

Race Equality Charter – submission feedback

This page is intentionally left blank

Race Equality Charter Feedback – July 2018 Bronze & Silver University

Please note that the below feedback is not an exhaustive appraisal of every point made in the submission. Additionally, while feedback is offered to applicants on each section of the form, it should be noted that applications to the Race Equality Charter are assessed “in the round”.

Institution name:	London South Bank University
Level of award applied for:	Bronze
Overview of the application	
<p>The panel welcomed the application and commended the university on its commitment and work on race equality to date. It is apparent how much work and effort has gone into the application, and the panel wanted to highlight this and commend the self-assessment team.</p> <p>However, while there are obvious examples of good practice within the university, the panel were unable to confer a Bronze award this time. The student element of the application was stronger than the staff side, and while it is usual for applications to have stronger and weaker areas, the staff data analysis and actions require further consideration.</p> <p>The panel highlighted line management in particular as an area of future focus; the analysis in places adopts a deficit approach in tackling staff pipeline issues, and the panel would have liked to see more focus on cultural and structural barriers to staff recruitment and progression.</p> <p>Additionally, the data were often only analysed at a high level, BME compared to White, and the panel commented that it would be useful to explore the data by ethnic groups, given the diversity of the staff profile as a whole. The trajectories of different ethnic groups can vary significantly, and it would have benefited the self-assessment if this could have been drawn out of the data.</p> <p>The panel were keen to highlight that they identified a lot of positive aspects in the application, and they were concerned that being unsuccessful at this time could negatively impact on engagement with the work. They urged the university to build on the work that has taken place, maintain momentum and spend another 6-12 months focussing on further self-assessment and developing the action plan before re-applying. As it stands, many of the staff-based actions are focussed on further analysis and information to develop actions, whereas the panel wanted the actions to have been developed.</p> <p>The panel provided the detailed feedback below on each specific section in the hope of explaining their decision further, and assisting the university to move forward.</p>	
Letter of endorsement from vice-chancellor/principal	
<i>Commended</i>	
<p>The letter is honest, sincere and comprehensive. The panel were pleased to see a link with the corporate strategy and clear reporting lines for the work. Additionally, extra resource is being provided for the work.</p> <p>The panel specifically commended the last line of the penultimate paragraph and commended the university on developing a culture in which people are able to openly talk about race equality, which is a significant step.</p>	
<i>For future consideration</i>	
<p>While the panel commended the university having a KPI on staff feeling valued and rewarded, they commented that it would be useful to have a race-specific KPI, or a race-specific element of existing KPIs.</p> <p>While the panel commended the support of the Vice Chancellor, they would have liked more information on how he had specifically been involved in the self-assessment process.</p>	
The self-assessment process	
<i>Commended</i>	

The self-assessment team (SAT) was ethnically diverse, there was student involvement and the team met regularly with focussed meetings and follow-up.

The panel commended the advisory team and commented that it was a good way of involving more people and including their voices and ideas, without the SAT becoming too big.

The student involvement was excellent, particularly, using student ambassadors to maximise survey response rates through promotion in lectures and halls of residence. The focus groups with students were also commendable.

The panel commented that the summaries of the survey responses were visually powerful and a great way of presenting the high level findings.

Overall the panel commended the thoughtfulness of the section: the SAT has been well organised with creative ways for engaging wider staff and students. The team is well balanced, and there is a plan for the work post-submission.

For future consideration

The panel suggested formalising arrangements for staff time to be on the SAT. They noted that staff had to clear the time with their managers, and they wondered if anyone had been refused permission. It might be useful for recognition to be formalised, so that staff can benefit from their involvement in appraisals, promotions and future job applications.

The panel commented that the SAT is quite heavy with equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) professionals. While this is not an issue in itself, they cautioned against the EDI professionals being expected to take too much ownership of the work and the actions – the work needs to be spread across the team.

The panel noted that it would have been useful to include the UK/Non-UK split of the SAT.

The staff survey results highlight significant differences in response to questions around development opportunities, line management encouragement of personal development and progression and applying for promotion. The panel wanted these themes to be picked up throughout the application.

Institution and local context

Commended

The section provides a detailed picture of the locality by ethnicity with clear evidence that the university is working with the local community (p. 19).

The panel commended the work with Lambeth College and being a Top 10 employer for BME staff in 2017, as rated by VERCIDA.

For future consideration

The panel commented that it would have been interesting to provide some detail on how the community are engaging with the university as well as how the university are engaging with the community.

More information would be useful on where LSBU staff and students are recruited from. It would also be useful to know whether the university considers its staff profile to be appropriately diverse, considering professional services staff separately to academics.

Staff profile

Commended

The panel commented that in places there is a good understanding of the data and good analysis, for example, the comparison of School data on p. 22.

The university have clearly identified an attrition point in the pipeline at grades 9 and 10. However, the findings were not explored further and a lack of SMART actions have been developed.

There are some commendable actions in this section. The panel particularly commented on Action 21, which sounds interesting. Additionally, they commended actions 23 and 27, but commented that they will need to be implemented carefully. The Executive members will need training in how to mentor or sponsor, and the distinction between the two needs to be clear. Executive search firms will need to be encouraged to engage meaningfully with the process – otherwise there is a danger that a diverse range of candidates are longlisted, but realistically they are not viable candidates and won't be shortlisted or appointed.

For future consideration

Throughout this section the panel commented that there were not enough links to the survey findings, and that the university did not attempt to analyse the data by specific ethnic group, at least in some places, rather than always having a BME/white comparison. There is analysis on p. 20 highlighting that the groups least represented in higher bands were staff from mixed, other, Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds, but that is not taken forward.

There is an increase in the proportion of staff who do not disclose their ethnicity, which is a worrying trend, and something the university should address as a priority.

Action 14 (p. 24) needs to go further. The university can already see from the data that there is a concerning trend with BME staff overrepresented on fixed-term contracts. The panel suggested that a focus group could have been arranged as part of the self-assessment, and SMART actions developed from there. The action as it stands is too passive.

The panel recommended that more analysis is needed of the academic staff data. They noted and commended the relatively high proportion of BME professors, but wanted to understand the ethnic profile of the BME professors, and to have a more nuanced understanding of the academic pipeline as a whole.

The panel highlighted the high levels of staff turnover as an area for reflection, and they commented that the actions did not reflect the stark data in table 4b. Action 16 is an aim, rather than an action, and the panel queried why the scoping couldn't have been conducted as part of the self-assessment, so that actions for addressing the high turnover could have been identified and included in the action plan.

The panel commended the analysis of disciplinary and grievance data, and also action 21 (as mentioned above). However, the panel also noted that some of the actions included here should have a focus on training for line managers.

The panel queried the rationale for the diversity of the University Executive: the application states that the Vice Chancellor decides its membership and places equality at its heart, but the Executive is not particularly diverse (88% White).

The image on p. 36 shows the Heads and Directors of central PSG departments are entirely White. The panel would have liked to see more comment on this, especially given the location of the university, and the finding that there are less BME staff at grades 9 and 10. The panel wanted this to be analysed further and for SMART actions to be developed.

Criteria not met

Actions are not SMART in places, and some actions should have been implemented as part of the self-assessment.

Academic staff: recruitment, progression and development

Commended

The panel commended the critical friend approach to reviewing job specifications to ensure they are balanced (p. 44).

The recruitment analysis for faculties is honest, and the work being undertaken in the business school is commendable.

Actions targeted at improving outcomes for international applicants are clear and targeted.

The panel particularly commended Action 43, to make acting up and secondment opportunities more transparent. They acknowledged that it is a difficult area to tackle, and specific actions here will take time to develop.

Clear procedures have been set out to monitor recruitment selection.

The panel noted the university's participation in the research concordat and HR excellence for research.

There is an academic promotions framework and action has already been undertaken to improve processes.

For future consideration

The panel acknowledged the limitations of some disciplines in enabling diverse recruitment, as set out on p. 47 in the School of Arts and the Creative Industries. However they also commented that the university's location provided opportunities to diversify recruitment that were not being fully recognised.

The panel commended the analysis of data that identified the difference in uptake of externally funded training, but they were concerned that the follow up interpretation and actions were potentially deficit in approach. Applications for externally funded training require support from line managers, and the survey data suggests that BME staff are not as proactively encouraged to progress in their career as their white colleagues. The panel highlighted that line managers were not being trained and briefed in ensuring they support their staff fairly and without bias, and in ensuring that training opportunities are promoted to all staff and suggested that further work around these areas need to be considered

The panel noted that there could be further reflection around action 41 as this could result in BME staff disproportionately receiving online training, while white staff receive external training. The action doesn't address the underlying issues, and potentially exacerbates the identified problem.

The panel commented that action 44, to run focus groups on perception of appraisals, could have been completed as part of the self-assessment which would have helped with developing actions. Appraisals are important in identifying training opportunities (which links directly to the above), development opportunities and promotions.

Three years' data has not been supplied.

This section would benefit from more qualitative data throughout, and more involvement of BME staff in developing the solutions.

Criteria not met

Only one year of data has been provided for recruitment and selection. The analysis and actions, in places, take a deficit approach.

Professional and support staff: career progression and development

Commended

The overall proportion of BME staff broadly matches the local community.

The panel commended the investment in mentoring, coaching and BME development programmes (such as the Diversifying Leadership course), but they cautioned against investing in these areas unless there is evidence to do so, and in consultation with BME staff. Where these initiatives are rolled out, they should not be in isolation, and staff feedback and evaluation should be analysed to ensure they are having a positive impact. Ensuring development programmes are not themselves deficit in approach is important, as is ensuring staff are able to develop on completion of the programme.

For future consideration

The panel made similar comments on the uptake of training as were made for academics. There is a consistent trend in the allocation of training opportunities, and the university needs to address why white colleagues are more likely to be invested-in with external training. Again, the panel commented that line managers need to take some responsibility for the development of their staff and ensuring that opportunities are allocated fairly and transparently.

The panel commented that many universities have a system of role regrading, where a job can be reviewed if responsibilities change, to re-grade the role. If LSBU has such a system, the data should be provided.

There is a decline in BME applications from application to shortlist to appointment. The same trends have also been shown in training. Action 47 on p. 80 does not go far enough and is not proportionate to the issue identified.

Survey response data has been presented on page 81 (which was commended) but there is a lack of commentary and reaction.

<i>Criteria not met</i>	Actions are not SMART enough, and in places the application takes a deficit approach.
-------------------------	---

Student pipeline

Commended

The panel commented that this was a strong section, and highlights the university's commitment to its students.

Actions 50, 51 and 52 were commended as they are targeted and specific. Although the panel commented that Action 50 will need to be conducted sensitively and should be run through the university's ethics committee.

The panel commended action 56 but suggested the university offer the workshops to all students, so those who haven't disclosed a mental health difficulty are not inadvertently excluded.

The panel commended the faculty action plans linked to this. While the action plans are a little inconsistent in depth and specificity, they represent a positive start in faculties taking ownership for the work and driving this forward.

The positive action strategy on page 89 targeted to the school was commended. The university are being creative looking at blogs and marketing. Action 53 was powerful, the university have thought in a measured way about what they would like to do and how this could be shared.

The panel commended the university investing in a specific role that will have university responsibility for addressing the attainment gap.

Page 103 to deepen understanding and embedding race equality work into strategic priorities was commended.

There is a high proportion of BME students at PG level in Engineering. The panel suggested identifying what is making the change here to be able to replicate in other areas.

Full and detailed analysis the students at each stage of study.

For future consideration

The panel commented that issues around sense of belonging could be focussed on more, as belonging was highlighted in the survey as important to students, and this is highlighted as a particular issue for mature students. Ensuring students have a sense of belonging fostered will impact on retention and attainment. The panel also commented that belonging is an issue that should be considered for BME staff.

The panel commended this section of the application, but cautioned that the actions and good practice outlined need to be harnessed into an overarching strategy for roll out and dissemination across the university: it is important that the university doesn't end up with a situation where those that are good at diversifying curriculum and learning make more and more progress in their specific area, while those who require more support are left behind.

The narrative on page 96 was honest and frank but did not provide an indication of how concerning this is, and the panel would have expected more of a sense of urgency from the university.

Teaching and Learning

Commended

The panel commended the breadth of initiatives referenced in this section. However, it was difficult to ascertain the impact on race equality specifically and the information provided would benefit from being more race-specific. Only 55% of survey respondents agreed that race and diversity are included in the curriculum (p. 108), and the approach outlined in section 8a is quite general.

The panel commended the development of the inclusive student toolkit (p. 108) and the inclusive curriculum symposium (p.109).

For future consideration

The information in this section would benefit from being more race-specific. Only 55% of survey respondents agreed that race and diversity are included in the curriculum (p. 108), and the approach outlined in section 8a is quite general.

The panel appreciated the examples provided on p. 109 (although they couldn't follow the links as panellists can only judge applications on the content included within the application) but cautioned that pockets of good practice are good, but they need to be disseminated across the university. It is important to ensure that those who are less confident and/or require more support are not left behind. It is also important to consider how the senior management team can incentivise people to attend events and get involved with the work.

The panel commented that student voice is lacking in this section, and it is important that students are partners in the development of the work and that BME mature students are specifically considered.

Action plan

Commended

The action plan is easy to read and navigate. The panel liked the thematic approach.

Most of the actions have been derived from the data, they have clear ownership and targets.

For future consideration

Some actions could be made more SMART for example action 24. The action is general and the panel wanted a more specific action here.

As highlighted in the staff sections, too many actions relate to exploring things further and running focus groups. This is self-assessment activity. The panel want this to have been done so that the actions in the plan are targeted, proactive and will advance race equality over the next three years.

Action 46 could be more stretching (p. 129). The panel would encourage the university to look at the process and see if this has a stronger impact.

The panel appreciated the inclusion of the school level action plans but for future wanted to note that some of the school level plans could be more robust.

Criteria not met

Not enough actions are SMART: too many lack specificity and include actions which are self-assessment activity.

Recommended result

No award

Good practice example

P. 11, Recruiting and training five student ambassadors to promote the survey in all seven LSBU Schools.

If unsuccessful at the level applied for, please explain why it failed to meet the criteria

Gaps in staff data, there is only one year of recruitment data.

Too many of the actions are self-assessment activity, particularly in the staff sections.

In places, the university reaction is deficit in approach, for example in relation to staff training.

This page is intentionally left blank