

## **Motion to Mandate the Graduate Union to urge the University to set up Scholarship Programmes to support Home BME postgraduate students.**

**Proposer:** Alessandro Ceccarelli, President and Chair, Graduate Union (henceforth GU)

**Seconder:** Mrittunjoy Guha Majumdar, Chair of Exec and Vice-president, Graduate Union

### **The Graduate Union notes:**

1. That Black students are one of four identified underrepresented groups at University of Cambridge (along with British Pakistanis, British Bangladeshis and people from white working class backgrounds).
2. That the average success rate of Cambridge admission for BAME applicants is concerningly lower than of white applicants (22% vs. 26.4%).
3. That the number of **Black UK PG students has decreased since 2015-16**, and that Black UK PG students represented only 1.29% of all UK PGs in 2017-18. These patterns of underrepresentation are concerning.
4. That the Cambridge Stormzy Scholarship is successfully attracting applications from Black undergraduate (UG) students. The Scholarship covers the full cost of tuition fees for four Black students (two in 2018 and two in 2019), and provide a maintenance grant for up to four years of any UG course.
5. The recent Postgraduate Mental Health Report, which includes results of a survey conducted with PG students by the Graduate Union (GU) shows that **27% of BAME PG respondents noted that racism has affected their mental health** (including experiencing anxiety, depression, isolation, difficult supervisor relationships).
6. That some British universities have launched scholarships for Black and Minority Ethnic doctoral students. E.g. at UCL, the BME funding scheme, initially funded by the Vice Chancellor's Fund, it is hoped that donors will provide long term funding. Participants are provided with a programme of development activities, such as mentoring, in addition to generous funding. For more information on the scheme, see <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/campaign/news/2018/nov/ucl-announces-brand-new-scholarship-programme-support-uk-bme-postgraduate-students>
7. That some British universities has been accredited with the Race Equality Charter. As part of this accreditation, they examined their progression data and found that there was lower participation from BME students going from PGT to PGR. Thanks to Focus Groups, the lack of finance and lack of BME academic staff role models were found correlated to the lower participation from BME students. Positive actions were taken to address these factors which is permissible by law.

8. That BME dedicated funding and academic staff role models can be successful in supplying a pipeline of BME academic staff who will in turn encourage greater participation of BME Students. They would encourage other institutions to take positive action to address inequalities in participation.
9. That, in consultation with the Cambridge Colleges and wider University of Cambridge, the Student Support Initiative (SSI) was set up and it is currently running. This brings together a set of proposals to transform student support at Cambridge. In line with the *Memorandum of Understanding between the University and the Colleges on Postgraduate Student Numbers*, the Collegiate University via the SSI wishes to increase significantly the **number of postgraduate students who receive funding**.
10. That the Graduate Union has an existing campaign called 'Campaign for Race Equality and Access through training and engagement' (CREATE), being led by the Vice-President

#### **The Graduate Union believes:**

1. That the University should set up Scholarship Programmes to support Home BME postgraduate students, on the level of PGT (e.g. Masters) and PGR (eg. PhD).
2. That the University should look for internal financial resources as well as donors to set up long term funding schemes for Home BME postgraduate students.
3. That a portion of the current University of Cambridge SSI efforts and funding should be dedicated to increase the number of Black PG students and to offer them support before, during and after the application process.

#### **The Graduate Union resolves:**

1. To urge the wider University of Cambridge and Colleges to identify financial resources and donors, and to set up dedicated Scholarship Programmes to support Home UK BME postgraduate students, on the level of PGT (e.g. Masters) and PGR (eg. PhD). These scholarships should priorities students coming from a disadvantaged backgrounds and low-income families.
2. To urge the SSI to diverge efforts towards financial and welfare support for Black PG prospective applicants and new students, including possible mentoring post-application and more academic staff role models.