# **A guide to racially inclusive teaching**

This guide provides ten prompt questions on racially inclusive teaching with suggested responses. You may wish to consider these with colleagues or individually.

1. **Where in their learning could students engage in conversations with you about steps being taken to support racially inclusive teaching and learning?**

Students value being invited into conversations about efforts to create racially inclusive teaching because it makes progress **transparent** and gives students the opportunity to **share their learning experiences.** The latter has the potential to benefit future students and give new perspectives on your teaching whilst also enabling students to reflect on their learning.

* If you are taking steps to make your teaching racially inclusive, consider communicating this to students. For instance, at the start of a lecture or Canvas course or at various points throughout a series of sessions, you could include a note outlining when you updated your reading list and what you are doing to make it more diverse.
* Try to create opportunities for students to give feedback on their experiences of racial inclusion within their learning in any evaluations that you are planning. This could also include an invitation to students to share suggestions for improvements or additions.

1. **Where in their learning could students reflect on how race and / or racial bias has influenced the voices and content that is traditionally taught?**

Students value the opportunity to **reflect on the voices and knowledge traditionally represented in their learning**. This could be particularly useful where there might be a perceived lack of diversity in the subject area or if content has racial implications that are not explicitly explored in the material itself.

* Encourage a conversation where students explore the principles that may have dictated which knowledge and whose knowledge is selected for inclusion / exclusion with the subject. This may include discussions that highlight limited racial diversity within the field and any steps being taken to address this, such as reviewing historical contributions and creating spaces for new voices or research.
* Where appropriate and relevant, when introducing new material consider asking students to reflect on the context in which a particular source or methodology was produced and what racial biases or assumptions this might indicate.

1. **Where in their learning could students encounter race and the contributions of racially diverse scholars?**

Oxford has a **growing collection of resources and texts**, which give students opportunities to engage with more racially diverse voices and knowledge sources. This includes resources from more racially diverse scholars as well a breadth of resources about race within different subject areas.

* Subject Librarians could support you to identify resources and publications related to race in your teaching area. The Bodleian Libraries also have a budget for purchasing more general racial justice resources that may otherwise fall through the gaps in subject-based collecting.
* The Academic Library Services lead for Equity, Diversity and Inclusivity, Helen Worrell ([helen.worrell@bodleian.ox.ac.uk](mailto:helen.worrell@bodleian.ox.ac.uk)) is able to provide support with purchases for texts related to race and racial equality beyond your subject.
* You may also be aware of projects highlighting the work of racially diverse scholars in your field, including articles and other media such as podcasts and videos, which you could draw on.

1. **Where in their learning could students create connections between race / racially diverse scholarship and other core areas of their study?**

Providing opportunities for students to engage with race and racially diverse scholarship consistently **by embedding this material within established subject matter** supports students to build a more comprehensive understanding of their subject.

* Aim to draw on material on the topic of race and / or contributions from racially diverse scholars throughout your teaching in conversation with the traditional range of topics and contributors rather than introducing them as ‘separate’ areas of study.
* When including examples and case studies, try to ensure these reflect a range of scenarios rather than those which reaffirm unhelpful racial stereotypes.

1. **Where in their learning could students be made aware of racial diversity within their discipline?**

Highlighting the **diversity of scholars** in the discipline could have a positive effect on students’ learning and challenge students’ assumptions about who is and is not represented in their field.

* Where possible, consider visually representing a range of scholars in your subject (i.e. not **just** racially underrepresented scholars), for example by linking to videos from reading lists or using images in slides to highlight whose work you are drawing on.
* Where possible, give students an opportunity to learn **about** scholars in their subject (including those from racially underrepresented backgrounds) and understand **how** they have contributed to your field or discipline, for example by including contextual interludes and / or biographical information. Encourage students to focus on the scholar’s ideas, not simply their identity.

1. **Where in their learning could students be made to feel their racial identity and experiences are welcomed and valued?**

All students value feeling included in the discussion and sometimes **tacit barriers to participation exist around correct use of their names and expectations around sharing of personal experiences**. This is particularly important where race is the topic of discussion and may relate to the lived experiences of racially underrepresented students.

* Make time at the beginning of tutorial or class for everyone to learn how to pronounce each other’s names correctly and don’t be afraid to later check with a student if you are worried you have mispronounced their name. You could also ask students to use [Vocaroo](https://vocaroo.com/) to audio record their preferred name, which they can upload to a Canvas discussion board.
* Consider giving opportunities for **all** students to share personal experiences / reflections on material where relevant, but don’t require them to do so and don’t expect any individual student(s) to speak on behalf of a racial group. If students share personal experiences, listen and validate these by acknowledging that many students will have responses to material **before** moving on to encourage the student to integrate these experiences into the academic material.

1. **Where in their learning could students be prompted to challenge problematic behaviours towards underrepresented racial groups?**

It is important that we **do** **not ignore acts of racism in the classroom** – **whether overt or unintentional**. This could include, for example, using incorrect pronunciations or names of places or it could involve ‘microaggressions’ (everyday insults directed at a member of a racially ‘minoritised’ group), such as alluding to racial stereotypes; making assumptions about someone’s beliefs based on their race; and treating racially underrepresented students differently. By framing challenges to such behaviour as a shared endeavour, it shows that everyone is learning and may make mistakes and enables students to challenge each other and you.

* Students will appreciate it if you make it clear how they might raise a concern or challenge with you and the group, and this may depend on the teaching setting.
* If you witness a microaggression, take a minute to discuss the significance of such acts (however unintended they may be) and why they are problematic. This takes away the threat of immediately calling someone out and gives the person responsible a chance to clarify. You could then explicitly ask the student if they want to rephrase their statement in case they have unintentionally said the wrong thing. If it is a significant offence, you could speak to the student individually after the session about why it is problematic.

1. **Where in their learning could students develop skills to manage challenging conversations and think critically about race and racial inequalities?**

Part of students learning to manage challenging conversations and think critically about race requires **reflecting on biases, assumptions and the reasons that may underpin why we hold particular viewpoints**, which may sometimes cause discomfort.

* At the start of a session where you will be exploring race as a topic, consider posing questions that prompt students to reflect on possible biases they hold. For example, you might ask ‘How might your own social experiences and perceptions of race shape the way you talk about the material?’. You could use the students’ reflections as a useful ‘way in’ to explore the topic.
* Consider agreeing with your students how you will use language and terminology. For example, you could share or co-create a glossary with students of key terms relating to race. Agreeing some ground rules for discussion may also help to give students a way of engaging in challenging conversations that respects different perspectives.

1. **Where in their learning could students be made aware of material that is racist in tone and/or content?**

Giving students advance warning of material that includes racist content will enable students to prepare to engage **intellectually with potentially challenging material**. The solution is not to remove such material from teaching, but rather to make **expectations explicit to students about what they may encounter in their learning and why this is important material to study.**

* This could be done informally in a tutorial or in your Course Handbook or on Canvas.
* Students find it helpful when notices are precise about what makes the material racist (e.g., it contains racial violence). However, if this is not possible you may want to consider a blanket statement acknowledging the challenging nature of materials students are likely to encounter.
* When engaging with racially ‘problematic’ material, consider contextualising it and explaining why students are being asked to explore it. Alternatively, try to provide complementary material to counter problematic ideas or viewpoints.

1. **Where in their learning could students be prompted to approach racial diversity in specific, rather than generalised, terms?**

Encouraging students to **accurately identify different racial identities and their significance to the material** avoids the conflation that can happen between different racial groups when imprecise terms are used, and which can sometimes mislead and / or mask the complexities of the material.

* Try to be specific when referring to racial identities, for example, by stating that you have added ‘three authors of Caribbean heritage’ to your reading list, rather than ‘three black authors’.
* Where relevant, consider drawing attention to specific choices in terminology, acknowledging that terms may have changed over time or carry specific meanings. For example, you might explain why you are using ‘African American’ rather than ‘Black American’.
* Consider how you can prompt students to explore the complexities of material. Stating that ‘BAME populations are more susceptible to cardiovascular disease because they have poorer diets’, for example, conflates different racial identities by using the term ‘BAME’, whilst making a broad generalisation about this group of people. An alternative would be ‘rates of cardiovascular disease are higher among Black and South Asian groups in England’. Students could then be asked to discuss / research the reasons for this, or you could provide a reflection.

## **Further reading and resources**

* The Centre for Teaching and Learning has created a [racially inclusive teaching reading list](https://rl.talis.com/3/oxford/lists/049AE91D-9E56-EC71-F912-5CAE7A311311.html?draft=1&lang=en-GB&login=1) as part of this toolkit.
* The Bodleian has collated reading lists around [race and the curriculum](https://rl.talis.com/3/oxford/lists/804DD9F0-BA05-F983-49D1-9EFD3F5A54BE.html) and [anti-racism](https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/c.php?g=686589&p=4907727).
* Case studies from teaching staff are available through the toolkit.