# **Anti-racism content development reflection tool**

### Introduction:

The tool aims to use reflective prompts to identify opportunities to incorporate [anti-racism](#_4fh9n41lfl05) into our work. It emphasises reflection and engagement with existing tools, communities of practice, the wider literature and other initiatives.

It has been developed recognising that Digital content practitioners (such as learning designers, learning technologists and other EdTech professionals) often work with content that will have been developed by, or ‘owned’ by, academic staff.

The tool can be used by individuals or teams at a ‘grassroots’ level but is also compatible with wider initiatives. **However** - we recognise that undertaking it in a group setting allows the possibility of racist power relationships to be exercised in the activity itself (‘I don’t think that form of racism exists here’ for example). If planning to run this in a group session, we suggest creating a safe space/shared understanding first (for example, drawing on ‘[Guidance material for university and general education teachers on tackling sensitive topics In a classroom](https://sisu.ut.ee/sites/default/files/sensiclass/files/2022.05.20_guidance_material_eng_a4.pdf)’).

Although the tool is intended for anti-racist purposes, racism [intersects](#_tx6ar37fe00b) with other areas of inequality. Considering intersections with gender, social class, religion, sexual orientation, skin colour/colourism, disability, age, nationality etc. is important in the reflective activities.

In creating this tool, we have particularly drawn upon the [University of Liverpool Decolonising the Curriculum Toolkit](https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/centre-for-innovation-in-education/resources/all-resources/decolonising-the-curriculum-toolkit.html) and the [Design for Diversity™(D4D) framework](https://thecreativeindependent.com/guides/how-to-begin-designing-for-diversity/). This tool is an ongoing work in progress, so please do provide feedback.

### Self Care:

Engaging with anti-racism and racism comes with personal and institutional challenges - whether of bringing up uncomfortable feelings within yourself, or being exposed to attitudes and responses that may leave you feeling isolated or marginalised. Reflecting on potential places of support and ways to self-care when engaging with the work, and potential sources of allies in dealing with this is important to consider.

1. What sources of support do you have available to you?

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### Communities:

‘Why it matters’

The content we produce may be interacted with by a range of communities, but some communities may be [privileged](#_ntc1vuafvph3) and some [excluded](#_iqpx3fwhmxld). In [her book White Privilege, Kalwant Bhopal](https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmwomeq/360/full-report.html) discusses the notion of unacceptable whiteness with regards to the Traveller Community. In 2011, the census collected information about Gypsy and Traveller people for the first time, with Roma not initially included but recommended for inclusion in the 2021 census.

2. What range of communities will the piece of work be available for? Is it possible to identify any communities who may be ‘excluded’ by racism in some way?

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Are there any actions you could take? Some examples:

* Data gather or use user research methods to understand who will be using your content.
* Find a way to engage - equitably and without putting a burden on them - with potentially excluded communities.
* Do some literature research.
* Look at previous projects along the same lines at your organisation and attempt to evaluate the impact they had on different communities.

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### The project team:

‘Why it matters’

The outputs of a project team can be influenced by who is on that team and what influence they have. There are many examples of tech catering to the needs of white users without thinking of the effects beyond them (e.g. [of speech recognition systems performing significantly better for white users](https://uxplanet.org/a-brief-history-of-how-racism-manifests-itself-in-design-and-how-we-can-learn-from-it-141b1b5ddd4b)). Beyond whether an inclusive design approach is used, the makeup of the team (or sector, or industry) will heavily influence the output.

3. Who is involved in creating the content and to what extent do you as the creators reflect the audiences for the work (bearing in mind seniority and influence as an axis)? What impacts might this have?

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Are there any actions you could take? Some examples where there may not be a strong range of racial representation in the project team:

* Are there racial equality student or staff societies at your institution (or beyond) who you could talk to over the piece of work?
* Are there ways you could engage [marginalised](#_iqpx3fwhmxld) communities to become co-creators (again, equitably)? E.g. talking to/running workshops to discuss or brainstorm solutions together.
* What other [anti-racist](#_4fh9n41lfl05) groups or individuals could you engage with in developing this work?
* Longer term, are there institutional or wider best practices in recruitment to diversify staff in your area?

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4. What is your level of influence in the project? If you are not able to influence at the content or curriculum level, which elements could you influence?

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Are there any actions you could take? Some examples:

* If you are not in a position of great influence, to put together a case for doing things differently to senior project members. Potentially finding a more senior ‘sponsor’ to aid in this.

### Learning content:

‘Why it matters’

In medical education, there is an absence of black and brown skin in textbooks and course materials. Students therefore are only taught to recognise dermatological conditions, for example, on white skin. This contributes to worse health outcomes for those with darker skin. (Reference - the [Black and Brown Skin](https://www.blackandbrownskin.co.uk/about-mentor) resource).

The invalidation of students from marginalised communities, such as only acknowledging knowledge from white sources and viewpoints, heaivy impacts on belonging, participation, grades, ability to excel for students excluded from this (see [‘Why is my curriculum White?’](https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/articles/why-is-my-curriculum-white-decolonising-the-academy)).

5.Going through the content, are there ways in which it might include harmful content or be colonial in design? Are there ways in which the content may be written for a white or privileged audience (include viewpoints based on their experiences/not discuss other experiences)?

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Are there any actions you could take?

* E.g. using audit or curriculum design tools, such as [the CST Decolonised Curriculum Audit Tool](https://www.bameednetwork.com/resources/resources-resource/cst-decolonised-curriculum-audit-tool/). See [Appendix II](#_boqrvrp8euj9) for some other resources.
* Are there [anti-racist](#_4fh9n41lfl05) or decolonising resources on the academic discipline of the project? What systems of knowledge and politics could be included that currently aren’t?
* Auditing the images and language used in the content.
* Find ways to celebrate Blackness, Asianness, for example, within the content.
* Design and communicate to users ways to raise any racial [microagressions](#_ji3aip1nkwp1) or other issues with the content in a way where it gets addressed, corrected and reported back on (i.e., that users don’t end up feeling there is ‘no point’ to raising issues).

### Tools and platforms

‘Why it matters’

Historically, colour photography was normalised to lighter skin tones. The impact of this was that darker skin tones were hidden in the image, effectively making dark skinned people invisible. It wasn't until 1995 that Kodak introduced a new multi-racial skin colour reference card that featured a Caucasian, Asian, and African woman with different skin and clothing colours. See [Sarah Lewis ‘the racial bias built into photography, NY times](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/25/lens/sarah-lewis-racial-bias-photography.html).

Many platforms perpetuate racist and sexist stereotypes, for example [search engine results returned from names associated with black men offering adverts for criminal records searches](https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/technology-21322183). As per [this Harvard Business Review article](https://hbr.org/2019/05/voice-recognition-still-has-significant-race-and-gender-biases), many forms of AI perform worse for women and people who aren’t white.Another example is of [how speech recognition preferences so called ‘unaccented’ english](https://altc.alt.ac.uk/blog/2021/11/decolonising-learning-technology-part-1/). For an example of lived experience of racial stereotyping of East Asian women see: <https://www.oxfordstudent.com/2021/03/20/108952/>

6. How might the tools or platforms you are using preference one community over another?

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Are there any actions you could take? Some examples:

* Audit the technologies used in the delivery of the content (developed in, hosted on, drawing on) and evaluate what bias might be there in each (in order to find ways to counter).
* E.g. providing a range of different tools that the content could be hosted on or ways to submit

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### Post-project reflection

 ‘Why it matters’

Post project reflection allows you to learn from experiences on the project in general, and from an anti racism perspective can help identify better practices for next time. Building in mechanisms for getting and addressing feedback is part of this also.

7. For this piece of work - or for a similar piece of work completed previously - what did you learn? What might you do differently in future?

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Are there any actions you could take? Some examples:

* Are there others involved in the work who could join in reflections/lessons learned?
* Is there a way to get feedback and future direction from communities who were potentially excluded? How could this be done in an appropriate and non harmful way?
* Giving the opportunity for anonymous feedback. Thinking of ways to genuinely incorporate that feedback.

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## Appendix I- glossary

Note that these glossary terms are taken from other a range of sources.

### Marginalised/excluded (people/communities)

* Describing people who lack decision-making powers and representation in public spaces and roles, including collections. Also **underserved**: Those who disproportionately do not benefit from services because of unfair practices. [Taken from [the Curatorial Research Centre’s Decolonising glossary](https://curatorialresearch.com/services/research/decolonisation/decolonising-glossary/)]

### Colonial/Decolonising

* **Colonial**, **colonialism**. Subjugation of one people by another particularly used to denote the period of British and European empires of **colonies** from 17th to 20th centuries. Political and economic control of a state over remote colonies. **Anti-colonial.** Actively against colonial actions, structures and institutions, often calling for their dismantling. [Taken from [the Curatorial Research Centre’s Decolonising glossary](https://curatorialresearch.com/services/research/decolonisation/decolonising-glossary/)]

### Anti-racism

* **Anti-racism** is a proactive stance against racism in all forms seen in actions and work rather than statements and policy. [Taken from [the Curatorial Research Centre’s Decolonising glossary](https://curatorialresearch.com/services/research/decolonisation/decolonising-glossary/)]

### Whiteness

* **Whiteness**, **white gaze**, **white fragility**, **conditional whiteness**. Facets of cultural and historic attitudes to and by people of white British and European heritage as espoused in critical race theory. [Taken from [the Curatorial Research Centre’s Decolonising glossary](https://curatorialresearch.com/services/research/decolonisation/decolonising-glossary/)]
* **White fragility:** A state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress or discourse becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves could include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, or behaviours such as argumentation, silence/ing, and leaving the “stress-inducing” situation. [Taken from [the Purple Rain collective’s glossary](https://purpleraincollective.com/glossary/)]

### Intersectionality

* **Intersectionality**. How identities combine. How racism is experienced when combined with other prejudices e.g. those based on disability, class culture, age, gender, sexuality, migration, language. [Taken from [the Curatorial Research Centre’s Decolonising glossary](https://curatorialresearch.com/services/research/decolonisation/decolonising-glossary/)]
* “Intersectionality is simply a prism to see the interactive effects of various forms of discrimination and disempowerment. It looks at the way that racism, many times, interacts with patriarchy, heterosexism, classism, xenophobia — seeing that the overlapping vulnerabilities created by these systems actually create specific kinds of challenges.” [Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, who coined the term, from a conversation with U.K. Black Pride organiser Lady Phyll [on the UK Black Pride site](https://www.ukblackpride.org.uk/blog/2019/3/8/kimberl-crenshaw-and-lady-phyll-talk-intersectionality-solidarity-and-self-care)]
* A theory with roots in Black Feminism, which considers the effects of race, class, gender, sexuality and other social identities and related systems of oppression as interlocking, rather than as mutually exclusive entities. Importantly, these intersecting identities cannot be separated from one another. [Taken from [the Purple Rain collective’s glossary](https://purpleraincollective.com/glossary/)]

### Colourism

* **Colourism** : Prejudice or discrimination against individuals with a darker skin tone. It typically occurs among people of the same ethnic or racial group. [Taken from [the Purple Rain collective’s glossary](https://purpleraincollective.com/glossary/)]

### Microagressions

* Less obvious racism in everyday life, e.g. “where are you from? No, where are you really from?” [Taken from [the Curatorial Research Centre’s Decolonising glossary](https://curatorialresearch.com/services/research/decolonisation/decolonising-glossary/)]

### Privilege

* Usually, not always, associated with white privilege. Systemic and institutional racism can benefit those with privilege, as well as disadvantage those without privilege. [Taken from [the Curatorial Research Centre’s Decolonising glossary](https://curatorialresearch.com/services/research/decolonisation/decolonising-glossary/)]

## Appendix II - further resources

These are not intended as exhaustive, but as potential entry points into the literature. There is also a longer resources list for digital content creators [available in this spreadsheet](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1T1g9JWnTez9HCt5K08MdrfQPAs8hl84Q/edit?usp=sharing&ouid=102162353568450562718&rtpof=true&sd=true).

### Communities

* [The Design for Diversity™(D4D) framework](https://thecreativeindependent.com/guides/how-to-begin-designing-for-diversity/) talks about how different audience communities may be included or excluded in pieces of work, and the ways in which engaging with those communities can be harmful unless done right (for example putting more workload on them by expecting them to engage as ‘volunteers’).
* The [University of Edinburgh Information Services Group Antiracist Reading List](https://open.ed.ac.uk/information-services-group-antiracist-reading-list/) covers sources on the historical racist context of technology, for example.

### The project team

* Beyond groups at your institution, there is the [ALT Anti-Racism & Learning Technology Group](https://sway.office.com/ctPxB8w3uStnabVG) which you can join and ask questions of.
* The [NUS Decolonise Education presents: your collaborative](https://www.nus.org.uk/articles/nus-decolonise-education-presents-your-collaborative-library) is another group sitting above the institution level.
* Pointing others to relevant items from reading lists such as the [University of Edinburgh Information Services Group Antiracist Reading List](https://open.ed.ac.uk/information-services-group-antiracist-reading-list/) might be one way to engage other institutional groups or individuals.

### Learning content

* The [University of Liverpool Decolonising the Curriculum Toolkit](https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/centre-for-innovation-in-education/resources/all-resources/decolonising-the-curriculum-toolkit.html) is a similar tool to this, aimed at programme leaders to help ‘audit’ curriculum content and take action.
* Other toolkits:
	+ [Decolonising SOAS Learning and Teaching Toolkit for Programme and Module Convenors](https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/decolonisingsoas/learning-teaching/toolkit-for-programme-and-module-convenors/)
	+ [the Teesside university/Jisc Digital Learning Design Toolkit for course teams](https://altc.alt.ac.uk/blog/2021/07/introducing-the-digital-learning-design-toolkit-for-course-teams/)
	+ [UCL BAME Awarding Gap: new staff toolkit](https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/news/2020/may/bame-awarding-gap-new-staff-toolkit)
	+ [University of the Arts London AEM and Attainment Resources](https://www.arts.ac.uk/about-ual/teaching-and-learning-exchange/resources/aem-and-attainment-resources)
* [The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1](https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/) are aimed at practices and settings to make digital content accessible for disabled people, important intersections with race.
* The [UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)](https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/guide-to-data-protection/guide-to-the-general-data-protection-regulation-gdpr/) covers responsibility for protecting the data of users of your content. The protection of the data of excluded communities can be particularly important.
* Imagery, representation and language guides:
	+ [ForumOne How to choose diverse and inclusive photos](https://www.forumone.com/ideas/how-to-choose-diverse-and-inclusive-photos/) – points to consider
	+ [Pexels – Diversity](https://www.pexels.com/search/diversity/) – stock of images
	+ [UK Government Inclusive Communication](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/inclusive-language-words-to-use-and-avoid-when-writing-about-disability)
	+ [National Assembly of State Arts Agency – Inclusive Language Guide](https://nasaa-arts.org/nasaa_research/inclusive-language-guide/)
	+ [NHS Inclusive Language](https://service-manual.nhs.uk/content/inclusive-language)
	+ [Chartered Institute of Insurance Inclusive Language Guide](https://www.cii.co.uk/media/10120292/inclusive-language-guidelines.pdf)
* As a subject-specific example, in the field of medicine, there are resources such as t[he Mind The Gap clinical handbook for black and brown skin](https://www.blackandbrownskin.co.uk/mindthegap), the [Brown Skin Matters medical image database](https://www.brownskinmatters.com/) and the [Skin Deep Paediatric medical image database](https://dftbskindeep.com/).

### Tools and platforms

* The [ALT’s Framework for Ethical Learning Technology (FELT)](https://www.alt.ac.uk/about-alt/what-we-do/alts-ethical-framework-learning-technology) is a framework for using learning technologies.
* The [University of Edinburgh Information Services Group Antiracist Reading List](https://open.ed.ac.uk/information-services-group-antiracist-reading-list/) ‘inequalities in tech’ section covers examples of how racism exists in platforms/technologies.
* Traxler, J. (2017). Learning with Mobiles in Developing Countries: Technology, Language, and Literacy. International Journal of Mobile and Blended Learning, 9 (2), pp 1-15.

### Post-project reflection

* One way to run a group ‘retrospective’ can be to use some variation of the basic questions ‘what went well/what didn’t go well/what questions do we still have’ – for example [this four question retrospective model](https://www.infoq.com/articles/4-questions-retrospective/).
* [The Design for Diversity™(D4D) framework](https://thecreativeindependent.com/guides/how-to-begin-designing-for-diversity/) talks about the ongoing process of improving the work with feedback from excluded communities.

## Appendix III - summary of feedback to date on the tool across all versions:

* Providing a glossary of definitions would be useful – tools currently assume a level of knowledge. Possibly as the ability to hover over keywords in order to get short descriptions. A way to address the problem of not knowing what you don’t know.
* Would be good to provide examples of ‘actions you could take’ under those points in the tool.
* It would be good to provide illustrative examples of issues under each heading. Anecdotes would help illustrate the need for reflecting on each area the tool addresses.
* As there are useful resources elsewhere on the site, it would be good if the form opened in a new tab.
* It is long/potentially unwieldy in length.
* A comment – the language of the tool/site not forceful enough
* Naming it as a ‘toolkit’ is a misnomer, given only two tools sit on the site.
* There’s no acknowledgement of intersectionality.
* Comments on the formatting of the questions in the tool, especially those with multiple ‘sub’ questions – not easily readable. Not easy to understand individual questions within the questions. Solve by bullet points. Make it more reader friendly. Three tier questions otherwise difficult to answer – can’t remember the first when doing the last.
* Too many questions/too long as it is. Suggestion of including more ‘why it matter’s style context and maybe only 2ish questions per area ‘communities/the project team’ etc). I think coming up with those context bits might take some work.
* The groups struggled sometimes to keep the reflection to racism vs a more general ‘who is disadvantaged.’ Partly to do with wording of questions, but also the tension with intersectionality. We thought if there is more context setting material that would frame it better around race.
* Some concern about the differences in doing it as a team vs doing it individually (eg that it could inadvertently become a process where someone is silenced) and to maybe have either more setting the scene material (principles of talking about this as a team) and/or separate slightly different versions of it for each purpose.
* Name more clearly - eg ‘reflection tool.’