# Race, Diversity and Access (RDA) Working Group: Actions being taken forward

In its statement of 9 June 2020, the Governing Body (GB) called for review of matters of race as they affected the College, and established a Working Group of staff, students and Fellows. At its meeting on 11 November, GB welcomed the Working Group’s work, and this note summarises the resulting actions. Since 9 June there have also been other relevant developments across the College and, in particular, Queen’s was pleased to announce the creation of the Brittenden Fellowship in Black British History.

## Awareness raising and the College’s intellectual life

A core objective of the RDA work was to further improve the ways in which the College enables all its members to flourish. To contribute to this, the Group recommended a programme of awareness raising and training. This is difficult and sensitive territory, primarily aimed at raising awareness and enabling difficult conversations to be held safely. The programme is envisaged as a whole College initiative, not aimed at one group or sub-group specifically. The GB agreed a programme as below:

* the College will commission a specialist facilitator to help it design its own programme to raise awareness of race and diversity. This should take place in Michaelmas Term 2021 or as soon after that as it can be safely done face to face. The purpose would be to contribute to behaviour change through ensuring that students and staff are up to date in their understanding of race in the workplace, focussing on the College, and that they have the skills to respond accordingly. The programme should include discussion of allyship and what it means to act as a responsible bystander;
* all staff are encouraged to take part in online training on race awareness as part of wider diversity training during Michaelmas 2020 and Hilary Term 2021. This would provide a first step towards the same aims as the larger programme. (Some support staff had already undertaken online training while they were on furlough);
* all those taking part in interview panels are encouraged to undertake online training in race awareness, as provided by the University, or to refresh themselves on that where necessary. The Working Group emphasised that the effects of implicit bias training are increasingly disputed, and other forms of training should be used;
* the College will support the JCR and MCR in providing training on race awareness to all students, in Michaelmas Term 2021, following its acceptance of a detailed proposal from the MCR and JCR Presidents.

As further support, the Working Group recommended the creation of the “Confluence @ Queen’s” informal meeting place for staff and students who identify as Black or Minority Ethnic (BME), and their allies, convened initially by Dr Poorna Mysoor; together with a celebration of BME staff and students, led by them, and initially online. Confluence has met twice so far this term, the second time in conversation with the author Caryl Phillips, who is an Old Member and Honorary Fellow. The College will pursue the idea of the online celebration later in 2020/21.

Many academic disciplines explore matters of race, or are engaged in considering what race means and has meant for their recruitment, educational practices and research directions. The College will hold an internal half day event of short presentations and discussions, where Fellows and students might hear about the breadth of these approaches.

Like other colleges, Queen’s will have educated people who contributed to colonialism and independence. The College will explore the possibility of joining a consortium of colleges supporting historical research into selected past students’ lives, building on the work underway at Balliol. If this goes ahead, it is likely that the College would be represented by the new Brittenden Professor.

## Increasing BME representation across the College’s communities

The extent of under-representation of BME groups varies greatly by type of role, especially seniority within roles, and by type of group. The GB agreed a range of measures recommended by the Working Group, to increase representation of currently under-represented groups.

For appointments and elections the College is:

* Adopting an expanded “boilerplate” statement stating the College’s objective of increasing diversity of its membership and advertising selected posts more widely and actively, to reach and to signal to under-represented groups that they should consider applying if eligible;
* Improving monitoring, including adapting iTrent systems to support data gathering in academic appointments, and enabling annual scrutiny by the Equalities Committee;
* Internally “certifying” that the diversity of the panel has been considered and action taken where necessary and possible, in a similar way to the requirement for College committees routinely to consider their Equalities duties;
* Ensuring that the 2020-21 Honorary Fellows Search Committee will include diversity amongst its criteria;
* Seeking opportunities to align the College with the University’s Black Academic Futures initiative, aimed at increasing the number of graduate scholarships available to black graduates.

For outreach the College is:

* Developing the website and other material further to “demystify” the College and Oxford, and to make the applications process more accessible;
* Investing further in work with Target Oxbridge and to engage with Roy Sefa-Attakora on outreach in Lewisham.

## Maintaining momentum

The Equalities Officer has agreed with the Working Group’s recommendation that the Equalities Committee trials an annual Open Forum at its meeting in Hilary Term, at which any student can attend and raise issues. At the Forum, the Welfare Officer will report on a proposed annual “pulse” survey.

Meanwhile, the RDA Working Group proposes to meet again in Hilary Term and Trinity Term 2021 to help maintain momentum.

Claire Craig 20 Nov 2020