity and provides a model of equality for the wider UK society.

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