ual:

Decolonising pedagogy and curriculum

We would like to begin

by acknowledging the work and expertise of students and staff who have been part of the long history of race equality work at the university. A central example of this is the ongoing work of Shades of Noir created by Aisha Richards. Shades of Noir has for the past 10 years undertaken social justice work informed by a critical race framework, which seeks to democratise and liberate higher education. In 2015 the Students Union at UAL launched the #UALSoWhite campaign challenging the lack of diversity amongst academic staff, which was another important precursor to decolonising work at the university.

What is this strand?

**This strand recognises that decolonisation is a complex and contested term.
The strand has been developed to support course teams in discussing decolonisation as a group and thinking through together the implications for your course.
Our approach is to offer a supportive and critically challenging space for open and authentic conversations around decolonising in order to help you formulate action plans and interventions to enhance the student learning experience and close the awarding gap. Decolonising work is an ongoing process and not a task that can be completed quickly, nor does it have a fixed end point.**

Research in attainment suggests decolonising the curriculum improves the student experience by identifying and dismantling barriers to access and success in Higher Education (Burke & McManus 2009, Finnigan & Richards, 2016 and Sabri, 2017)
The Decolonising Pedagogy and Curriculum strand underpins the work of sibling AEM strands; Fostering Belonging and Compassionate Pedagogy and Enhancing Assessment for Equity in considering the student experience and increasingly diverse classrooms and staff teams.
The Fostering Belonging strand explores 'individual reflective activities and team-based discursive sessions' specific to teaching practice and course context. Similarly, with this strand there is 'no one size fits all' approach to decolonising the curriculum. There is instead, a focus on a 'plurality of knowledge' and this strand will support course teams to develop resources and strategies that are relevant to their course context.

Why use this strand?

The strand will signpost you to a range of resources across and outside of the university to support decwolonisation and share examples of curricular and pedagogical innovations which are currently underway across the university.
The strand aims to support course teams to:

• Examine their own positionality in relation to decolonisation

• Examine how knowledge is constructed in their discipline and course

• Develop strategies to draw on multiple perspectives and ways of knowing in their course

Decolonising the curriculum, cannot be covered in isolated lessons or units, but becomes instead a default approach to organising teaching and learning

Decolonising the curriculum

The current sector-wide focus on decolonisation has arisen largely in response to well-orchestrated national and international student-led campaigns condemning the erasure of and or marginalisation of non-Western perspectives from and within the academy (Bhambra, Gebrial and Nisancioglu, 2018). The student movement began in South Africa and over the past five years students across a number of British universities have been involved in high profile campaigns. In response to student protests and sector research highlighting the importance of an inclusive curriculum in supporting student retention, engagement and success, many universities are undergoing a period of reviewing and reforming their curriculum as part of their overall strategy to eliminate awarding gaps for students of different ethnicities. Decolonising the curriculum is increasingly considered to be an important part of the strategy being undertaken across higher education settings to address the awarding gap for BAME students although all staff and students benefit from a decolonised curriculum.

What does decolonising the curriculum mean?

There is no agreed definition of decolonisation or what it means to decolonise the curriculum and it is worth acknowledging that 'no education is politically neutral' (hooks, 1994, Friere, 1996). Broadly speaking, decolonising the curriculum interrogates the ongoing impact of legacies of colonisation and imperialism on knowledge production. A decolonial approach concerns itself with deconstructing existing hierarchies, in favour of drawing on multiple knowledge systems/ways of knowing in order to integrate a range of perspectives, with a particular focus on amplifying the voices currently underrepresented in the curriculum. Whereas Western knowledges are often presented a-historically, neutral and of universal value, decolonisation advocates for the contextualisation of all knowledge within a historical, geographical, cultural framework and re-shaping the curriculum is a key component of culturally responsive pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The goal of decolonising the curriculum is to ensure education is structured in a way which gives everyone access to the opportunities they need to thrive.

What might decolonisation look like in practice?

Decolonisation is primarily conceived of as an active approach, which involves a set of ongoing and emerging practices, which evolve out of reflections on how to improve the experience for all students, but especially those who are marginalised. The strand encourages reflection and co-creation in line with Freirean principles of praxis, collaboration and critical pedagogy (Freire, 1996). The sessions encourage course teams to develop their own responses. Furthermore, since 'none but ourselves can free our minds' (Marley, 1980), individuals and teams focus on reflection and reflexivity to develop pedagogy, curriculum and a 'decolonial' mindset. Decolonising the curriculum can therefore not be covered in isolated lessons or units but becomes instead a default approach to organising teaching and learning. There is no singular path to decolonisation (Dei, 2016) which is reflected in the range of approaches being taken across the university.

Some examples of these are:

Examining the impact of colonialism on disciplinary norms, aesthetics and representations of the 'other'

Exploring the politics of cultural appropriation/ representation as well as burdens of representation, and the politics of production (sustainability)

Drawing on the lived experience of students and centering contemporary issues of relevance to students

Working in partnership with students to develop curriculum content

Embedding non-Western histories, perspectives and contributions to disciplines

**Please note this is not an exhaustive list and tutors are constantly innovating, updating and exploring new approaches in their teaching and learning.
Some approaches may be more or less relevant for specific disciplines.**

Broadly speaking, decolonising the curriculum interrogates the ongoing impact of legacies of colonisation and imperialism on knowledge production

How we will work together

The delivery of this strand involves working collaboratively with course teams. This is delivered through a blended teaching and learning approach and most sessions take place online through a mixture of asynchronous and synchronous activities. The strand expects high levels of engagement from Course Leaders and course teams. The strand includes an array of multimedia resources, individual and team-based activities. Its aim is to help create spaces for authentic discussions around race and educational inequalities by courageously confronting what may be challenging and to approach this in a respectful and developmental way. Through discussion and an iterative process of reflexivity and impact evaluation, course teams will reflect on the resources and approaches. They will formulate action plans and implement them in their individual contexts.

Course teams should regularly review the changes made to their curriculum and teaching practices to assess the impact of these changes, and work with the AEM and Attainment team to respond as appropriate to ensure that interventions are benefiting students.

"The whole nine months of studying our curricula has not given us a global outlook or covered global industries. Everything is concentrated around knowledge systems, forms and content of industries in Europe and the US"

UAL Student

Academic Enhancement Model and Attainment team

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