THE BUCHANAN INSTITUTE

The University of Edinburgh's Response to Asian Hate On Campus

August 2021

Table of Contents

Foreword

This policy research paper was produced by a group of students within the Buchanan Institute as part of the 2021 Summer Research Programme.

The Buchanan Institute is a University of Edinburgh-based student-led think-tank that empowers students with the ability to develop policy that will solve real-world problems. By conducting policy research on specific issues, Buchanan's members aim to turn diverse ideas into comprehensive action.

The Buchanan Institute Summer Research Programme, separate from its Academic year Research Programme, was borne amid the first UK lockdown in 2020 out of a desire to provide an opportunity for students left suddenly without work experience and internships to continue to engage in public policy during an unprecedented time. In a time where many students felt abandoned or forgotten, it was more important than ever that students had the necessary tools and knowledge to make their voices heard.

This year brings the Summer Research Programme closer to home by centring the research topics on The University of Edinburgh, bringing back the focus on a familiar landscape. Through this latest instalment of the Programme, we hope to continue helping the next generation of young adults to engage with the public sphere.

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Racism Unmasked

Racism Unmasked is a non-profit organization founded to combat racism towards East/South East Asian (ESEA) people in Edinburgh and the wider U.K who have experienced racism. Founded in December 2020, we formed in the aftermath of the racist attack that happened outside Edinburgh University Library towards an East Asian student. Due to the significant increase in hate crimes towards the E/SEA community in Edinburgh, on top of the existing marginalization and silencing of the community as a whole, it has become more important than ever to create a community where people can come together and finally be heard. Our aims include providing safe-spaces and support for ESEA people, raising awareness of the racism faced by the E/SEA community and educating the general public as to how they can be better allies, and working with local organizations, businesses and government to help change policies to make this society more inclusive.

We were excited when the Buchanan Institute reached out to us to collaborate on this project, as we are passionate about working to improve institutional policies so that they protect and support ESEA people and PoC (People of Colour) in general. The University of Edinburgh has a huge ESEA student body for which it is failing to provide necessary support, something many of our admins have experienced first-hand, and that has added to the trauma of the racist attacks and incidents they have faced. With the ease of restrictions, students will be returning to Edinburgh to continue their studies, therefore, the University urgently needs to come up with schemes and strategies to protect them from racism. We hope that a formal policy proposal informed by ESEA voices will be a good step in communicating with the University and pushing for vital change. Beyond that we are eager to assist with any ESEA researchers, and encourage research related to ESEA people and their experiences, as ESEA people's experiences are underrepresented in academia.

Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the efforts and time Racism Unmasked has provided, to ensure this paper is of a high standard. We value your contribution and commitments and look forward to further collaborations.

A further expression of gratitude is extended to members of the University of Edinburgh community for their time and insights towards this issue, we understand that this is a highly sensitive topic and express our appreciation in sharing your perspective, most notably:

- Adam Bunni, Head of Academic Policy and Regulation

- Johanna Holtan, Program Director of The Mastercard Foundation Scholars

- Neil Doig, Crime Prevention Officer

- One Pusumane, PhD Student and Research Intern

- Rebecca Shade, Policy and Projects Officer for the Student Experience

- All Students Who Have Participated in the Research Survey and Interviewing Process

Lastly, we would like to extend our appreciation and acknowledge the entire Buchanan Institute Committee for their help and support during our research and publishing of the project, most honourably:

- Nadja Chong, Research Director and Research Mentor

- Lila Sakata, Research Director

Executive Summary

The Covid-19 pandemic has reinvigorated existing sinophobic sentiments worldwide and led to an alarming spike in violent hate crimes towards those of East and South-East Asian (E/SEA) descent. Evidence of this extends into the University of Edinburgh campus when, in December 2020, a Chinese student was verbally harassed and physically assaulted by a group of men outside the University Library[1]. The response from the University of Edinburgh was insubstantial, catalysing many students to feel unsafe and unprotected. The pandemic has exacerbated racial divisions but also exposed existing gaps in our anti-Asian discrimination policies which this paper aims to criticise and confront. This policy paper will explore the University of Edinburgh's current policies, suggesting methods to improve their reporting and supporting structures for racial incidents to ensure all its students' safety.

Currently, depending on the severity of the incident, the University has multiple pathways for students to report racially motivated crimes which include: directly reporting incidents to staff members, settling the issue through the Frontline Resolutions or going to the Advice Place.[2] The University has additional supportive mechanisms in place for students inclusive of external helplines and University counselling services.[3]Additionally, In attempts to deal with the symptoms of the pandemic, the University has also issued the 'Equality and Anti-Racist (REAR) Action Plan 2021/2022' which looks at taking actions against various forms of racism (personal, cultural and institutional.)[4]

However, upon analysis, these practises do not seem robust enough. During this unprecedented time where the need for these mechanisms are greatly needed, their efficacy is greatly questioned, particularly areas of visibility, accessibility and accountability. This paper therefore recommends more intensive training for all staff members alike, particularly Personal Tutors; mandatory talks regarding our zero tolerance towards racial abuse and discrimination during Welcome Week for Freshers; more visibility online and on campus for

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[1] "Incident On Campus", The University Of Edinburgh, 2021, https://www.ed.ac.uk/news/students/2020/incident-on-campus-a-statement-from-the-university.

[2] "Procedure", The University Of Edinburgh, 2021, https://www.ed.ac.uk/university-secretary-group/complaint-handling-procedure/procedure.

[3] "Accident / Incident Reporting", The University Of Edinburgh, 2020, https://www.ed.ac.uk/health-safety/accident-reporting.

[4] The Race Equality and Anti-Racist Sub-Committee (REAR), "Uoe Race Equality And Anti-Racist (REAR) Action Plan For 2020/21" (repr., The University of Edinburgh Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee, 2021), https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/uoe_race_equality_and_anti-racist_action_plan.pdf.

resources and support; and a stronger centralised policy system that is made aware by students alike.

Key Recommendations

The recommendations are broken down into a two-tiered structure to ensure robust and comprehensive progressions of development.

Short-term recommendations are proposed for the upcoming academic year, which will likely involve elements of improving visibility and starting a dialogue between the university and the student body, and aims to formulate a sense of trust between both parties. Long-term recommendations are focused on improving the university experience and targeting much more complex issues, inclusive of adopting a culture of anti-racism at all levels of the institution.

<u>Short-Term</u>

- Improving the efficiency and visibility of measures currently in place
    - More robust dissemination of information online via university websites and social media, and offline via mandatory posters and signs in all campus and university buildings which include information about reporting and helplines.
    - Ensure accessibility of university website, and ensure through frequent checks that webpages are working and up-to-date

- Opening a Dialogue
    - Mandatory talks regarding zero-tolerance for racial abuse during Welcome Week and Induction Talks
    - Supporting student societies that aim to tackle all forms of racism
    - Call for EUSA to have more action and agency in supporting said societies
    - Creating grassroots workshops and forums to enable inclusivity
    - Start a dialogue and communication between students' associations (student body, EUSA) and staff, particularly REAR

<u>Long-Term</u>

- Strengthening Student Support
    - Training for those likely to be a main point of contact for students: namely personal tutors, welfare officers in student societies and RAs
    - Educating students on all forms of harassment, particularly on the nuances of racial harassment and microaggressions
    - Gaining and restoring trust between the institution and the student body through ensuring full transparency, a will for concrete action and lasting change

Introduction

With half our research team being East and South-East Asian (E/SEA) descent this policy paper sits rather personal to us all. Collectively experiencing and/or witnessing a multitude of racial discrimination and abuse, we refuse to enable or be complicit in this sort of behaviour within our university community. In times where socio-political strife is apparent and divisions are created through racial lines, we thought this policy paper to be particularly salient. With a large international population and the university priding themselves for being racially diverse, we need to ensure the protection and safety of all students and staff. Furthermore, for both local and international students we strive to create a community that not only welcomes but embraces all cultures and heritages, however in doing so we must address rather difficult discourse and interrogate challenging conversations.

Now more than ever it is crucial we listen to this feedback given by both the marginalised and our allies. This report aims to help, productively and critically, bridge the gap in communication between universities, teaching staff and students, and support collaboration when making future plans to eliminate E/SEA racial crimes. Through conducting both primary and secondary research we aimed to create a policy paper that is holistic, capturing various perspectives of the issue at hand, but to also enable a level of research integrity.

We do, however, recognise that given certain time restrictions and limitations we were unable to tackle all aspects of this rather complex and systematic issue. However, we do hope that this acts as a preliminary policy paper which will catalyse other reforms and action.

We hope you find this report an insightful read, and that it inspires you to be involved in the discourse to end racial abuse not just in our university community but throughout the wider scope of society.

Research Methods

Primary Data

There were two main methods of collecting data for this research project: a survey and several interviews. These utilised to better understand the individual experiences of students and staff with relevance to the topic of Asian Hate. Through the collected primary data, several graphs and diagrams were created to aid in the visual representation of the study.

I. Surveys

I. Relevant Stakeholders and Gatekeepers

The survey was shared through social media and the university's student society networks were utilised to increase reach and awareness of the survey. The societies have been selected in relevance to their stance on Asian Hate, thus a majority of those approached were Asian societies. However, the strategy is to approach as many societies as possible that align the motivation of self-education and awareness.

II. Student Experience

Surveys questions were created to measure the students' personal experience when dealing with racial abuse *(See Appendix)*. The question criteria were created to include the wide cultural backgrounds of the student body. As such, the survey was open to non-Asian students to gauge the indirect perspective of Asian hate crimes. The survey included a total of 34 questions detailing those surveyed consent to participate, anonymous background information and their perspective of the university's response to Asian hate. Those surveyed were then allowed to leave their contact details to be contacted by the research team if they were interested in participating in a more detailed interview of their experience.

III. Survey Analytics

Listed below *(figure 1,2,3,4)* are a visual representation of the key demographics of the survey respondents. The survey received 115 respondents over the course of 18 days. These are included for transparency and in the event of further research.
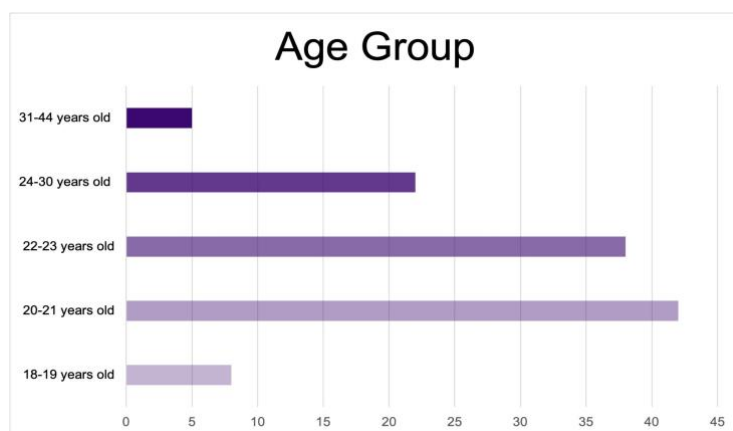

Figure 1. Age of survey respondents. (Photo by Anti-Asian Hate Policy Researching Team).
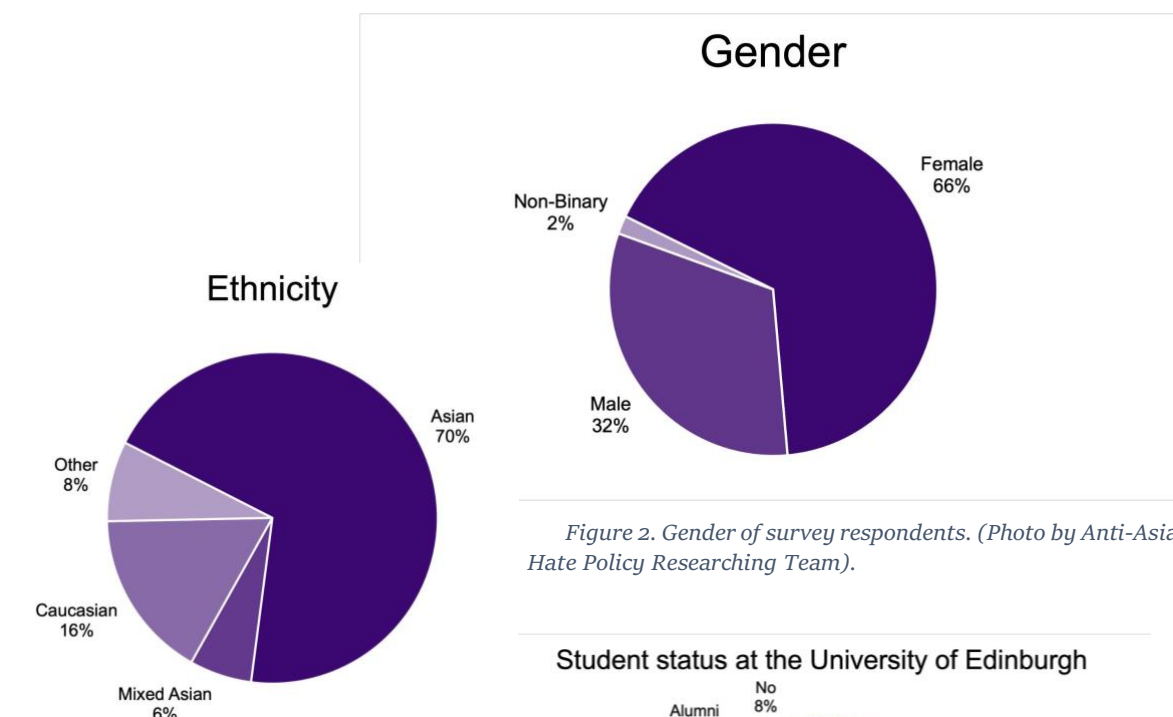
Figure 2. Gender of survey respondents. (Photo by Anti-Asian Hate Policy Researching Team).

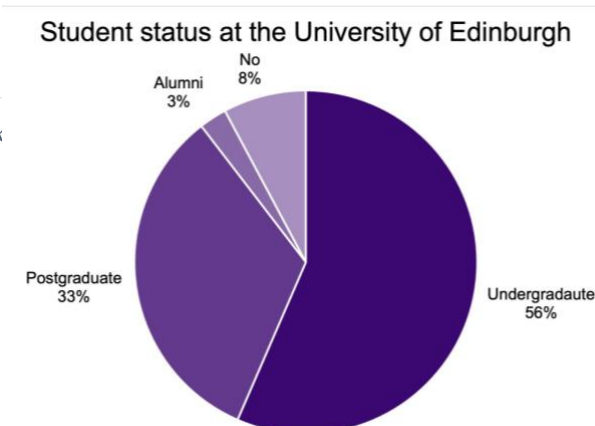Figure 3. Survey Respondent's Ethnic Back[...] (Photo by Anti-Asian Policy Researching Team).

Figure 4. Educational Level of Survey Respondents. (Photo by Anti-Asian Policy Researching Team).

I. Interviews

Interviews were categorised as student or staff feedback. Students were interviewed on an opt in basis which was determined through the survey as mentioned above. Survey respondents were given the option to leave their contact details if they felt comfortable being interviewed. Staff interviews were contacted based on their relevance to the research project. Interviewed staff within this proposal are listed below in the Acknowledgements Section for reference. Members of staff were interviewed to get a dual perspective of the university's response to racial abuse. As such, departments such as the Crime Prevention Office and Academic Policy and Regulation were approached to better understand the current ecosystems existing within the university. The interview structure for student interviews are listed within the 'Appendix.' As for staff interviews, we have included a sample of the interview structure and questions that were utilised for our interview with Adam Bunni, the Head of Academic Policy and Regulation.

Secondary Data

While this policy paper is largely primary data heavy, we still engaged with secondary data to support certain claims and points. We will engage most with secondary data throughout the 'Background' particularly in illustrating the context behind racial hate and how the current landscape has been impacted by the current pandemic.

Background

Rising Asian Hate Throughout the Pandemic

As the coronavirus pandemic touched upon all corners of the world, racism and hate crimes have increased towards E/SEA. Young E/SEA people have reported experiencing hate crimes throughout their lives. However, the frequency and severity of these incidents have multiplied since the beginning of the pandemic.[5] A poll by Ipsos Mori highlights the way COVID-19 would impact the British public's behaviour, and makes a startling revelation that one in seven people would avoid coming into contact with those of Chinese descent.[6]

A study conducted by Chelsea Gray and Kirstine Hansen from University College London, has highlighted the correlation between the pandemic and the amount of racial hate crimes towards those of Chinese ethnicity. They concluded that the probability of Chinese people being a victim of a hate crime during the pandemic increased from 10% to 13% in London, and subsequently there were no changes in hate crimes towards any other ethnic group.[7]

In Scotland, Asian hate crime has risen as well since the pandemic. Police Scotland have reported around 474 hate crimes between January and December 2020 which is a significant increase from 316 the year before.[8] These crimes have also been increasingly occurring at British universities with Asian lecturers and students being primary targets for racially

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[5] Abbianca Makoni, "Racism And Asian Hate Crime During Covid: Young People From The Community Speak Up", *Evening Standard*, 2021,

[6] Kelly Beaver, "COVID-19 – One In Seven People Would Avoid People Of Chinese Origin Or Appearance", *Ipsos MORI*, 2020, https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/covid-19-one-seven-people-would-avoid-people-chinese-origin-or-appearance.

[7] Chelsea Gray and Kirstine Hansen, "Did Covid-19 Lead To An Increase In Hate Crimes Toward Chinese People In London?", *Journal Of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, 2020, 104398622110279, doi:10.1177/10439862211027994.

[8] Christina Ong and Debbie Jackson, "Covid In Scotland: People Are Treating Us Like The Disease", *BBC News*, 2021, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-edinburgh-east-fife-56113045.

motivated hate crimes.[9] On December 11th 2020, a 22-year-old student was racially abused by a group of Scottish youths. [10] He was subjected to violence and racial slurs outside the Edinburgh University library, with one boy attempting to hit him over the head with a bottle of vodka, after which he was taken to the hospital with minor injuries. [11]

Two lecturers, Nini Fang and Shan-Jan Sarah Liu at the University of Edinburgh have published an important discussion on being Yellow during COVID-19 in the International Feminist Journal of Politics. They provide their personal perspectives of being a 'Yellow' migrant, living and employed in the United Kingdom. The article provides an important perspective on members of the E/SEA community taking extra precautions against COVID-19 early on, and how some white people saw this as 'hysterical'.[12] Fang discussed how she did not want to attract unnecessary attention outside:

"I really didn't feel safe wearing a mask when I was out because there had already been incidents where East Asians had been beaten up for carrying the 'Chinese virus' or the 'Kung flu.'" which as a result she stayed at home for 30 days, and once she finally decided to leave her house she was spat at.[13]

Ultimately, Asian hate crimes in the United Kingdom have sadly seen a substantial increase during the pandemic both in severity and frequency. Unfortunately, attacks have occurred in both the public sphere and private sphere, with some on university campuses, affecting students and staff alike. Therefore, it is important that there is an effective framework in place on university campuses to help protect and offer justice to victims of any hate crime.

Universities Response Towards Asian Crime and E/SEA issues

I. University of Edinburgh's Response

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[9] BBC News, "University Of Southampton Lecturer 'Beaten Up In Racist Attack'", 2021, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hampshire-56209881.

[10] Jeremy Watson, "Virus Blamed For Rise In Race Attacks", *The Times*, 2021, https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/virus-blamed-for-rise-in-race-attacks-3kskhx77c.

[11] Hannah Brown, "'Despicable' Racist Attack Against 22-Year-Old Student Outside University Of Edinburgh Library", *Edinburgh News*, 2020, https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/crime/despicable-racist-attack-against-22-year-old-student-outside-university-edinburgh-library-3066434.

[12] Nini Fang and Shan-Jan Sarah Liu, "Critical Conversations: Being Yellow Women In The Time Of COVID-19", *International Feminist Journal Of Politics*, 2021, doi:10.1080/14616742.2021.1894969.

[13] Ibid,337.

In response to the December 2020 library attack, the University of Edinburgh has released a media statement reassuring students, staff and the general community that the university does not condone violence, racism or any forms of discrimination. In working with Police Scotland on the investigation, the University highlighted how adequate repercussions will be made and action towards making the campus environment safer is underway[14]. However, despite these sentiments, no other forms of communication have been made on other visible social-media platforms. In this sense students particularly, have felt a disconnect suggesting that the University has not done enough to denounce this behavior or provide adequate visible support for the E/SEA community.

Behind closed doors however, more procedural and systematic changes have been made via the Race Equality and Anti-Racist (REAR) Sub-Committee. This committee is a thematic committee of the University of Edinburgh Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee (EDIC) and aims to promote the inclusion of BME staff and students while encouraging activity across the University to end systemic racism. Their action plan for 2020/21 has addressed the increased threats of violence toward E/SEA and responds with plans to combat this (*see figure 5*) [15] . However, the efficacy, visibility and transparency of this plan is questioned; insights to this will be assessed and addressed in the discussion section of the policy paper.

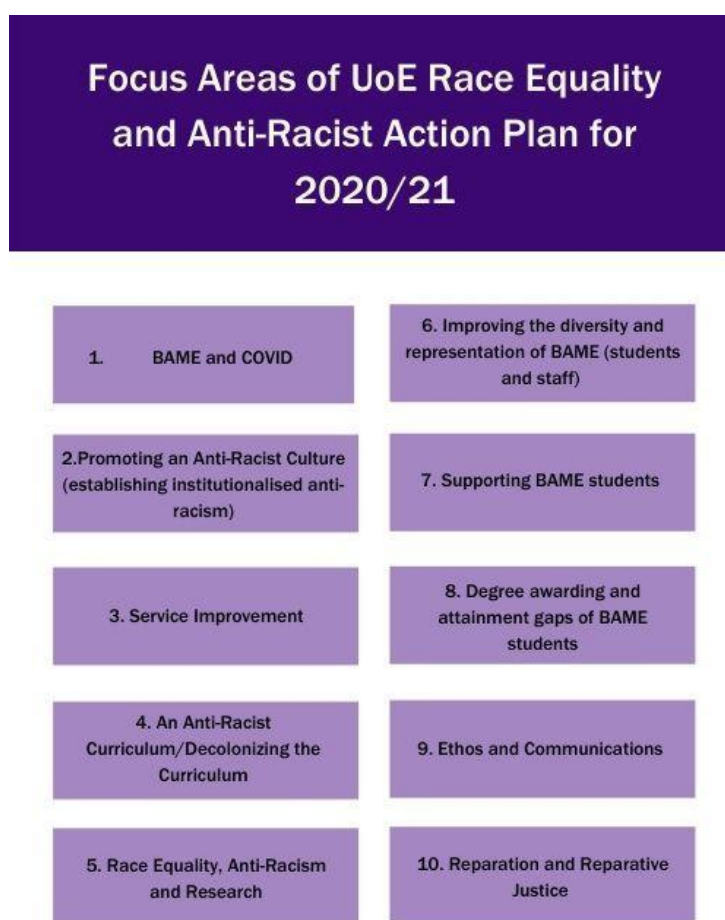*Figure 5. A visual aid for the focus areas for the REAR 2020/21 Action Plan. (Photo by Anti-Asian Hate Policy Researching Team).*

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[14] The Univeristy of Edinburgh, *"Incident On Campus"*.

[15] The Race Equality and Anti-Racist Sub-Committee (REAR), "UoE Race Equality And Anti-Racist (REAR) Action Plan For 2020/21" (The University of Edinburgh Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee, 2021),

With contextual insights into how the University of Edinburgh has responded it is salient to comparatively look at how surrounding institutions have responded both collaboratively and within their own respective campus to form a cohesive understanding of how racial and discriminatory discourse is responded to.

II.   Collaborations Between Academic Institutions: A Macro Outlook

More recent action has been taken by other institutions in response to the rise in Asian hate crime, exacerbated by the pandemic. Attracting more than 1,480 signatures, including 21 people of which came from University of Edinburgh, a campaign for UK universities to take actions against anti-Asian racism has called for all university stakeholders nationwide to reflect and take concrete steps to eliminate Sinophobia and anti-Asian racism throughout their higher-education institutions[16]. These concrete steps include but are not limited to: proving and strengthening support for witnesses and victims of racial abuse; providing anti-racist training to all staff; and publishing statistics of complaints and racist reports regularly, disclosing how these cases have been dealt with. With these signatures those who have conceived the campaign - students, alumni and staff of Chinese descent from UK universities - will aggregate the number of signatures from each university to its respective student union and senior management.

While these requests largely overlap and align with values and action supported by the REAR committee and the University of Edinburgh, many stakeholders in the University of Edinburgh community are signing this petition, suggesting that either current mechanisms are insufficient, ineffective or invisible.

III.   Specific Initiatives Taken by Other British Academic Institutions: A Micro Outlook

Analyzing British universities more specifically there has been various implementations and initiatives provided to show support and solidarity since the beginning of the pandemic. UCL have particularly used their 'spotlighting' media platform to highlight Asian experiences since the pandemic.[17] One most notably shedding insight to the 'End the Virus Of Racism Campaign.' Since a UCL student was attacked in early 2020, UCL postdoctoral fellow at the Institute for Global Health in Lu Gram, co-funded this campaign becoming the first UK non-profit to address racism and xenophobia towards East and Southeast Asians[18].

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[16] "UK Universities Must Take Actions Against Sinophobia And Anti-Asian Racism", 2021, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EPqFhavfnsL-

[17] "Spotlight On... Lu Gram", UCL News, 2021, https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2020/oct/spotlight-lu-gram.
[18]Ibid

The University of Nottingham have similarly taken comprehensive action in response to Asian hate, strengthening and upgrading their reporting services and procedures. Providing multiple platforms for E/SEA voices to be heard such as: a virtual Diversity Festival, in March 2020[19]; a panel discussion showcasing the latest research on how Covid-19 has impacted minorities groups and exploring how the University can use this to inform its strategies and policies[20]; and, an EPSRC-funded project to drive a positive change in culture and practices in equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) across Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (STEMM) and the development of a new toolkit to raise awareness of hate crime, in partnership with the Students' Union[21].

[19] "Diversity Festival - The University Of Nottingham", Nottingham.Ac.Uk, 2021, https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/diversityfestival/diversity-festival.aspx.

[20] "Keynote Event: Impact Of Covid-19 On Minority Groups Recording - The University Of Nottingham", Nottingham.Ac.Uk, 2021,

[21] "STEMM-CHANGE - The University Of Nottingham", Nottingham.Ac.Uk, 2021, https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/edi/stemm-change.aspx.

IV.   Considerations When Implementing Anti-Asian Hate Policies and Initiatives

While implementing initiatives promotes positive development, how it is received by the E/SEA community should be acknowledged. East Asian consumers are traditionally less prepared to voice dissatisfaction than their Western counterparts, and this may be exacerbated when dealing with high-ranked academic staff [22]. Respondents reported a high level of proactive behavior in approaching relevant staff with their problems via informal conversations as opposed to formal complaint channels. Collectivist culture, which predominantly Japanese, Korean and Taiwanese communities subscribe to, does not encourage individuals to vent negative emotions in public which inevitably affects how they address dissatisfaction within academic institutions[23].Therefore when adapting structures and systems in place, this should be acknowledged. Informal pathways and opportunities should be visible and accessible to E/SEA students to effectively express their concerns.

University of Edinburgh's Current Approach

I.   Reporting Systems

Currently, should a student at the University of Edinburgh wish to report a racially aggravated incident committed by a fellow student or staff member, there are a number of avenues from which to choose *(see figure 6)*. Depending on the severity of the incident, it may be necessary for victims to contact the police directly, by 999 or 101(for non-emergencies), or for any university organization to do so on their behalf upon receiving their complaint, if the perpetrator(s) present a threat to public safety.[24] If a legal investigation will not be required, before launching a formal report, the university advises students to pursue 'Frontline Resolution'; encouraging them to 'sort out the problem with those directly involved if you feel able to do so.'[25] If this approach fails, they suggest contacting the Advice Place, a student-run listening service, before launching a formal complaint, to determine 'whether another procedure may be more appropriate.'[26] In going ahead with the report, students are directed to a general complaints form; asked to attach any supporting documentation and detail the actions they have taken to resolve the issue already.[27] Alternatively, the Health and Safety

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[22] David J. Hart and Nigel F. Coates, "International Student Complaint Behaviour: How Do East Asian Students Complain To Their University?", *Journal Of Further And Higher*

[23] David J. Hart and Nigel F. Coates, "International Student Complaint Behaviour: How Do East Asian Students Complain To Their University?", *Journal Of Further And Higher Education* 34, no. 3 (2010): 303-319, doi:10.1080/0309877x.2010.484051.

[24] The University of Edinburgh, "*Reporting*"

[25] The University of Edinburgh. "*Procedure*"

[26] Ibid.

Department provides a similar online process for reporting an 'accident/incident' that may have resulted in injury.[28] Neither form make direct reference to hate crime or discrimination of any kind.
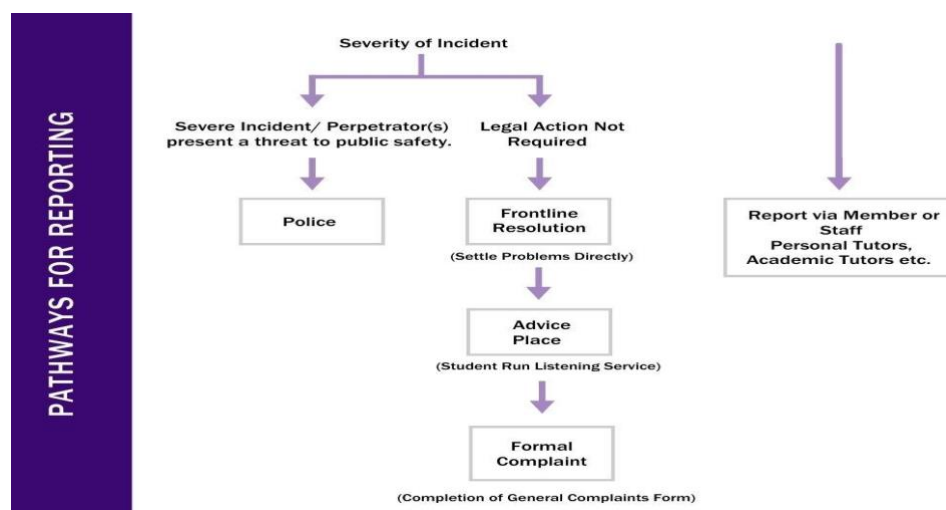

Figure 6. Pathways for reporting at the University of Edinburgh. (Photo by Anti-Asian Hate Policy Researching Team).

Alternatively, the student may wish to report the incident through a member of university staff. If discrimination occurred in an academic context, for instance, they may prefer to discuss it with their personal tutor or course administrator, who then would intervene as they deem appropriate. The effectiveness of this reporting process, however, is dependent largely on the student's relationship with such staff members; many have multiple personal tutors throughout their time at university, and thus may not feel comfortable reaching out for help. This issue has likely been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, as a significant portion of students have never met their personal tutors.[29]

II.   Support for Victims

Regardless of the method they use to report an incident, the university assures complainants that they will be supported throughout the process of investigation, with access to a number of both university-based and external support networks. For instance, those who

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[27] The University of Edinburgh Secretary's Group, "Request For Complaint Investigation", 2020, https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/new_chp_form.pdf.

[28] The University of Edinburgh. *"Accident / Incident Reporting. "*

[29] Austin Zhang, *Student Interview with Molly Shewan*, August 2021; Chloe Lei, *Student Interviews with Molly Shewan*, August 2021

report an incident to a member of staff can expect to be contacted with a confirmation of the details of their case and any resolutory action agreed, along with personalized support information.[30] Students are likely to be directed towards the Advice Place and university counselling service, to receive advice and support from trained volunteers, in a confidential setting - yet they may be obligated to contact the police if the assailant is deemed to pose a 'continued threat' to the complainant or others.[31] The university's 'racial harassment and hate crime' website also directs students towards resources funded by the Scottish Government: their advice and linked support for victims, and Victim Support Scotland, an organization established to provide 'emotional, confidential and practical help and support' to victims, whatever course of action they decide to pursue.[32] Additionally, university based and external helplines, such as nightline and support line, can offer general support for those struggling with their mental health.[33]

In addition, the recently launched Report and Support initiative focuses on providing support for victims of gender-based violence and plans to expand the service to aid victims of hate crime. The Health and Wellbeing Centre recently opened in Bristo Square may also provide another avenue for students to seek support.[34] 3 full time BAME counsellors were hired by the Counselling Service during the 2020/2021 academic year, which students may find additional support from. [35]

III.   Staff Training

Training for university staff on handling any reports of racial discrimination or hate crime is largely available through the LEARN portal, as a selection of online courses.[36] The training course available to school safety advisors, for instance, contains guidance on 'accident and incident management'.[37] Crucially, however, this course, along with all others available under the Health and Safety Department, is voluntary: 'No formal qualifications or standards of training for Health and Safety Advisers have yet been set down in any of the relevant

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[30] The University of Edinburgh, "*Reporting*"

[31] Ibid
[32] "Racial Harassment and Hate Crime", The University Of Edinburgh, 2021, https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/crisis-support/racial-harassment-and-hate-crime.

[33] The University of Edinburgh. "*Accident / Incident Reporting* "

[34] Rebecca Shade, Staff interview with Emma Lake, August 2021

[35]REAR Sub-Committee, *Action Plan for 2020/21*

[36] The University of Edinburgh. "*Accident / Incident Reporting*. "

[37] "School Safety Advisers Training", The University Of Edinburgh, 2021, https://www.edweb.ed.ac.uk/health-safety/training/e-learning/learn-courses/school-safety-advisers-training.

legislation.'[38] Therefore, although there is a course available to staff, detailing how to log a report and template an investigation, there is no way to confirm the rate of uptake among those eligible. Moreover, the courses available under the Health and Safety department focus largely on general health and safety policy, 'accident and incident' reporting and risk assessment - none purport to address handling racial issues, identifying discrimination or hate crime specifically, implying that such topics are not covered.[39]

The University's Race Equality and Anti-racist committee has highlighted the significance of creating 'institutionalized anti-racism' in their 2020/2021 action plan, stressing the importance of widening the 'conversation' on race to staff at all levels, particularly lecturers and heads of schools. Though such efforts to address systemic racism throughout the university are promising, REAR's proposals fall short of imposing mandatory training for all staff regarding racial and cultural discrimination and reporting procedures. For students, there is thus no guarantee that the staff they are in contact with, including personal tutors, lecturers, and course administrators, have received any such training, or are qualified to address any concerns surrounding racial discrimination that they may have.

IV.   Annual Accident and Incident Report

An 'Annual Accident and Incident Report' is made by the University Court and Health and Safety Committee. Students and Staff are able to access this report upon request.[40] Moreover, Students and Staff may ask for a report of BI Suite Incident [business data intelligence record or crimes on campus], searching for a specific date, be that month, academic quarter or academic year.[41] This accessibility is positive as it creates transparency between the university and its Student and Staff body. However, the lack of solutions given in response to these reports, which indicate recurring incidents on campus, is worrying. Conversations surrounding the narratives of how the University addresses, acknowledges and provides support in regard to incidents of racial discourse and violence on campus, are prevalent on the University of Edinburgh's campus following the December 2020 attack of an ESEA student outside the University Main Library. The University's delayed response and lack of action following this racially motivated act of violence has resulted in Staff and Students to lose confidence in the University's ability to uphold pastoral duties of support and safety.[42] Moreover, the lack of feedback parallels the lack of solutions given in response to reports, such

[38]Shade, *Report and Support Interview*

[39] "LEARN Courses", The University Of Edinburgh, 2021, https://www.ed.ac.uk/health-safety/training/e-learning/learn-courses.
[40] The University of Edinburgh. "*Accident / Incident Reporting.*"
[41] Ibid.

[42]Sihang (Olive) Xu, *student interview with Caiying Feng*, August 2021

as the 'Annual Accident and Incident Report', which demonstrate the need for better response systems.

V.   Investigation of Hate Crimes

If a police investigation or the process of criminal proceedings is underway then the University states that it will not carry out its own investigation internally.[43] This is due to the fear that a University investigation will compromise police investigation.[44] However, once the criminal process is complete, then the University will review if an internal investigation is necessary. If a University Investigation is deemed necessary, following a complaint made against a University Student or member of Staff, then the University will review this as a breach of conduct. The investigation will be reviewed under the Code of Student Conduct.[45] The Conduct Investigator will contact the victim in question, explaining the process of investigation. The victim will be asked how they'd like to engage with the investigation process. Moreover, whilst the investigation is underway, the student or staff member accused of committing a hate crime may be prohibited from accessing certain or all University facilities and University activities.[46]

The University recognizes that 'The investigation will be as thorough as reasonably possible, but will be more limited than a police investigation, since the University does not have access to forensics, and cannot compel witnesses to give evidence'.[47] The investigation is reliant on the Conduct Investigator's decision as to whether the Code of Student Conduct has been breached.[48] If the Code has been breached, the case will be passed to a Student Discipline Officer or the Student Discipline Committee. Once passed to the Student Discipline Committee the victim will be asked again as to what level of engagement they wish to endure during the process. The victim may submit a written statement to the Committee if they do not wish to be present. The student or staff member who has breached the Code of Student Conduct will not be present at meetings unless specifically requested.[49] However, the student or staff member accused of committing a hate crime will be advised to reach out to 'The Advice Place' of Student Counselling Services for support.[50]

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[43] "Investigations Of Hate Crimes", The University Of Edinburgh, 2021, https://www.ed.ac.uk/students/health-wellbeing/crisis-support/racial-harassment-and-hate-crime/investigations.
[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.

VI.   Plans for the Future

For the near future, new reporting systems for racial abuse are said to roll out in 2022, to mimic the systems of gender-based violence.[51] As mentioned by Holtan, more long-term, less established plans for the future involve: creating robust reporting and supporting mechanisms, improving staff literacy on racism and preparing the community so that it is competent when incidents are reported. A report and support mechanism will be launched in January 2022. This has been endorsed by the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee, endorsed by University Executive and is also Outcome 1 of the Equality Outcomes Action Plan for 2021-2025 with a focus on supporting staff and students to report harassment and hate crimes with a specific focus on gender-based violence and racial harassment.[52] Improving the counselling services and liaising with them to create a smoother process was also discussed but again, no concrete plans for this have been developed.[53]

[51]Adam Bunni, *staff interview with Rianna Choong*, August 2021

[52]Joanna Holtan and One Pusuname, *staff interview with Emma Lake*, August 2021

[53]Ibid.

Discussion

The Student Experience

The general student experience at the University of Edinburgh has been mixed with regards to experiencing or witnessing Asian discrimination on campus.

Upon reflection of their university experience, most students felt excluded in a social setting compared to an academic setting, suggesting that the culture around racism at university needs to be re-examined. 46.1% and 46.9% of students collectively responded 'yes' and 'somewhat yes' to feeling excluded in a social setting, and 'somewhat yes' to seeing another member of the E/SEA community being excluded because of their race, respectively *(see figure 6 and 7)*. In interviewing various students, they shared similar experiences of detachment and dissociation, finding it particularly challenging to integrate. Austin Zhang, an ethnically Chinese student who grew up in Canada reports feeling excluded in his student halls[54]; Hubert Yeo, a 4th year student international student studying remotely in Singapore, revealed how his Singaporean accent and slang made him feel that it was more "difficult to integrate" in social settings[55]; and Kashan Deslourix, a half Asian, half black student offers a similar perspective whereby he felt that it was easier to be friends with international students because they shared similar experiences[56]. While all anecdotal data, this presents a microcosm for the many E/SEA student experiences. While Although the university community seemingly has gone a long way with EUSA playing a big role in ensuring that students feel welcomed, systemic inequalities still exist and that diversifying the student body is a very important step.

Figure 6. Students who have seen E/SEA students excluded in a social-setting due to their race. (Photo by Anti-Asian Hate Policy Researching Team).

Figure 7. E/SEA students excluded in a social-setting due to their race. (Photo by Anti-Asian Hate

[54]Austin Zhang, *student interview with Molly Shewan*, August 2021

[55]Hubert Yeo, *student interview with Sydney Kwok*, August 2021

[56]Deslourix, *Student Interview*

In accordance with systematic racism, students also highlighted incidents of casual racism. Looking at the 31.3% *(see figure 8 and 9)* those who felt some degree of discrimination in an academic setting, there was a general consensus that E/SEA academic peers seem to entertain and perpetuate racial stereotypes. "I just feel like they have a perception of me and don't really expect much. They think I'm just cruising along even though I want to contribute" as mentioned by Deslourix.[57] Zhang on the other hand felt that in his tutorials some students failed to understand that some international students (for whom English is not their first language) may take longer to process questions than others, and thought that there could have been more consideration by other students to understand the predicament of these international students[58].

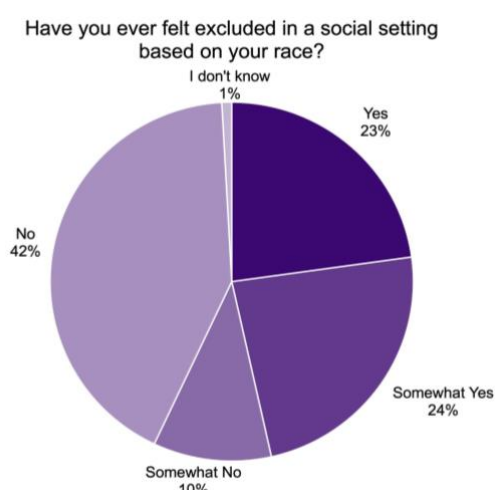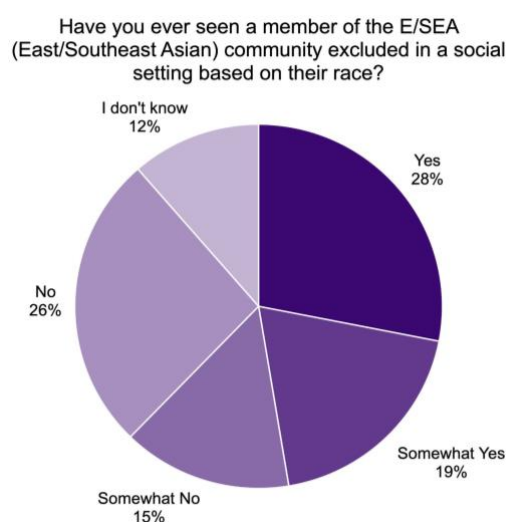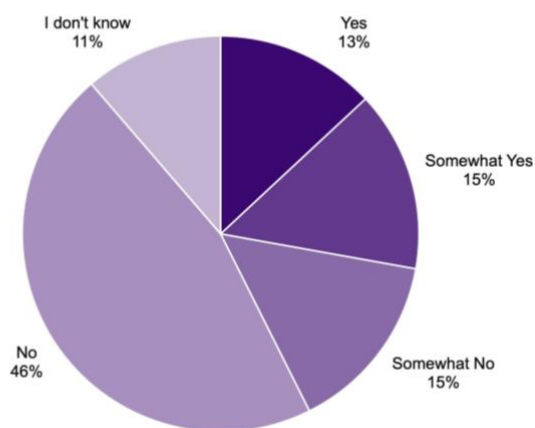**Have you ever seen a member of the E/SEA community excluded in an academic setting, based on their race?**

Figure 8. Students who have seen E/SEA students excluded in a social-setting due to their race. (Photo by Anti-Asian Hate Policy Researching Team).

Have you ever felt excluded in an academic setting, based on your race?
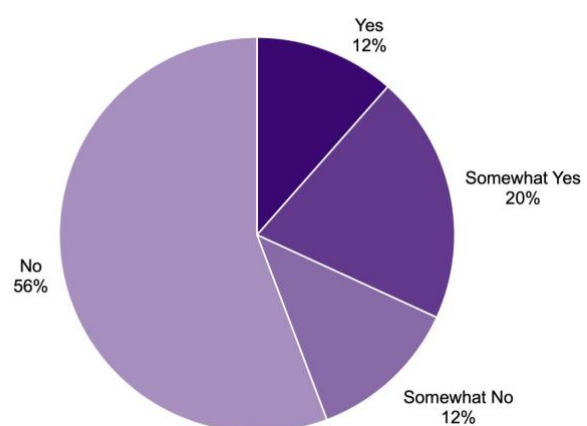
Figure 9. E/SEA students excluded in an academic setting due to their race. (Photo by Anti-Asian Hate Policy Researching Team).

In exploring deeper into how casual racism manifests within the university landscape, verbal and micro-aggressions are identified as the most utilized when incidents occur. Yeo has mentioned he has experienced micro-aggressions from various people in Edinburgh where they have made assumptions about his race. Sihang (Olive) Xu, a E/SEA postgraduate student at the University of Edinburgh, has been targeted verbally by teenagers and old men in

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[57]Ibid.
[58]Zhang,*Student Interview*

Edinburgh and around the university area because she was Asian[59]. When Xu retorted back verbally asking them to stop on numerous occasions, she emphasized that

"[they didn't] expect me to fight back or give any other response other than silence[60]. They wanted us to be silent, to be self-muted. It's bullying when you are seen as the weak. But I won't accept this."[61]

Contrary to all the other students we interviewed, Xu was the only person to elaborate that she fought back against the perpetrators. Most seemed to have taken more of a passive role in this situation, which perhaps reveals the most common reation from E/SEA students when faced with verbal abuse, which has been mentioned previously.

However, some students claim ignorance and poor integration is two-way, suggesting that E/SEA should have some agency in educating students; that to some degree E/SEA are complicit in perpetuating casual racism. As stated anonymously in the survey questionnaire: "Racism often comes from not knowing. I feel the E/SE Asian community also plays a part in not having done enough to integrate more based on what I experience; often being insular"

In essence, the university should strive to create a more inclusive environment, where reporting is not undermined. Casual racism ignorance, while damaging, is more dangerous when left unacknowledged and unrectified. Perhaps, this reiterates the notion that the university should, more intensely, explore and implement mechanisms that diversify the scope for growth, support and strengthen the culture around reporting - with the goal of stopping the cycle of under-reporting and under-supporting. Other suggestions, made by students in interviews, include: asking societies to push for more racially inclusive practices; emphasizing a zero tolerance for racial abuse, and overall promoting and creating more awareness on this sort of unacceptable behavior.

[59]Xu, *Student Interviews*.
[60]Ibid.
[61]Ibid.

Reporting Systems and Mechanisms

I.   Limited Resources and Training

With regards to reporting structures at the University, the limited training provided for staff has been identified as a major drawback affecting the experience for students when initially reporting racial incidents. Staff with inadequate training to respond and in turn provide support to students who are the victim of racial violence, aggression, isolation and hate crimes is an aspect that needs to be tended to. During her interview Rebecca Shade, Policy & Project Officer, stated 'there's a lot of work to be done here, but the university is committed to making change happen in this area so we're getting really pushed by the race committee to do more work which is great'[62]. The University's acknowledgement of the need for change is positive, though in the short term: as recounted in survey interviews, students are presently left feeling unheard and unseen. Shade highlighted the systematic problem of students thinking 'I've made this report, no one's helping me'[63]. The current system of reporting to Personal Tutors and then having to recount the situation to multiple parties deters many students from reporting micro-aggressions or hate crimes that they experience. This can be traumatizing in itself as the victim is made to recount and in turn relive the experience of the hate crime. However, Shade discusses how training can rectify the "confusing and decentralized"[64] systems that the university currently has; students do not need to reiterate their incidents and be passed down a systematic chain of advisors to reach help.

Moreover, it was emphasized during this interview that if students are aware of there being 'Report and Support' officers on campus who are fully trained and equipped with the linguistic framework to respond to racial aggression, then students will feel more confident and comfortable to come forward and report their experiences of racism. Deloureix, a mixed Black and Asian fourth year student, expressed concern with the reporting systems stating his reluctance to use it as it may not be able to provide adequate resources particularly due to his mixed minority background[65]. As articulately mentioned by another student, Yeo, "with racism it definitely requires some sort of training of staff. And not just personal tutors but all staff members."[66]

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[62]Shade, *Staff Interview*

[63]Ibid.

[64]Ibid.

[65]Deslourix, *Student Interview*

[66]Yeo, *Student Interview*

II.   <u>Personal Tutors</u>

At present, personal tutors at The University of Edinburgh are given a 'fact sheet' which outlines the protocol for acts of racism and hate on campus. However, personal tutors - the current first responders to such incidents - have no formal training unless they have personally sought out such response training. As Shade summarized, 'Some of you might have good PTs (Personal Tutors) some of you might not have good PTs and some of you might have good student support teams, or you may prefer to go to the advice place because you know your friends had a really good experience there [...] so we don't want to close off students options in that way, and I think another part of the race committees work will be [...] how we can make staff more aware of these things, and how they can then support students'[67]. Solutions regarding the training of staff and 'Report and Support' Officers were proposed during the interview. It was proposed that students should be asked what they would find most helpful and in what form support should be given - carrying on from Shade's previous statement discussing the avoidance of restriction of response and support available to students. Moreover, it was proposed that, 'a PhD student [would be hired] to train them up'[68]. The training of staff and personal tutors by a PhD student would be positive as the work would be research driven, mirroring the needs and experiences of students.

While there is significant value embedded in the role of PT's, perhaps too much scope and responsibility is placed on them, limiting their capacity and ability to satisfy the needs of students. Some students expressed their shortcomings as stemming from the fact that their role is not clear enough. As stated by Yeo 'I think one of the things that most students bring up is that some PTs do not seem to know when their role ends [...] for the longest time its always been PTs helping students with all these possible things but then the university doesn't provide consultants with the adequate support or training
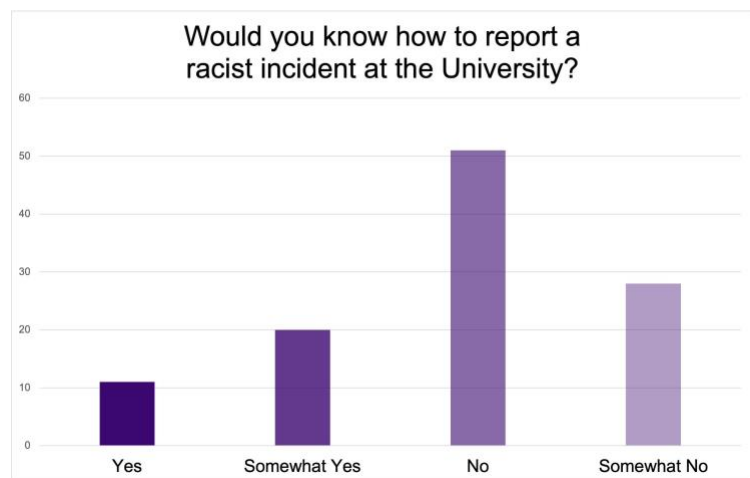

Figure 10. Students' knowledge of how to report incidents at the university. (Photo by Anti-Asian Hate Policy Researching Team)

for them to fulfil that role as best we can.'[69] A more structured approach needs to be apparent

[67] Shade, *Staff Interview*

[68] Ibid.

[69]Yeo, *Student Interviews.*

to ensure accessibility for students but also practicality for PTs. While this, however, has been discussed in the 2020/2021 REAR action plan, criticism on the implementation of this is questioned.

III.   A More Centralized Framework

Despite plans for a more centralized reporting framework, implementation of this has not been successful. In analyzing the survey data and interviews, students have still emphasized the need for a more centralized framework and system to streamlining the reporting process. Implementing a 'one format mechanism rather than having different systems in each school/college for dealing with racial harassment'[70] is highlighted in the REAR action plan for 2020/2021 but further details into what this entails has not been disclosed in the plan or the community. Currently most students are unaware of the reporting mechanisms in place (*see figure 10)* emphasizing in interviews that standardizing these processes so students are aware of what's going on is important, and "a more centralized framework would help because it's easy to remember and convenient."[71]

Some students have suggested that the centralized systems of reporting racial discrimination should mirror systems similar to the extension and special circumstances portal (*see figure 11)*. In acknowledging and responding to the varying circumstances exacerbated or created by the pandemic that may have adversely influenced students' academic performance, the student administration has overhauled the extension and special circumstances portal to better support students during this unprecedented time. At present, applying for special circumstances and extensions is more comprehensive, accessible, and transparent with an entire step-by-step overview of the application process, tracking the status of your application and attaching various multimodal services and resources for support. Deslourix, a 4th year student, specifically highlighted that it would be good "having a system
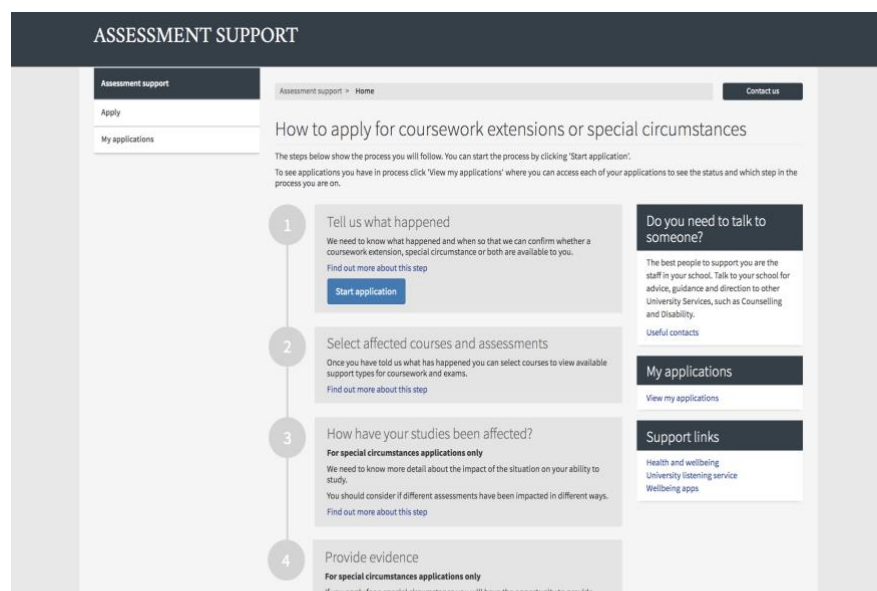
Figure 11. Screenshot from Assessment Support: Coursework Extension and Special Circumstances Portal

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[70]REAR Sub-Committee, *Action Plan for 2020/21*
[71]Yeo, *Asian Hate Student Interviews*.

similar to that of the extension and special circumstances portal, so having something central that is accessible and visible to students and expanding it so that contextual details can be included"[72] Xu, had the similar expectation: "I'd prefer a more centralized framework. More centralized means more accessible."[73]

[72]Deslourix, *Student Interview*

[73]Xu, *Student Interviews*.

IV.   **<u>Broader Scope for Reporting</u>**

While looking at improving and developing the systems and mechanisms for reporting at University, interviewee insights have proved this to not be exhaustive enough; the current culture around reporting and support for students needs to be acknowledged to create more robust systems.

Students have expressed how they have internalized different forms of discrimination as holding varying degrees of value. As mentioned by student Chloe Lei, a student at the University of Edinburgh, says she feels uncomfortable reporting microaggressions or verbal abuse compared to physical abuse. Students associate a lack of evidence to the validity and quality of the report.

'with physical violence I'd be more comfortable reporting it because there might be more evidence or witnesses to sort of support your claims, whereas if it was more verbal abuse or [...] psychological, [...] I'd be a little more hesitant to reach out or even mention it to people that I know.'[74]

As mentioned by Shade *'there are systematic inequalities and looking at what support means for different people is a way to alleviate these issues.'*[75] Our current reporting systems need to distinguish between different levels of racism to appropriately support students but equally ascribe the same value to all reports. Similarly, our research has found a discrepancy in reporting academic forms of racial abuse versus social forms of racial abuse. Forms of discrimination relative to the academic sphere, would be reported to their personal tutors or program directors; however, if they witness anything other than physical abuse it would largely go unreported.[76]

The short and mid-term goals of the REAR 2020/21 Action Plan, are looking into (i) the use of Third Sector counselling agencies, individual therapists and robust service level agreements to cover gaps to be formalized[77]; (ii) recruitment of a BAME counsellor who will have the knowledge and skill set to specifically counsel those who have experienced racism and microaggressions and a Peer mentoring or buddy system to be considered as further

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[74]Chloe Lei, *Student Interviews with Molly Shewan*, August 2021

[75]Shade, *Staff Interview*

[76]Lei, *Student Interviews.*

[77]REAR Sub-Committee, *Action Plan for 2020/21*

mechanisms for providing support[78]. Nonetheless, this has not been made aware to students, impacting its overall efficacy, which will be expanded in the following sections.

In analyzing the culture of reporting in reference to reporting systems, deeper and more robust mechanisms could be put in place to cater to different forms of abuse. However, the accessibility and culture of reporting itself will be elaborated in more detail further in the section.

Visibility and Accessibility

I.   Lack of Visibility

While the University of Edinburgh staff members have vocalized their developments, particularly the launch of the Report and Support program, the lack of visibility contributes to students' unawareness *(see figure 12),* impacting the overall efficacy of the policy and perpetuates the narratives that the university is unsupportive of E/SEA issues and complicit in allowing racial discrimination to ensue.

The 'Report and Support' program was inspired by a similar sister-program which works to prevent acts of gender-based violence and looks to give support to victims.[79] The 'Report and Support' system now looked to expand to support students who were victims of racially motivated aggression and hate crimes.[80]

However, Shade explained how the program had undergone 'a very soft launch' as the University did not wish *'to be bombarding students with messages when they're really busy with exams [...]'*.[81] However, we aregue that the examination period is a time of high stress. These periods of high intensity are when such programs of 'Report and Support' should be most prevalent and available. The 'soft launch' approach of the University is problematic as the program is now active but unknown to students. Consequently, the 'Report and Support' program through its current situation of lack of visibility is in danger of becoming as relevant as a non-existent program which is unknown by students, as seen in Figure 5. The student population cannot report racial aggressions or hate crimes and in turn gain support if they do not know what services are available.

[78]Ibid.

[79]Shade, *Staff Interview*

[80]Ibid.

[81]Ibid.

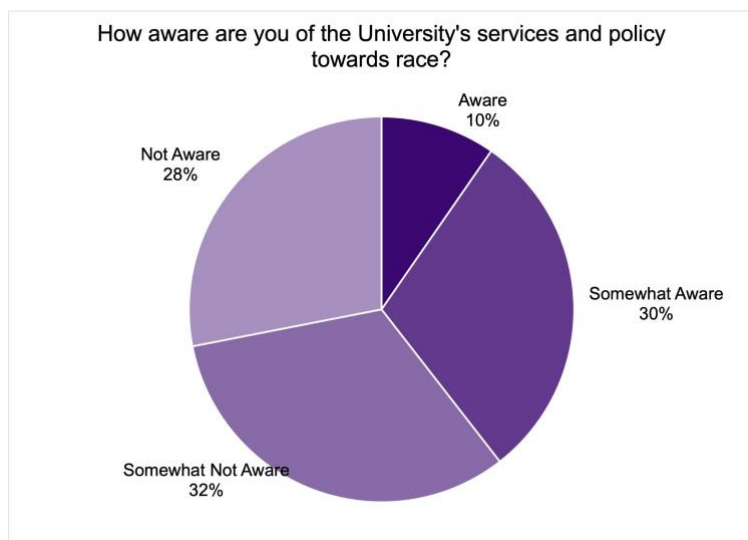Figure 13. Visibility of Anti-Asian Posters. (Photo by Anti-Asian Hate Policy Researching Team).

Figure 12. Students awareness of university services and policies regarding racial incidents.. (Photo by Anti-Asian Hate Policy Researching
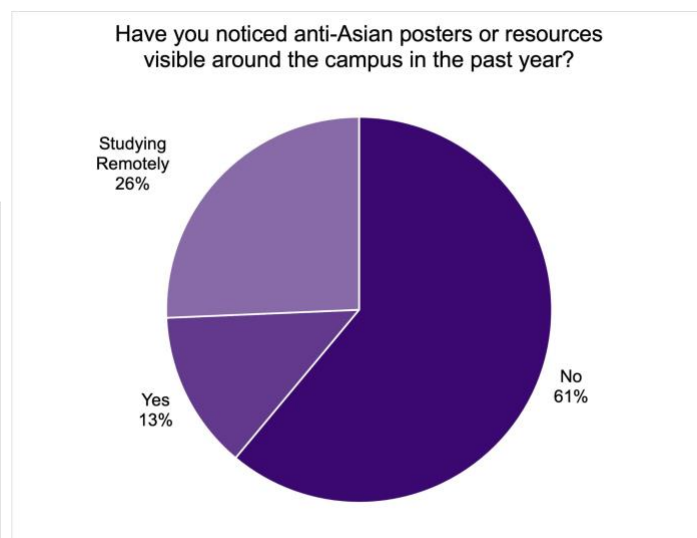
II.   Distribution of Information

A recurrent theme of the ineffectiveness of the present method of communication and in turn distribution of information by the university is central to the lack of visibility of existing programs such as 'Report and Support'. The use of emails and the use of the student newsletters to disseminate information to the majority of the student population has been unsuccessful as students seldom read these.[82] Xu reiterates the ineffectiveness of emails: *'I don't think we are used to checking all the weekly emails. Sometimes you miss the information which might be helpful. This system's visibility is not enough'.*[83]

Furthermore, the poor and ineffective distribution methods further perpetuate narratives amongst students that the university is disingenuous with its stance on eradicating racial hate; it presents its responses as performative and tokenistic. *"The lack of effective communication*

[82]Ibid.

[83]Xu, *Student Interviews*.

has led to feel unsupported and dismissed: *'I don't see they were making an effort other than sending emails. It might be harsh to say, but I'd say they don't care".*[84] It is clear that the distribution of information regarding the support available to students and the existing reporting system is failing with the majority of students not being aware or noticing anti-Asian hate posters or resources *(see figure 13)*. As consequence, the lack of visibility and accessibility to existing reporting systems has not only resulted in students to feel unsupported, but has concurrently cultivated a culture of mistrust within the student body and a disbelief in the university's capabilities to counter acts of racism on campus:

'I haven't seen any posters or signs about hate crimes, anti-racism or diversity in the university buildings. [...] I don't think our university has made any substantive achievements. [...] Friends of mine won't seek help from the university when they encounter such difficulties [acts of racism or hate crimes]. The university hasn't established a trust bond with students.[85]

It is the lack of trust that the university must counteract to build an effective reporting system. Trust and support from the university are especially important for students who have a relatively short time of study in the university, e.g., postgrad students, year-long or semester exchange students. Since these students need to quickly adapt to university life in a short time, providing them with a safe and comfortable social and academic environment became particularly vital. All students need to feel supported, safe, heard and understood in order to seek help from these existing programs of support: *'I would be comfortable talking if there [was] trust between us, but there isn't such a thing between the university and me or my friends so far'.*[86]

III.   <u>Ineffective Personal Tutors</u>

It has been highlighted that the lack of interpersonal relationships between students and their personal tutors is central to the disruption of reporting systems and stands as a deterrent to students who wish to seek support following an incident of racism.[87] Deslourix, has relayed that they will only communicate with their PT's within the academic context i.e. if they wished to change courses at the beginning of the year. However, showing reluctance when approaching them with more sensitive, personal issues like racial hate or abuse. Deslourix, in fact, specified they would not be comfortable reporting anything in general.[88] The opinion that personal tutors should receive anti-racism training and be more versed on the struggles and

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[84]Ibid.

[85]Ibid.

[86]Ibid.

[87]Deslourix, *Student Interview*

[88] Ibid.

issues of international students to be more accessible was emphasized by Deslourix.[89]While PTs are utilized as an accessible channel or communication, bridging the gap between the students and management, this is limited when rapport is underdeveloped.

Factors that contribute towards the low rapport and shallow relationships formed between PTs and students stems the general infrequency in communication. The disconnection of communications between personal tutors and their tutees have also emerged as a serious problem for numerous students. Xu, had been constantly confused for not receiving replies from her personal tutor for no explanation in months:

"We haven't even had a first meeting. She never contacted me. I had tried to reach out to her [through emails] to ask for general life advice, but she had never ever got back to me. [...] I know some of my friends' personal tutors are being really nice. They were asked about their lives and things like hate crimes as they were Asians and it was an absolutely realistic and potential problem for many. But I know there were personal tutors being on leave in the middle of the semester, and their tutees had just lost contact. [...] I don't feel I was being excluded or racially discriminated against by her [Xu's personal tutor], but I can't tell the reason why she was not replying to my emails. It's so confusing."[90]

The lack of interpersonal relationship and in turn the lack of communication and of continuity in communication between student and personal tutor stands as a barrier to accessing support as students do not feel comfortable approaching tutors to report incidents. Moreover, due to their absence of training, students are left skeptical about PTs' capability to understand and support them in an effective manner.[91]

IV. <u>Cultural Inclusivity in Reporting</u>

In assessing the accessibility of the reporting structure at the university, both staff and students have addressed how the culture around reporting is largely hindering progress. mentioned by Shade *'while there has not been a huge spike in reports [for E/SEA hate crimes] the distrust in the reporting structures speaks to that.'[92]*

Currently, the isolated and independent culture of reporting needs to be rectified to allow for inclusivity and accessibility. Johanna Holtan, Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program Manager, stated. *"The University must reassess their culture of support as at present the*

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[89]Ibid.
[90] Xu, *Student Interviews*.
[91] Deslourix, *Student Interview*
[92]Shade, *Staff Interview*

University places emphasis on self-lead remedies of support, often leaving students vulnerable and isolated."[93] Holtan proposed that, in the short term, the University should invest in well trained service officers who can respond effectively and efficiently to students' needs.[94] Subsequently, this will improve the culture of the University as students feel seen and heard, making them more comfortable to approach bodies of support at the University.[95]

Holtan emphasizes how the current culture of the university currently perpetuates the gaslighting of students who report racially motivated aggression and hate crimes, particularly in reference to reporting microaggressions which result in students questioning their experience and deterring future reporting. Furthermore, additionally forcing them to recount, relive and justify their experiences in order to receive the appropriate support.[96] The fact that many student 'don't know' whether the anti-racism services at the university are accessible may attest to this (*see figure 14*). It is the cult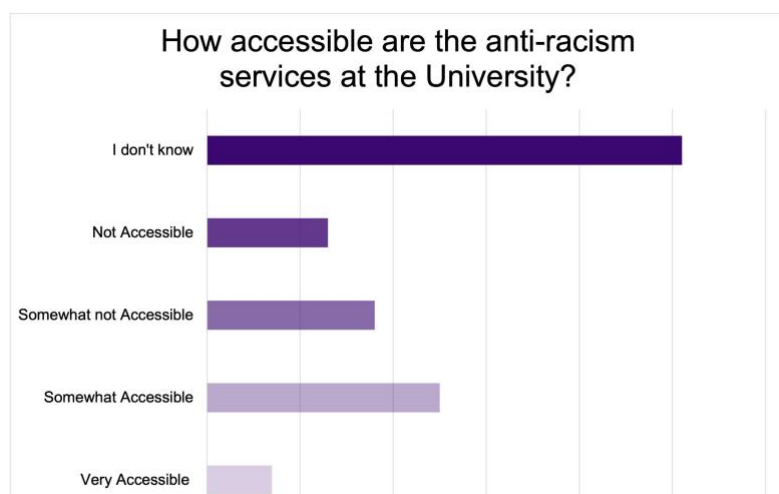ure of the reporting and the support system which needs to be reviewed. Additionally, it was proposed by Holtan that, in the long term, the University should strive to cultivate a culture of inclusivity which is currently unattainable due to systematic racially-based inequalities. [97] Holtan recognized that structural systematic change is very difficult to achieve as it requires both strong senior leadership and grassroot methods of growth to obtain change. Therefore, she emphasized the importance of running workshops, surveys and forums with students in order to

Figure 14. Accessibility of anti-racism services according to university students. (Photo by Anti-Asian Hate Policy Researching Team).

learn their needs. Successively, through data and research driven programs, the university could begin to strive for the long-term goal of cultural inclusivity[98]; actively looking at creating an environment where racial awareness and consciousness is thought of on a daily basis and not ad hoc when an incident occurs.

As *Figure 5* has reflected, the current landscape around the accessibility of reporting could be improved. With students internalising and perceiving discrepancies between the value placed on different forms of racial abuse, gaslighting processes ensuing and the process being

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[93]Holtan and Pusumane,*Staff Interview*.
[94]Ibid.
[95]Ibid.
[96]Ibid.
[97]Ibid.
[98]Ibid.

largely self led, students are hesitant to report racial incidents, leaving students concerns largely unheard.

V.   Solutions

Neil Doig, Crime Prevention Officer, emphasized the need to target students early during their first years of university. Shade echoed this, concluding that first years should be targeted for channeled information so that they will be aware of these systems throughout their time at the University. Moreover, both Shade and Doig observed how first years are enthusiastic to learn about the University's departments and available programs, making them prime candidates to educate on the 'Report and Support' system. However, instead of solely giving students information during Welcome Week, Doig proposed that information should be staggered throughout the year so that the available university services regarding help, support and security would remain prevalent and visible throughout the academic year. Xu, agreeing with Doig, discusses how the university should implement regular activities to distribute information regarding the available reporting systems to gain support. The improvement of student's psychological support coincides with the betterment of the university's communication.

There is a need to redesign the University of Edinburgh's website. The website is difficult to navigate and the resources of support are often hidden behind a chain of links which a student must tediously navigate in the hopes of finding the correct department who may respond to their report. Shade reiterates this need to improve the accessibility of Edinburgh's website, as the current chain of links and the network of bureaucracy one must navigate to obtain help, can be traumatising for the individual in question as they are forced to relive the racially abusive event - resulting in many to feel unheard and unseen. Yuanzhe Jiang, a first-year undergraduate student who completed a yearlong remote study in China echoed when discussing what could be done to improve the policies at the university, "They can add more notices and links on MyEd. I know they (University of Edinburgh) do have these portals on MyEd, but they need to be more visible, or else people won't notice them." Therefore, to improve visibility and accessibility of the appropriate reporting and support services, such as 'Report & Support', the University must improve its networks of communication - that being from methods of distribution of information, personal tutor and the design of its official website.

Accountability and Transparency

Effective procedures must be built upon a foundation of transparency and understanding; students need to feel secure in the knowledge that their experiences will not be dismissed or minimized should they choose to reach out. True accountability will come from an overall cultural shift towards anti-racism throughout the university; students will be more likely to report an instance of discrimination when they know they will be taken seriously and offered

appropriate support without the risk of gaslighting or victim blaming.[99] While discussing plans to expand the university's 'Report and Support' initiative, currently in place to address gender based violence, to deal with instances of racial harassment, Shade also noted the importance of establishing trust throughout the reporting process in order to optimize its effectiveness.

Though it is necessarily often a lengthy process, throughout which the university aims to keep complainants informed, postgrad student Xu also argued that those who report hate crimes should be receiving real-time updates on the status of their case to improve transparency.[100] As stated by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in their guidance on 'tackling racial harassment' in higher education, ensuring that reporting mechanisms are robust, well-resourced and effective is a key to facilitating an 'inclusive culture', for which 'higher education leaders and governing bodies demonstrate leadership and accountability.'[101]

Yet throughout the duration of our primary research, particularly in interviews with students, the topic of accountability was regularly raised in reference to the December 2020 attack. Though the university was quick to condemn the incident as unacceptable, the absence of any visible effort to tackle Asian Hate on campus specifically *(see figure 6)* or engage in an open dialogue with the ESEA student body, left many unsatisfied. Yeo, who studies remotely, deemed the response 'lackluster' *"It took quite a bit of social media uproar and reporting in the news before they decided to do anything".*[102] Deslorieux, also argued that the university's response did not amount to genuine accountability: *"As long as it doesn't look into newspapers and affect their reputation, they couldn't care less and that they only will stand up and take notice when it is their bottom figure, like their money being affected." Similarly, another anonymous student reaffirmed in the student surveys: "The university should publicly share their anti-racism policies and warn that racial discrimination is a criminal offence"*

In addition, Yeo noted a need for greater 'transparency in communicating' between 'senior management and the student association' regarding the university's approach to dealing with racial hatred. In this sense, transparency is closely connected to visibility. In order to create a truly inclusive and safe environment for all students the university must be willing to openly 'outline a plan of action', on which students can have their own input, allowing their 'different experiences' to 'inform the decision making better'.[103] This is a notion upon which staff agreed; every university staff member interviewed expressed willingness to take the ideas of the

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[99]Holtan and Pusumane, *Staff Interview*.

[100]Xu, *Student Interviews*.

[101] *Tackling Racial Harassment*, ebook (repr., Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2019), 19, https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/tackling-racial-harassment-universities-challenged.pdf.

[102]Yeo, *Student Interviews*.

[103]Ibid.

student body on board, yet were often unsure of how to do so.[104] Therefore, although the university is indeed opening up internal conversations surrounding their approach to racial harassment and discrimination, particularly through the REAR sub-committee, this process of reflection and planning has not been adequately transparent.[105] Furthermore, though staff expressed a willingness to connect with students' needs in interviews, outreach efforts to incorporate students into the policy making process have been minimal. Overall, although there are promising signs of change to come, it is evident that the university's approach towards dealing with racial issues has thus far fallen short of true accountability and transparency in the eyes of many students, fostering a perception of performatism amongst some.

[104]Doig, *Staff Interview*

[105]REAR Sub-Committee, *Action Plan for 2020/21*

Recommendations

Short Term

In the short term, the university should focus on improving the efficiency and visibility of the measures currently in place to deal with racial discrimination. Having found that a majority of students are not fully aware of the university's policies surrounding racial harassment and discrimination, nor the reporting procedures and resources available to those who have experienced it, more must be done to communicate this information - both online, through the university's websites and social media, and most importantly, on campus buildings. With greater visibility of the existing policies and reporting procedures, students will be well informed on how to navigate the relevant university's system when they need to and the prevailing plight of misunderstanding about the university's attitude towards students and victims will have a change. In addition, a number of technical issues could be addressed to make navigating the websites on reporting and student support easier: ensuring that all pages are easily visible, valid and their links are up to date.

Long Term

In the long term, the university must strive to adopt a culture of anti-racism at all levels of the institution. It is clear that systemic failings have hindered the effectiveness of current reporting systems, rendering the process inconsistent and insufficient across the board. In practise, this should be amended by an expansion of training for all staff, particularly those likely to be a main point of contact for students: namely personal tutors, welfare officers in student societies and resident assistants in university accommodation. Students too must be further educated on the nuances of racial harassment: what does it mean, what it looks like, where they can go seek help, where they can go to report it and who can support them through this process. Policies must be informed by student input gleaned at a grassroots level to ensure they are research driven; regular workshops, forums and meetings with student organisations would likely prove useful in achieving this. Throughout the research, the team had found that most crucially, trust must be restored between the university institution and the student body. Currently, there is a widespread perception among students that the response of university leadership to issues surrounding racism have been tokenistic and performative, an image that will only be amended with full transparency, concrete action and lasting change.

Table 1. Specific recommendations for improving student supportl visibility and opening a dialouge

Strengthening Student Support	Improving Visibility	Opening a Dialogue
- More intensive training for all staff members alike, especially Personal Tutors and RA's - Training session for each academic year for PTs - Debrief PTs about pathways - be completely transparent with PTs - Create a more structured and robust separate body to support students, when there is onerous scope and responsibility is placed on PTs. The lack of capacity of PTs is likely to fail to deal with adequate supporting students on relevant incidents while researching themselves - Incentivize training for RA's iby embedding this in their university transcripts - Hold weekly meetings and liaisons with schools welfare officers, includes relevant positions in student associations	- Promote more visibility online and on campus for Resources and Support - Enhance the visibility of the Student Support column on MyEd - Improve accessibility of university websites: - Create a platform where news and information are updated frequently - Ensuring websites, links and portals are always available - Better interface and user friendly - Disseminations of information - Mandatory posters and signs in all campus buildings and areas - Information about reporting and help lines need to be posted where incidents or attacks have occurred in the past and are likely to occur.	- Hold mandatory talks regarding our zero-tolerance racial abuse and discrimination during Welcome Week for Freshers - Contact digital marketing officer about promoting more solidarity online and social media - Create grassroots workshops and forums to enable inclusivity - Have more research driven changes - Support student associations and societies that call for more racially inclusive practices - Start a dialogue and communication between students' associations (student body, EUSA) and staff, particularly REAR - Call for EUSA to have more action and agency - Push for Welfare officers in student associations to take

		part in more workshops and trainings
		• Reemphasize policies that support zero tolerance racial abuse
		• Make perpetrators go to welfare officers or counsellors after incidents as a mandatory consequence

Next Steps

Communication

Throughout discussions, the theme of 'communication' has been central. Both students and staff members have emphasized the importance of communication, allowing students to be aware of the facilities of support available. At present, the system of communication, which is dependent on the dissemination of information through the student newsletter or easily lost emails, is ineffective - leaving many students to feel isolated and unheard. Therefore, we propose that the university take the following steps to improve their communication networks:

- Interviews with more staff at the University of Edinburgh (personal tutors, lecturers, relevant department officers, disciplinary committee) to gain a more whollistic understanding about the situation and what other stakeholders. Below is a list of suggested staff members to contact:
    - Adam Shanks - Director of Student Wellbeing (andy.shanks@ed.ac.uk)
    - Victoria Madden - Digital Safety Support Officer (Victoria.Madden@ed.ac.uk)
    - Shelagh Green - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Resources for Students and staff (Shelagh.Green@ed.ac.uk)
    - Sarah Burley - Lead for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (Sarah.C.Burley@ed.ac.uk)
- Working with EUSA to collect data on student experience - interviews, university-wide surveys
- Looking more in depth into social media platforms - BAMEfess, EdiFess, UoE run accounts

Centralized Frameworks for Sustainable Long-Term Change & Developments

It is important that future steps, which the University takes to improve report and support systems and grow its culture of inclusivity, are centralized. At present there is a lack of communication across departments which provide support to students, be that 'Report and Support' or Personal Tutors. Therefore, we propose that the University establishes a research grouping dedicated to hate crimes in order to simultaneously establish effective forms of support for students, and find long-term solutions to change the culture of hostility on campus:

- Research: Different forms of research methods such as focus groups, gender intersectionality in racism and hate crimes

- Once UoE have launched the different channels of communication, assess the efficiency of it

Comparison

Forms of assault and abuse on campus, such as gender-based aggression or sexual assault, has been well addressed and the appropriate support is available. This level of awareness and the services available should be the same for students or staff who are the victim of racially motivated aggression, hostility and hate crimes. Therefore, we recommend the following steps;

- Utilizing other forms of harassment as a benchmark comparison to the progress on racial hate crimes
- Ensuring the development of racial abuse reporting and awareness is kept on par with other forms of abuse

Conclusion

This report has sought to act as a bridge between the students and management, highlighting what the students need and translating that to staff who are in the process of minimizing racial discrimination. There are still systemic issues which are apparent, which will require much more attention from long-term policies to alleviate its impact by changing the culture and mentality surrounding reporting and erasing micro-aggressions from a student's daily life. This can be done by offering specific training to PT's so that they are well equipped to support a student who has been involved in a racial incident. In addition to this, the research has shown that there needs to be more open dialogue between students' associations and staff in order to recreate trust within the student community. In the meantime, however, there are still short term aspects that can be done to minimize racial abuse and discrimination. There needs to be an improvement within the visibility of the university's policies surrounding racial discrimination which can be done by ensuring that the university's website is updated frequently, and to provide a better means of communicating with students about important policies such as providing a platform specifically for reporting racial incidents or mirroring the extensions and special circumstances platform. Ultimately, whilst it is important to acknowledge that the university has also gone a long way in improving its response to dealing with racial discrimination, even hiring external individuals to observe and improve their system, in order to solve this problem entirely there needs to be more communication between all levels of the university body.

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Appendix

<u>Background Information</u>

1. What gender do you identify as?
    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. Non-Binary
    d. Prefer Not to Say

2. What age are you?
    a. 18-24 years old
    b. 25-34 years old
    c. 35-44 years old
    d. 45-54 years old
    e. 55-64 years old
    f. 65-74 years old
    g. 75 years old or older

3. What ethnicity do you identify yourself as?
    a. Caucasian
    b. Africa-American
    c. Latino or Hispanic
    d. Asian
    e. Native American
    f. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
    g. Two or More
    h. Other ____
    i. Prefer not to say

4. Do you identify as part of the E/SEA community?
    a. Yes

b. Somewhat Yes

c. Somewhat No

d. No

e. I don't know

5. Where did you grow up?

_____

6. What school did you attend?

    a. Private school

    b. Public school

    c. Grammar school

    d. International School

    e. Other _____

7. Are you currently a student at the University of Edinburgh?

    a. Yes, I'm a current undergraduate student

    b. Yes, I'm a current postgraduate student

    c. No, I'm an Alumni student

    d. No, I've never been a student at the University of Edinburgh

8. Have you ever experienced or felt discriminated against in university based on your gender?

    a. Yes

    b. Somewhat Yes

    c. Somewhat No

    d. No

    e. I don't know

9. Have you noticed/experienced a rise in hostility towards to E/SEA community since the beginning of COVID?

    a. Yes

    b. Somewhat Yes

    c. Somewhat No

    d. No

    e. I don't know

If you replied yes and would like to be contacted for an additional interview and discuss this matter further please leave your name and contact details? Reply with N/A if you are uninterested

_____

Student Experience

10. Have you ever felt excluded in a social setting (i.e. pres, societies, in halls etc.) based on your race?

    a. Yes

    b. No

    c. I don't know

    d.

11. Have you ever seen a member of the E/SEA community excluded in a social setting (i.e. pres, societies, in halls etc.) based on their race?

    a. Yes

    b. No

    c. I don't know

12. Have you ever experienced any forms of racist attacks/incidents involving students at the University?

    a. Yes

    b. No

    c. I don't know

13. How far would you agree that students at the University are racially aware

    a. Very Aware

    b. Somewhat Aware

    c. Somewhat Not Aware

    d. Not Aware

14. Do you feel that the specific department a student is studying in affects their racial awareness?

    a. Yes

    b. No

    c. I don't know

Academic Experience

15. Have you ever *felt* excluded in an academic setting, based on your race?

    a. Yes

    b. Somewhat Yes

    c. Somewhat No

    d. No

    e. I don't know

16. Have you ever *seen* a member of the E/SEA community excluded in an academic setting, based on your race?

    a. Yes

    b. Somewhat Yes

    c. Somewhat No

    d. No

    e. I don't know

17. Have you ever experience racial discrimination from a member of staff at the University of Edinburgh?

a. Yes

b. Somewhat Yes

c. Somewhat No

d. No

e. I don't know

18. Have you ever experienced racial discrimination from a student at the University of Edinburgh?

a. Yes

b. Somewhat Yes

c. Somewhat No

d. No

e. I don't know

If you replied with yes which area were they employed in?

a. Lecturer

b. Academic Tutor

c. Personal Tutor

d. Administration

e. Other _____

f. Prefer not to answer

19. How diverse would you consider the syllabus at the university to be?

a. Diverse

b. Somewhat diverse

c. Somewhat not diverse

d. Not diverse

e. It doesn't apply to my degree

Visibility

20. Are you currently doing remote study or on-campus study?

a. Remote

b. On-campus

c. Mixture

d. Not currently a student

21. Have you noticed anti-Asian posters or resources visible around the campus in the past year?

a. Yes

b. No

c. I have been studying remotely

Reporting

22. Would you feel comfortable reporting any incidents to the university?

a. Yes

b. Somewhat Yes

c. Somewhat No

d. No

e. I don't know

23. Would you know how to report a racist incident at the university?

a. Yes

b. Somewhat Yes

c. Somewhat No

d. No

e. I don't know

24. How aware are you of the University's services and policy towards race?

a. Aware

b. Somewhat Aware

c. Somewhat Not Aware

d. Not Aware

25. How accessible are the anti-racism services at the University?

    a. Very accessible

    b. Somewhat accessible

    c. Somewhat not accessible

    d. Not accessible

    e. I don't know

26. Do you feel like the university takes this issue of anti-racism seriously and deals with racist incidents adequately?

    a. Yes

    b. Somewhat Yes

    c. Somewhat No

    d. No

    e. I don't know

27. Do you feel that the university could be doing more? [tick with what you agree with]

    a. Yes, more could be done with publicizing anti-racist policies

    b. Yes, the university could be implementing more anti-racist policies

    c. Yes, more could be done with how racist incidents are being handled

    d. Yes, more could be done with how aware students are

    e. Yes, more could be done with how aware staff are

    f. Other _____

    g. No

    h. I don't know

28. Do you have anything else you would like to share with us?

_____

Interview Questions

Students

<u>Background</u>

1. Tell us about your experience growing up [insert ethnicity]

2. What year and what degree are you studying at the University of Edinburgh?

<u>University Experience</u>

1. Tell us about your experience at the University of Edinburgh and how it may relate to your ethnicity

2. What are your initial views on the University's stance and position to Anti-Asian Hate?

3. Have you had any personal experiences (Academic or Social) that have influenced this opinion?

4. How comfortable would you say you are with your personal tutor

<u>Reporting and Policies</u>

1. What do you think could be done to improve policies at the University?

2. What are your opinions on a **more centralised framework for reporting** versus **different pathways or routes for specific cases?**

Is there anything you would like to share with us or ask us?

Contact Details

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