

## **Protect the Independence of Staff Networks**

### **UMUCU Stands in Solidarity with the BAME Staff Network**

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**The branch notes:**

The University's Registrar and EDI Committee, chaired by the Vice-President for Social Responsibility, have launched an unprecedented attack on the BAME Staff Network — an **independent, member-led collective of Global Majority staff dedicated to challenging institutional racism and inequality at the University of Manchester.**

The use of the University's whistleblowing policy to justify an investigation is disproportionate and has produced a report that is inaccurate, biased, and unacceptable in its tone and portrayal of BAME staff. The threatened dissolution of the Network, alongside the removal and barring of its elected co-chairs, represents a direct assault on its independence. We reject the authority of the Registrar and EDI Committee to impose these measures. These actions amount to harassment, victimisation, and bullying of BAME staff, and reflect a wider failure within the University's EDI structures. This is institutional racism in action.

The University has a history of removing co-chairs from the BAME staff network who challenge the institution's lack of progress on race-related initiatives, such as the Race Equality Charter. We are concerned by an emerging pattern in which management-compliant and administration-friendly network chairs are seemingly installed to silence criticism, censure dissent, and undermine independent staff representation. This constitutes an attack on freedom of speech and academic freedom, as protected by the University's [statutes](#).

Moves to constrict staff voice contradicts recent remarks by the Vice-Chancellor and President, who stated that staff networks should be able to challenge, critique, and push back against the institution where necessary. These punitive steps also run counter to the University's stated commitments to equality, inclusion and shared governance as outlined in its EDI framework and Manchester 2035 strategy.

## **The branch believes:**

1. BAME staff at the University of Manchester continue to face longstanding structural barriers that undermine their wellbeing, safety, sense of belonging, and opportunities for progression.
2. A race pay gap of almost 20% persists and has widened over time. BAME staff remain concentrated in lower grades, with limited opportunities for career progression, and there is a continued paucity of senior leaders from BAME backgrounds.
3. Complaints of racism, bullying, and harassment raised by BAME staff are too often dismissed. Data collected over the 2020-2024 period indicates that BAME colleagues are overrepresented in terms of requesting grievance cases.<sup>1</sup> In terms of disciplinary cases, BAME staff are also overrepresented.<sup>2</sup>
4. Many BAME staff lack confidence in the University's existing EDI infrastructure and do not believe it adequately represents or protects their interests. This makes the independence of the BAME Staff Network all the more important.
5. It is deeply disheartening that a space for staff to come together to challenge the racism they experience is marked out for oppression.
6. Fighting for equality is a fundamental part of the remit of the trade union movement; it is established as a clear tenet in [UCU's rulebook](#).

## **The branch resolves to:**

1. Reject the authority of the Registrar and EDI Committee to interfere in the governance of the BAME Staff Network, including the barring and selection of its co-chairs.
2. Reaffirm that the BAME Staff Network, like all staff networks, is independent and governed by its membership.
3. Call on the University to acknowledge the existence of institutional racism within the organisation.
4. Emphasise that the purpose of the BAME Staff Network is to challenge and address institutional racism at the University, rather than to validate EDI performance metrics in a tokenistic manner.
5. Demand an end to punitive action against BAME staff and their allies who raise concerns about institutional racism.
6. Urge the employer, to work with trade unions and staff networks, to develop a serious, democratic, and properly resourced anti-racism strategy.
7. Call for the development and delivery of high-quality anti-racism training, led by experts within the university community, such as CoDE, to be made available to all senior and middle managers.
8. State that, should the BAME Staff Network request it, UMUCU will join a collective grievance regarding the whistleblowing investigation.

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<sup>1</sup> See page 42 of the University's ["Equality Information Report 2025"](#).

<sup>2</sup> See page 43 of same report.