



Professor John Devaney  
School of Social and Political Science  
Chrystal Macmillan Building (2.30)  
15a George Square  
University of Edinburgh  
Edinburgh  
EH8 9LD  
Tel: (+44) 0131 6515363  
(+44) 7810 727476  
Email: [J.Devaney@ed.ac.uk](mailto:J.Devaney@ed.ac.uk)

Jude Currie,  
Chair  
SASW Committee

31<sup>st</sup> March 2021

Dear Jude and Alison

Thank you for your recent correspondence seeking employers and education providers to commit to anti-racist practice in social work. On behalf of the Department of Social Work at the University of Edinburgh I would like to affirm our commitment to anti-racist social work practice, and the challenge which flows from this. We would be keen to support SASW, as our professional body, to raise and address issues of how racism can be addressed within society, for the users of social work services, and for our colleagues. While anti-racist practice has always been a feature of social work education, the events of last year have brought into sharp focus the need for us to reflect on what we are doing, and how, and to commit to taking action to address a range of short comings.

At the University of Edinburgh our work is located within a wider set of developments within the university, such as [Race.Ed](#), a cross-institutional network concerned with race, racilisation and decolonial studies. This is complemented by wider developments across Scotland such as the establishment by the Joint Universities Social Work Education Scotland Committee (made up of the heads of social work departments from the nine universities in Scotland offering social work education programmes) of a cross-institutional working group on race and racism.

Locally, we have taken a number of steps to review upon how we can better reflect on race and racism within our teaching and research. In summer 2020 we established a working group of staff and students to formulate an action plan for addressing issues related to race, racism and culture. Key issue identified included:

- the need to enhance teaching about race, racism, culture and intersectionality. We have sought to do this primarily through two specific courses, supplemented by additional teaching on other courses. The teaching delivered this year has been audited by the working group of staff and students, and has been well received by students who have taken these courses this year. In addition, we have reviewed and updated reading lists for students to include a wider range of material reflecting issues of race and racism within a UK and international context. This is also part of our commitment to decolonise the curriculum, and to ensure that a wider range of voices and perspectives is reflected in our teaching.
- the importance of looking at the experiences of students from minority backgrounds while on placements is being explored. One of the things we have done is to hold a learning event for practice educators looking at the issue of cultural awareness and the assessment of students within practice learning relating to race and racism. This learning event was led by Dr Prospera

Tedam and was well received by practice educators. We are also working with the university's staff who have been newly appointed to support students from minority ethnic communities should they experience harassment or bullying, to look at how students can be supported should they wish to make a complaint of racism while in university or on placement.

- overarching these developments we have also invited and appointed external examiners for programmes who are from minority backgrounds in order to benefit from their review of our teaching and advice on how we can further strengthen our teaching on race and racism.

These developments are only the beginning, and we have agreed with our working group that they will continue to meet throughout the 2021-2022 academic year as a means of offering advice, but also holding us accountable for delivering the changes required.

Thank you for your leadership on these issues which we fully support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Devaney', written in a cursive style.

John Devaney, PhD  
Centenary Professor and Head of Social Work