Institutionalised

The Rise of **Islamophobia** in Higher Education

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LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

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Contents

Foreword

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Islamophobia – prevalent, far reaching and evermore emboldened. It is the specific and systematic targeting of Muslims and the Islamic faith, which continues to strengthen in oppressing those who simply wish to practice their beliefs, free from discrimination, surveillance and criminalisation.

Our education systems, often thought of as being catalysts of progressive knowledge and spaces for critical reflection are not exempt from harbouring, maintaining and shielding Islamophobia in its many forms. It may not be a very difficult a task to find those who have experienced, witnessed, held these views, or have been on the receiving end of it within the sector. Yet, in many quarters Islamophobia remains unchallenged, accepted even, as it has become a normalised part of many workplaces and institutions.

Last year, numerous universities were quick to declare themselves 'anti-racist,' 'decolonial' and progressive, with many not quite understanding the aforementioned. Yet these self-gratifying statements are often nothing more than simply that, a statement, a verbiage, with minimal, if not zero action. All whilst upholding the very forms of institutional racism that people have been fighting against for centuries, including Islamophobia.

Many are growing tired of the empty platitudes and virtue signalling that institutions are no stranger to partaking. I join the thousands before, presently and after me who call upon our universities to act on their words, it is long overdue.

Institutionalised builds upon the knowledge and literature shared by Muslims who have given their emotional and intellectual labour in identifying, detailing and tackling Islamophobia. My thanks first and foremost go to these scholars, and the students and staff at London Metropolitan University who offered up their time and personal experiences in aiding this research.

Thank you Dr Zainab Khan, for your refreshing leadership, mentorship and support, you are a shining example of someone who leads with their values, unapologetically. Thank you Dr Jason Arday, you are an inspiration to many, someone who has not only dedicated their career but their life to racial justice, paving the way for others. You are a great colleague, mentor and friend. Thank you Dr Fatima Rajina for your sisterhood and guidance, not just in work but in life.

Dr Asim Qureshi, Dr Ibtihal Ramadan, Izram Chaudry, Dr Zain Sardar and Mark Ellul thank you for your expertise, support and unreserved advice, it truly means a lot.

Thank you Racheal Alake, my sister, for always challenging me to think outside the confines of our realities and reimagine our futures.

Lastly, thank you Jamal El-Kalawy who has been my confidant, my support system, my peace and my joy throughout this difficult year. Thank you always.

Foreword

Dr Zainab Khan
Pro Vice-Chancellor & Director, Centre for Equity & Inclusion

In November 2020 we became the first UK University to adopt the working definition of Islamophobia as proposed by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims.

We recognise this is not a universally accepted definition and discussions continue on how best to describe Islamophobia so that it is seen and understood as a distinct form of hate and harassment. However conceptual debates cannot distract or delay organisations from taking action. Sofia Akel explains that by adopting a definition we bring Islamophobia into the vocabulary of the institution. Importantly, she suggests this creates a basis and 'avenues through which Muslim students and staff can discuss, lodge complaints and expect to have their experiences understood.' In consultation with staff and students, we have developed a set of indicative examples of Islamophobic behaviour which should be read in conjunction with the APPG definition.

Words alone will not address Islamophobia which is why this important study has been conducted in order to understand the issues and challenges present at London Met. Every institution has its own unique culture, however recent larger studies into racial harassment conducted by Universities UK and EHRC point clearly towards trends across Higher Education. *Institutionalised* can be used as a springboard by institutions to begin their own internal discussions and work on Islamophobia.

The reluctance of our Sector to acknowledge the problem of Islamophobia, partly evidenced by the dearth of research on the Muslim experience within Higher Education, demonstrates a considerable distance left to travel. A failure to recognise the problem reflects a lack of understanding of the complexities of contemporary racism in Britain. Approximately 17% of students at London Met are Muslim, this is not an area that we can defer action.

Whilst some of the findings provide reassurance that there is good practice at London Met, the research indicates several areas where we know we must do more. This is particularly the case in relation to improving inclusivity in student politics as well as ensuring that the campus experience enables faith observance. Of particular importance are the findings indicating staff and student confidence levels in our reporting processes. Confidence in our complaints processes will only improve if and when minoritised individuals experience University staff as racially literate. This is not a training priority reserved only for complaint investigators. We are committed to ensuring that all London Met staff develop a heightened understanding of the nuanced forms of racism so that ethnic and faith minorities feel able to raise issues relating to their experience in the confidence that they will be understood without the exhaustive burden of first having to educate others on what racism is. We will achieve this through a programme of extensive training, and by facilitating regular discussions on race and racism within the University. We are committed to creating conditions where everyone feels safe, supported and able to fulfil their potential.

Foreword

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A New Dawn: Addressing Islamophobia in British Higher Education

The rise of Islamophobia over the past two decades has been disturbing within the British and global context. The demonization of Muslims within public and policy discourses has led to a racism that casually pervades within British society's major institutions. Higher education has been an incubator for harbouring and facilitating this form of racism in all of its pernicious manifestations.

The racial victimization of Muslims within British universities has been an issue that has continued to gain traction, but more recently there has been a focus on how public and policy debate now addresses Islamophobia as a tenet of institutional racism. This has come in response to Muslims being ignorantly ascribed as facilitators of terrorism or a civilizational threat. This framing of Muslims is toxic and sadly continues to gather momentum. Universities have always been framed as egalitarian spaces that foster progressive thinking and cultural inclusivity. This myth has been repeatedly challenged as we observe more intersectional inequalities regarding cases of misogyny, sexual harassment, classism and racism. Muslims have been subjected to more covert and violent episodes of hostility within the Academy. The absence of interventions to thwart incidences of Islamophobia within our universities indicates that much remains to be done in terms of universities truly being a reflection of racial equality.

The racism continually experienced by British Muslims is reinforced by a narrative of suspicion rooted in systemic racial ascriptions and aligns with Islam being a vehicle for violent extremism or other criminal or deviant behaviour. This narrative continues to be framed by a dominant right-wing media and Parliamentarians keen to present Islam as an infringement on our freedoms, liberties and fundamental British values.

Muslims have become the principal 'cultural other' in the British context, with Islamophobia now becoming arguably the most acceptable form of racism. Universities need to implement more interventions which aim to address and disrupt Islamophobia, to ensure that they are not complicit in sustaining and maintaining racism. It is important for universities to remain vigilant to racial and religious intolerance in their capacity and moral obligation to take a lead on advancing diversification, inclusion and social justice.

London Metropolitan University's definition of Islamophobia challenges the sector to orientate towards more tangible and penetrative interventions that can dismantle and address the continuous victimization of Muslims within British higher education and beyond. This welcome and much-needed report reflects the University's commitment to dismantling Islamophobia and comes at a seminal moment in our race relations history. It synthesises the sector's need to continuously develop anti-racist endeavour, and represents another significant step towards achieving racial equality in Britain.

Executive Summary

London Metropolitan Findings

Islamophobia is not a new or recent phenomenon, it is the methodical and campaigned targeting of one of Britain's most diverse religious groups, permeating all corners of our institutions – including universities.

There has been a growing national discourse amongst Muslim student interest groups into higher education's failure to acknowledge the prevalence of Islamophobia on campuses. In November 2020 London Metropolitan University (London Met) became the first UK University to adopt the working definition of Islamophobia as offered by the 2018 All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims. This report marks the beginning of London Met's commitment to improve institutional understanding of the manifestations of Islamophobia, both overt and covert in order to take actions which improve university culture and practices.

The study seeks to examine the question:
To what extent does Institutional Islamophobia shape the experiences of Muslim students and staff at London Metropolitan University?

The research question was disaggregated into four key sub-questions explored through thematic areas, tailored to student and staff specific environments:

1. **Observing Religion on Campus**
   What are the experiences of Muslim staff and students in relation to practicing Islam on campus?
2. **Academic Success, Inclusion and Attainment**
   What are the experiences of Muslim staff and students within academic settings?
3. **Institutional Islamophobia**
   What are the experiences of Muslim staff and students in relation to Institutional Islamophobia and the intersections of race and religion?
4. **Microaggressions, Safety and Reporting Islamophobia**
   How does Islamophobia on campus impact the safety of Muslim students and Staff, and their confidence in reporting it?

Each section of this report has been written with flexibility in mind, therefore you can choose to read specific sections in isolation. However to gain a holistic understanding you are encouraged to read this report in chronological order, in its entirety.

MUSLIM STUDENT EXPERIENCE

According to student records and HESA returns- at the time of writing- there are 1644 fully-enrolled Muslim students studying at London Met across all modes of study.[1] This research studied the experiences of almost 100 Muslim students, who completed an online survey.

Observing Religion on Campus

To practise religion, or to attend class? This is the constant state of negotiation that has come to characterise a number of Muslim students' experiences at London Met. Almost 50% have been forced to make a decision between attending a lecture or attending a religious event or prayers.[2] One student in particular described having no choice but to attend lectures due to the class attendance requirements associated with their student visa. 9% of students indicated that their lecturers had made allowances for religious observance during class e.g. scheduling breaks at times of prayer. 66% of students did not feel comfortable asking academic staff to make adjustments. A student noted the flexibility afforded by online recorded lectures in enabling them to observe prayer and study.

Examinations

During periods of extended religious observance, 30% of students felt that fasting during Ramadan has a negative impact on their exam performance whilst 17% of students felt that this had a positive impact on their performance. London Met must take this into consideration when setting and scheduling examinations.

Utilising Prayer Spaces

Both campuses have designated prayer rooms segregated by 'gender', with wash room facilities. A quarter of respondents did not feel comfortable utilising on campus prayer spaces.

1 All London Metropolitan University data on students and staff are provided by student records, staff records and HESA returns.
2 All statistics have been rounded.

Most preferred prayer at home, or across locations including on campus, local mosques and at home.

Halal Provisions

Whilst the majority of respondents felt comfortable eating Halal food offered by university catering, 19% did not, citing concerns such as cross-contamination of Halal and non-Halal food items and queries on the certification status of Halal food served. A number of examples were given where catering staff had not been confident in their understanding of Halal meat, nor could they answer confidently if they were serving it.

Academic Success, Inclusion and Attainment

An inhospitable environment

Respondents detailed how their academic spaces can become forums for ridicule, injustice and discrimination. Recalling lectures, whereby their beliefs, and by extension their identities, have been branded "medieval," incompatible with "today's world," by their lecturers under the guise of 'academic discussion.'

> *"A lecturer made a remark 'I bet you get searched everywhere you go with a name like that' to a student in a large gathering. The student was lost for words and clearly upset."*

5.4% of students felt that their contributions to academic discussions were disproportionately scrutinised by peers or lecturers due to prejudices against Islam. As a result, students are deterred from engaging with course material to the fullest extent, with 10% feeling unable to research topics of interest for fear of being considered "somehow dangerous, or radical."

Institutional Islamophobia

Preventing Prevent

In regards to the Prevent Duty, there were largely positive findings which did not suggest a campaign of Prevent-led treatment of Muslim students at London Met. Some respondents had recalled instances either directly, or indirectly relating to surveillance suggesting undertones of fear amongst the student body.

> *"I wear [a] long dress, I have a hat and I have beard. I may look a bit different and easily identifiable. I understand that some of the security guards know me by my name and I am not sure how."*

A percentage of 4.3%, believed their interactions with staff and students to be shaped by the Prevent Duty – 3.2% of students have been called upon by either university staff or student peers to condemn acts of terrorist extremism. These requests are premised on a presumption of guilt within a framework of imaged responsibility that Muslims are pressured to take.

The broader societal culture of heightened surveillance and criminalisation of Muslims as a 'suspect community,' has led students to self-police in the pursuit of self-preservation.

> *"I'm cautious because I feel that any student or staff member can coerce me to say something. I heard lots of scary stories about prevent."*

Inclusion

Intersectionality

Different elements of students' identities may determine which situations and spaces they feel most comfortable or are welcomed into. The majority of Muslim respondents had not experienced exclusion from participating in elements of university life, such as events, socials, etc due to religious discrimination or faith-based prejudice.

7% of respondents felt excluded from Muslim student groups and societies because of their ethnicity. Discrimination on racial lines, such as anti-Blackness can be prevalent amongst communities of colour.[3] A student also reported that they were discriminated against due to following a different denomination of Islam.

Student Democracy

Whilst many students hadn't experienced Islamophobia, respondents did reveal how they must take steps to protect themselves from the possibility. 26% of students would not nominate themselves for student elections, or take up leadership positions (such as course representatives) due to fear of religious discrimination. Leadership roles can be pivotal in changing representational structures, and the broader socio-political context within which a university operates.

3 Janice Gassam Asare, "How Communities Of Color Perpetuate Anti-Blackness," *Forbes,* July 19, 2020, https://www.forbes.com/sites/janicegassam/2020/07/19/how-communities-of-color-perpetuate-anti-blackness/.

Pressure to 'Conform'

Although drinking culture on campuses has decreased in recent years, events which do involve alcohol can indirectly exclude Muslim students.

> *"At one of the student fresher events alcohol was being consumed so I decided to leave but was laughed at and peer pressured to stay."*

Some respondents felt pressured to alter their religious practices in order to fit prevailing western social norms. A number of students had also considered or had modified their appearance in relation to their religious identities in order to avoid Islamophobic treatment.

Microaggressions and Safety

Gendered Islamophobia

The weaponisation and politicisation of religious garments such as the Niqab or Hijab has entered students' university spaces. Over 25% of students report having had to defend the wearing of religious garments whilst on campus, describing this as having impacted their sense of safety on campus- 16% feel unsafe wearing identifiably Islamic garments.

Hidden Islamophobia

Of those asked, 7.5% of respondents had either personally experienced or witnessed Islamophobic microaggressions at London Met. However, 17.2% were not sure, which may, in part, relate to their degree of understanding of the term 'microaggressions.' Students cited being asked to reveal their hair from under their Hijab, being questioned about 'Islamic oppression' or have hostile interactions – some of which are not microaggressions but overt Islamophobia. One student shared how they have reluctantly accepted that they will face discrimination, as a result, they refrain from discussing or reporting discriminatory incidents, choosing to "keep it in".

Self-Preservation Strategies

16% of students describe hiding their religious beliefs from their peers to avoid prejudice, physical assault, discriminatory treatment and mischaracterisation.

45% of students say they have no safe space to discuss the experiences and issues that they face at London Met.

Complaints Procedures

At London Met 61% of respondents felt comfortable lodging complaints of Islamophobia to the University, and a lower number (49%) felt comfortable reporting to the Students' Union.

There are many reasons why students from a minoritised group may choose not to report discrimination. Reasons for this ranged from fear of victimisation and retribution, to a lack of confidence in the Institution's ability to handle these complaints seriously. Importantly, a student highlighted the difficultly of evidencing microaggressions which are often expressed subtly.

> *"I feel like it wouldn't be taken seriously as there wouldn't be any proof except my word."*

Recommendations

All UK Higher Education Institutions must recognise that Islamophobia exists within the sector. Furthermore, universities must examine its impact on staff and students, taking decisive action to eradicate Islamophobia from campuses.

The recommendations in this report address key concerns raised by students, such as updating complaints procedures, educating staff on Islamophobia and supporting religious observance on campus.

MUSLIM STAFF EXPERIENCE

At the time of writing, London Metropolitan University (London Met) did not routinely collect data on staff religion and belief, therefore there was limited existing data based on voluntarily disclosures. Of those who did share their religion upon commencement of employment and are still working at London Met, 6% were Muslim.[4] Survey respondents represented 11% of the London Met's Muslim staff population.[5]

Observing Religion on Campus

Utilising Prayer Spaces

Having access to a prayer spaces on campus is an important part of supporting religious staff, almost 50% of respondents utilised these. 23% did not feel comfortable praying on campus citing conflicts with work schedules or expectations. One individual said they was made to feel disruptive if they chose to pray during work hours, resulting in them finding ways to do so discreetly.

Religious Holidays

During Ramadan, half of respondents were able to adjust their work schedule, working flexibly where possible. However, some roles do not allow for such flexibility, such as academic positions. 31% did not feel comfortable asking their line-managers for flexible working around religious holidays or events.

Halal Provisions

Just over half of respondents felt comfortable eating Halal food offered by university catering, however around 40% did not, citing concerns such as cross-contamination of Halal and non-Halal food items and queries on the source of meat served. An example was given where a respondent had witnessed catering staff cross-contaminate their utensils and food surfaces, on multiple occasions which created a distrust in the services offered.

Workplace Culture, Inclusion and Progression

Intersectionality

Various elements of staff members' identities may determine which situations and spaces they feel most comfortable or are welcomed into. Some respondents felt that their interactions were filtered through the prism of race, whereby they were viewed in relation to their ethnicity. However, some felt viewed predominately though perceptions of their religion.

Within on-campus Muslim communities themselves, 18% of respondents felt that their ethnicity excluded them from joining and participating in certain Muslim communities, for example anti-Blackness can be prevalent amongst communities of colour.[6]

Inclusion

Access to workplace events or staff socials, can be influential in building relationships with colleagues, work collaborations and impact career progression and development. 54% of respondents have never felt excluded from participating in staff events or socials but 31% felt excluded because of the presence of alcohol. Lack of diversity, inclusivity and conflicts with religious principles were also cited as causes of exclusion.

Progression

23% of staff believe exclusion from staff-related socials can negatively impact their career progression.

> *"I have seen members of staff in [redacted] side lined and marginalised due to not 'fitting in', so they may have 10 to 20 years' experience but when an opportunity comes up it will always be the non-Muslim colleague with less experience that gets considered."*

This can lead to pressure to conform or alter your identity – 23% had either modified or considered modifying their identity to this end. Whilst 15% felt pressured to adapt their religious practices to fit prevailing western societal norms.

Normalisation of Islamophobia

39% believe that Islamophobia is normalised at London Met, in so much that staff may freely espouse Islamophobic rhetoric in the workplace. In some instances this has been directed at students by members of staff, including a staff member boasting about their involvement in persuading a Muslim student to convert away from Islam.

4 All London Metropolitan University data on students and staff are provided by student records, staff records and HESA returns.

5 All statistics have been rounded.

6 Janice Gassam Asare, "How Communities Of Color Perpetuate Anti-Blackness".

> *"[A male colleague] made a comment how he wouldn't be surprised if he heard that a particular student were to 'get in a truck'. This was mentioned in front of 3 other members of staff one of whom was the acting head of school who made light of the situation after I asked for clarification of what he meant from the offending colleague."*

Discrimination such as this can negatively impact how Muslim staff are received in these spaces- 23% of respondents had been disproportionately scrutinised or invalidated due to prejudices their peers may have against Islam.

Academic Environment

Academic settings can become hostile places, whereby offensive or discriminatory discourse can be disguised as 'academic discussion.' Within these settings 17% of academic staff have been discriminated against or targeted by a student in relation to their religious identity.

> *"It was a combination of racist and Islamophobic behaviour. Disruptive behaviour in class, comments being made about my professional integrity and comments made on Facebook about me. Students made complaints against me also."*

17% of respondents avoided topics of "religion and politics" with their students.

Institutional Islamophobia: Prevent

In regards to the Prevent Duty, there were largely positive findings which did not suggest a campaign of Prevent-led treatment of Muslim students at London Met - 54% had not experienced this. Though some respondents had disclosed that they had felt under surveillance (8%) suggesting some awareness of Prevent or institutional Islamophobia.

23% of staff have been called upon by either their colleagues or students to condemn acts of terrorist extremism. These requests are premised on a presumption of guilt within a framework of imaged responsibility that Muslims take.

Microaggressions and Safety

The weaponisation and politicisation of religious garments such as the Niqab or Hijab has entered staff university spaces. 8% of staff report having had to defend the wearing of religious garments whilst on campus, however this had not impacted safety on campus – respondents unanimously feel safe wearing identifiably Islamic garments.

Self-Preservation

Whilst most respondents had felt safe in expressing their religiosity, 15% have hidden their religious beliefs from university colleagues and students to avoid Islamophobic treatment. Some staff exercise caution, guided by awareness of the ways their religion can be used against them by those who harbour prejudicial and discriminatory views on Islam.

Complaints Procedures

At London Met, 77% of respondents felt comfortable lodging complaints of Islamophobia to the University, although almost a quarter did not.

There are many reasons why staff from a minoritised group may choose not to report discrimination ranging from; fear of victimisation and retribution, to a lack of confidence in the Institution's ability to handle these complaints seriously. Staff noted the relatively new journey that the university is on, in terms of understanding and tackling Islamophobia.

> *"This has just been acknowledged at London Met as being recognised. Now the battle will be taking it seriously. Need more awareness and educating training for staff."*

Furthermore, over 50% of respondents feared missing out on promotions and opportunities related to career progression and personal development if they were to challenge discrimination in the workplace. A quarter of respondents were discouraged by colleagues from lodging a complaint.

Recommendations

All UK Higher Education Institutions must recognise that Islamophobia exists within the sector. Furthermore, universities must examine its impact on staff and students, taking decisive action to eradicate Islamophobia from campuses.

The recommendations in this report address key concerns raised by staff, such as the normalisation of Islamophobia, Halal provisions on campus, codes of conduct and career progression.

Background

Background

ISLAMOPHOBIA DEFINED

Defining the complexities, nuances and mechanics of oppression that account for both the overt and more subtle manifestations is a task that does not come without considerable challenges. As such, there has been much debate and discussion on how best to define Islamophobia which reveals how complex and multifaceted Islamophobia is.

London Metropolitan University was the first UK university known to have adopted a definition of Islamophobia- voting to recognise the ***All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims' Definition in November 2020***.

> "Islamophobia is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expressions of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness" - APPG Definition of Islamophobia[7]

Adopting a definition does not solve Islamophobia itself, however having a recognised term as part of the institutional vocabulary, allows those within the university to begin to develop a nuanced understanding in order to collectively embed anti-oppressive practices. Importantly, a formal recognition creates avenues through which Muslim students and staff can discuss, lodge complaints and expect to have their experiences understood- only then does the definition provide a useful basis.

However, recent studies of race in Britain and specifically within Higher Education – such as *Racism At Work*[8] and *Dismantling Race in Higher Education*[9]- demonstrate a continued simplistic, if not reductive definition and understanding of racism which has blighted the way in which universities organise themselves around the issue. Institutions have failed to see the multifaceted and insidious nature of racism, despite the body of evidence which points towards the institutionalised form that racial oppression takes.

What this looks like in practice, is a lack of appropriate responsiveness and decisive action against racism in it many forms. Between the academic years 2014-15 and 2018-19, The Guardian found at least 996 formal complaints of racism were lodged by staff and students across 131 UK universities.[10] Of those lodged, only 367 were upheld.

A study by the Equality and Human Rights Commission ***Tackling Racial Harassment*** found that students and staff lack trust and belief in their universities to handle reports of harassment appropriately.[11] Additionally, ***Insider-Outsider*** found that students who lodged complaints of racism, had to take on the additional emotional burden of educating typically all-white investigative panels on how racism operates.[12]

Furthermore, The National Union of Students found incidences of student complaints that had taken over two years to be handled by their universities, leading to very low numbers of students (14%) believing their universities to handle complaints fairly.[13] However, universities have been under scrutiny for their "sub-standard complaints procedures" for many years, with reports dating back to the early 2000's.[14] Jaswinder Gill, a lawyer representing students, describes universities to be a "law unto itself."[15]

To bring this back to the focus of this research, at a very basic level, institutions much charge themselves with the responsibility of understanding Islamophobia beyond the superficial- from how it operates through to its potential impact on recruitment processes, the psycho-social environment and to complaints procedures.

7 All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims, "Islamophobia Defined," November 27, 2018.
8 Binna Kandola, Racism At Work: The Danger of Indifference. (Pearn Kandola, 2018).
9 Jason Arday and Heidi Safia Mirza, Dismantling Race in Higher Education Racism, Whiteness and Decolonising the Academy (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018).
10 David Batty, "UK Universities Condemned for Failure to Tackle Racism," The Guardian (The Guardian, July 9, 2019), https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/jul/05/uk-universities-condemned-for-failure-to-tackle-racism.

A HISTORY OF INSTITUTIONAL ISLAMOPHOBIA

Islamophobia is not a recent phenomenon. Fearmongering, scapegoating and suspicion of Muslims and their religious practices can be dated as far back as the mid-15th Century. In 1609 the Moriscos (Muslims of Arabo-Amazigh heritage) were exiled from Spain following over 100 years of systemic repression and ethnic cleansing.[16] Over the course of this time, laws that sought to force assimilation, such as banning religious and cultural garments, and Islamic names further subjugated Muslims in Spain.[17] Moriscos were also accused of holding sympathy for their nation's enemies, such as the Ottoman Sultanate.[18] In addition to the increasing anti-Muslim sentiment of the time, historian Francois Soyer describes the two key factors that led to their expulsion:

1. The inextricable conflation of faith and culture
2. An extremely unfavourable political context in which the Muslim minority came to be perceived as a danger to the security and survival of the state[19]

The rhetoric of that period is eerily similar today.

Through the process of creating folk-devils, in a post 9/11 world Muslims have become the focus of centuries old tropes that are deployed to fuel moral panic, where the fibre of British moral society and culture is portrayed as 'under threat'.[20] This narrative is supercharged following acts of domestic terrorism or organised crime where suspects identify as Muslim, a cycle used to legitimise further surveillance and othering, which gives Muslims a hyper visibility whilst simultaneously suppressing them.

The narrative on Muslims in the public sphere has also been reinforced by the rise of disproportionate regulation of the faith, often under the auspices of 'counter-terrorism' or preserving culture.

> "The growing Muslim presence in Europe has become a central issue for all European countries, East and West. The numerous debates that have been breaking out across the continent about "multiculturalism," "secularity," or even "identity" are almost always connected to this "Islamic" factor."[21]

Two European examples of this include France's controversial banning of the Burqa and Niqab (which at the time of writing, is simultaneously mandated alongside the wearing of masks to stop the spread of Coronavirus), and Denmark's legal requirement that new citizens must shake hands at their naturalisation ceremony – both of which target Islamic practices.[22,23]

11 Equality and Human Rights Commission, "Tackling Racial Harassment: Universities Challenged," October 23, 2019. pp.52
12 Sofia Akel, "Insider-Outsider," October 2019, https://www.gold.ac.uk/media/docs/reports/Insider-Outsider-Report-191008.pdf. pp. 38.
13 "University Complaints Procedures Often Work against the Student," *The Guardian*, February 17, 2009, https://www.theguardian.com/education/2009/feb/17/national-union-of-students.
14 BBC, "Student Complaints 'Mishandled,'" *News.Bbc.Co.Uk*, August 2, 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/5239622.stm.
15 "University Complaints Procedures Often Work against the Student," *The Guardian*.
16 François Soyer, "Faith, Culture and Fear: Comparing Islamophobia in Early Modern Spain and Twenty-First-Century Europe," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 3 (March 2013): 399–416, pp. 402
17 *Ibid* pp.404
18 *Ibid* pp.402
19 *Ibid* pp.402
20 Stanley Cohen, Folk Devils and Moral Panics : The Creation of the Mods and Rockers (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 1972).
21 Tariq Ramadan, "Tariq Ramadan: As Europeans Adapt to a More Diverse Citizenry, They Must Avoid Any Kind of Cultural, Religious, or Racial Determinism," *The Guardian*, December 4, 2008
22 Jason Silverstein, "France Will Still Ban Islamic Face Coverings Even after Making Masks Mandatory," *CBS News*, May 12, 2020, https://www.cbsnews.com/news/france-burqa-ban-islamic-face-coverings-masks-mandatory/.
23 Martin Selsoe Sorensen, "Denmark, With an Eye on Muslims, Requires New Citizens to Shake Hands (Published 2018)," *The New York Times*, December 20, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/20/world/europe/denmark-muslims-handshake-law.html.

PREVENT, SURVEILLANCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Arguably, the most well-known legislative development in Britain, designed to counter Institutionalised extremism is Prevent. The 'Prevent Duty' is part of the government's counter-terrorism strategy, also known as CONTEST, which aims to stop people from becoming radicalised towards terrorism, which the government believe is caused by 'extremist views.'[24]

The Prevent Duty has been subject to considerable discourse. It is a statutory (legal) requirement for institutions such as education, immigration and healthcare to train and report to the police, people who they believe may be 'vulnerable' to radicalisation. Academics, lawyers, politicians and civil liberties campaigners have criticised Prevent on the grounds that innocent civilians become a focus of surveillance.[25]

The National Union of Students have also campaigned widely on **'Preventing Prevent,'** on the grounds that the duty is a legal manifestation of institutionalised Islamophobia.[26] The connection point between Prevent and Islamophobia is the predominant focus of counter-terrorism policing of those racialised as Muslim. Although the Prevent Duty claims to root-out all forms of extremism that are incongruent with 'British values,' Muslims have been the central focus, often treated as a 'suspect community'.

Taken from the report ***Islam and Muslims on UK University Campuses (2020)*** a student summarises the impact that Prevent has had on their growing connection with Islam:

> "I think under Prevent, the fact is, if you're a Muslim, and you start taking your religion seriously, you start practicing, you start reading, you start growing a beard, you're really going to be under the spotlight, more than if you're a Christian, Sikh… Religiosity has become, like, I don't want to say criminalised, but really, really heavily interrogated."[27]

NUS' research found that Prevent significantly disrupts students' university lifecycle, making them less likely to engage in their student democracy processes, debating issues in relation to their religious identities, and general involvement in their academic learning. Consequently, 43% of their respondents felt that they were unable to express their views or be themselves at their universities.[28]

In terms of staff members, it is difficult to assess the extent to which Prevent shapes their experiences at university. This is due to a lack of data and research into this respective area.

In the formative years of Prevent, 65% of referrals were 'Islamist' related, compared to 10% 'right-wing' referrals. Overtime this has balanced out, in 2018/19 around 24% of 'Islamist' related and 24% of 'right-wing' related cases were equally reported.[29]

However, in the years preceding Prevent, a UK university launched a wholesale ban on garments that cover the face. This included hoodies as well as religious garments such as the Niqab or Burqa- a decision made jointly with their students' union at the time over "security concerns raised by terrorist incidents."[30]

24 Ilyas Nagdee, Hareem Ghani, and Zamzam Ibrahim, "Preventing Prevent: Handbook 2017" (NUS, 2017).
25 Matthew Guest et al., "Islam and Muslims on UK University Campuses: Perceptions and Challenges," Https://Www.Soas.Ac.Uk/Representingislamoncampus/Publications/File148310.Pdf, July 2020. pp. 40.
26 Ilyas Nagdee, Hareem Ghani, and Zamzam Ibrahim, "Preventing Prevent: Handbook 2017," pp.35.
27 Matthew Guest et al., "Islam and Muslims on UK University Campuses: Perceptions and Challenges," pp. 41.
28 National Union of Students, "The Experiences of Muslim Students in 2017-18," March 18, 2018, https://www.nusconnect.org.uk/resources/the-experience-of-muslim-students-in-2017-18. pp. 7.
29 Matthew Guest et al., "Islam and Muslims on UK University Campuses: Perceptions and Challenges," pp. 41.
30 BBC, "Students' Anger over 'Veil Ban,'" News.Bbc.Co.Uk, January 17, 2006, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/education/4620034.stm.

MUSLIM STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Understanding the religious demographics of students in UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is an important part of building the contextual basis upon which to explore the experiences of Muslim students.

Across the sector almost half of all students identify as having 'no religion,' however in terms of those who do follow a particular religion, Christians are the most populous group at 24.7%. They are followed by Muslims (8.4%) and Hindus (2.2%) respectively (see figure 1). The least populous religious group is that of Judaism, with 0.4% of the student population identifying as Jewish.

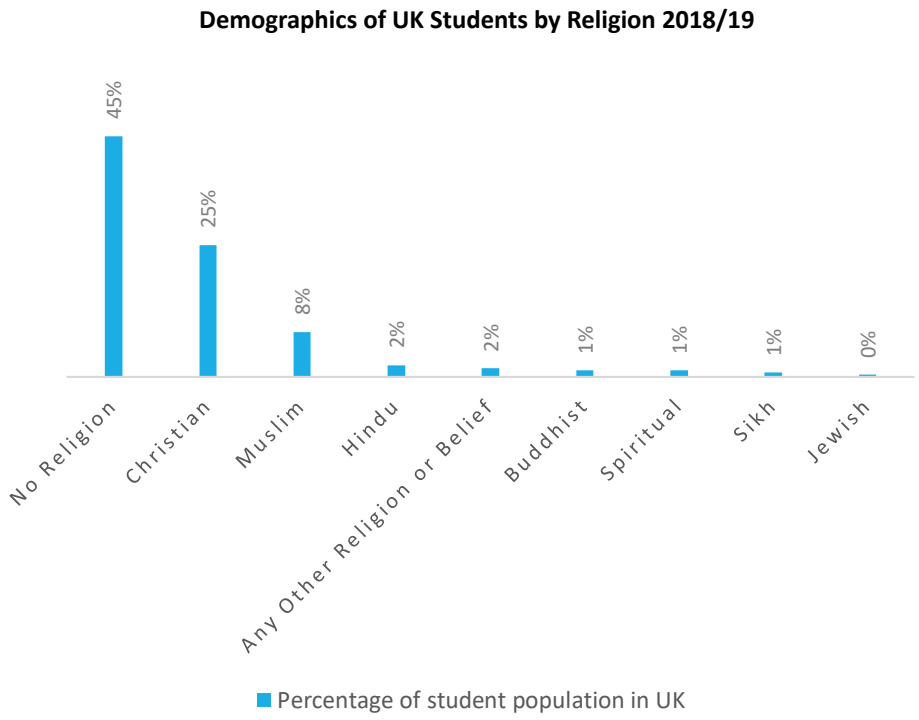

Figure 1: Demographics of UK Students by Religion (2018/19) [31]

According to the APPG on British Muslims, Islamophobia is rooted in racism. Within the sector, Muslims are one of the most racially diverse religious groups, predominately comprising of Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black African students. Therefore, it is important to look at race as an additional dimension to their identities in order to build a more holistic understanding of their socio-political experiences.

Our identities are a constant negotiation, in dialogue with those which are chosen and those which are forced upon us. From entry through to graduation, both race and religion shape the experiences of Muslim students, it is best to understand both as two parallel roads, intersecting at key junctures of the student lifecycle. Each road, may differ in terms of how it impacts the journeys, but they are inextricably linked. Therefore, where possible, this research seeks to look at both race and religion.

31 Advance HE, "Equality and Higher Education- Student Statistical Report 2020," Advance HE, October 22, 2020, https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/equality-higher-education-statistical-report-2020. pp.219.

De-homogenising Muslim Students

Sector

Only recently has it become a possibility for the sector to analyse race in relation to religion, this was due to new requirements introduced in the academic year 2017-18, whereby UK universities must return data on students' religion and belief to HESA.[32]

Muslims are frequently viewed and discussed through an all-encompassing lens that homogenises a vastly diverse set of people. This lens produces an oversimplification of the complexities of navigating multiple identities whilst being viewed through a singular identity.

Whilst many may identify themselves as Muslim first, with other aspects of their identities secondary, institutional oppression of minoritised peoples remains predictably split and most pronounced along racial lines in the sector – this is not to minimise the role that religious oppression plays, as explored throughout this report.

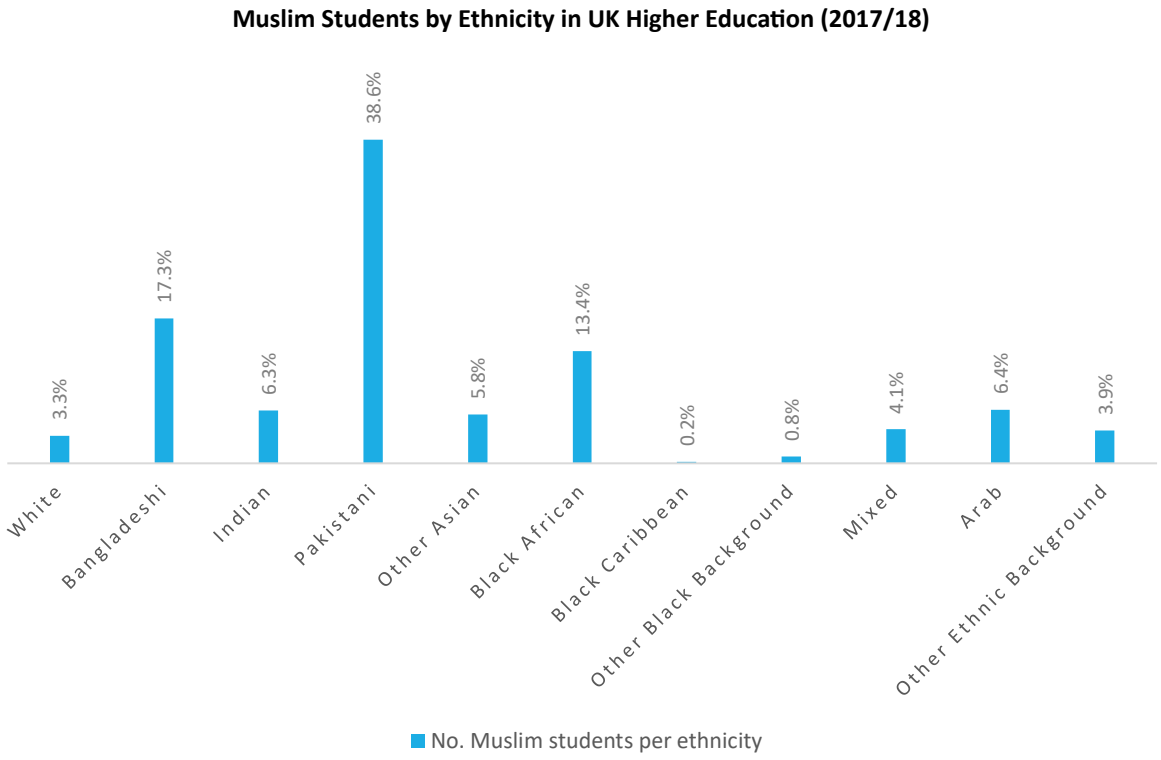

Figure 2: Muslim Students by Ethnicity in UK Higher Education (2017/18)[33]

Some religious groups consider themselves an ethnic group, whereas others do not, therefore there is no straight forward process of comparing student communities and this is relatively new territory in terms of higher education – Advance HE released data on the intersections of race and religion for the first time in 2020.[34]

However, we can look at the ethnic identities that students themselves have declared as well as their religion in order to understand broadly, the diversity of religious groups in higher education. Certain religions such as Islam, Buddhism and Christianity have a diverse range of students from ethnic groups that differ in both region, as well as inter-continentally e.g. Christian students are made up of 76.3% white and 12.2% African people. However, by contrast, religions such as Judaism and Sikhism predominately consist of white or Indian students respectively. [35]

32 Advance HE and Natasha Codiroli Mcmaster, "Research Insight: Religion and Belief in UK Higher Education," *Advance HE*, March 17, 2020, https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/research-insight-religion-and-belief-uk-higher-education.
33 *Ibid* pp.11
34 *Ibid* pp.3
35 *Ibid* pp.11

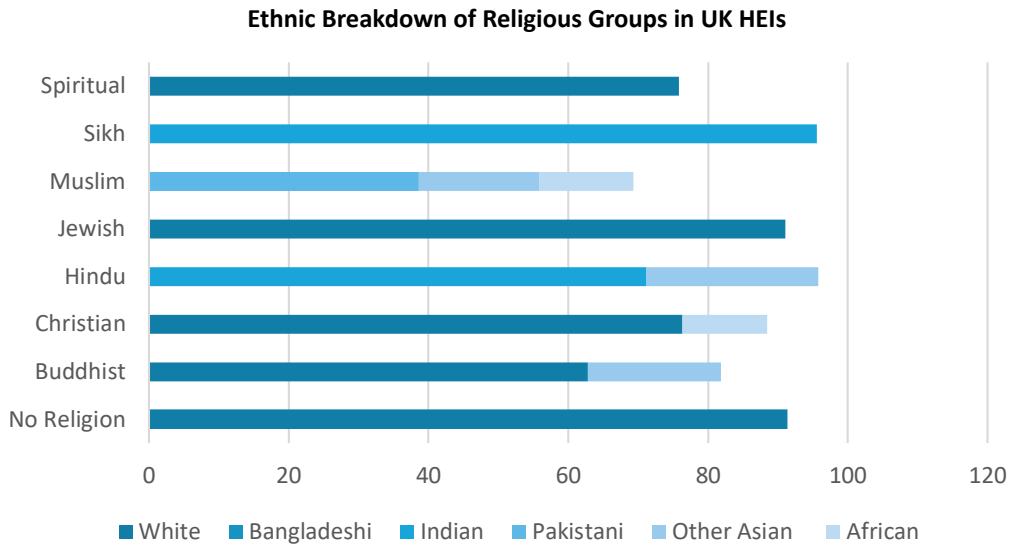

Figure 3: Demographics of UK Students by Religion and Ethnicity (2017/18)[36]

London Metropolitan University

During the academic year 2018-19, London Metropolitan University (London Met) had a total of 9,618 students, 63% of which were students of colour.[37,38] Using data from student records and HESA returns, there are 1644 fully-enrolled Muslim students studying at London Met – including full-time and part-time modes of study across undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

In terms of the latter, 18% of the Muslim student population are enrolled in postgraduate degrees, with 6% in postgraduate research and 94% in postgraduate taught degrees.

Overall Muslim women are represented in greater numbers compared to that of Muslim men, with 986 sisters and 654 brothers respectively (4 were undisclosed). In terms of our undergraduate Muslim student population, figure 4 breaks this down by ethnicity and sex.

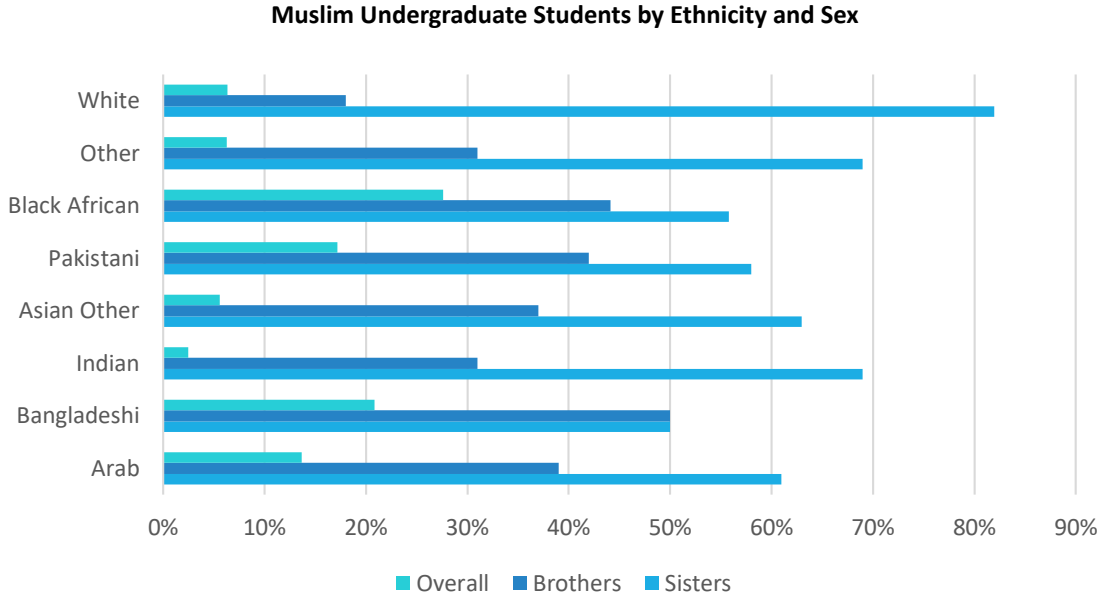

Figure 4: Muslim Undergraduate Student Population of London Met by Ethnicity and Sex (2020)
(Ethnicities with less than 5 individuals have not been included to protect students' anonymity)

36 *Ibid* pp.11
37 London Metropolitan University, "Key Statistics- London Metropolitan University," Www.Londonmet.Ac.Uk, accessed December 1, 2020, https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/about/our-university/university-publications/key-statistics/#:~:text=76%25%20were%20undergraduate%20%2F%2024%25.
38 All London Metropolitan University data on students and staff from student records, staff records and HESA returns.

Much like the sector as a whole, the Muslim student cohort is very diverse, with the biggest ethnic groups being that of Black African, Bangladeshi and Pakistani. This also includes people of Arab, white, Indian, 'other mixed,' 'Black other' and 'other Asian' heritage, albeit in smaller numbers.

Due to relatively small numbers of postgraduate students, these have not been broken down into ethnicities to protect students' anonymity.

University Admissions

Prior to applying to university, students must first assess if they can fund their degrees or access governmental loans. Whilst this may seem like a relatively unambiguous first step, it is not so simple for some Muslims due to the interest payment elements of students loans, which are not Shar'iah (translation: the "path" which Muslims may follow) compliant.[39] Following public consultation, the UK Government declared their support of a Shar'iah-compliant Takaful alternative to student loans, where no interest is paid (although the equivalent fees are returned) and the money held is not invested in industries such as gambling, alcohol or weapons manufacturing.[40]

However, according to the Aziz Foundation there persists a lack of Shar'iah-compliant student finance systems which ultimately can determine whether or not a Muslim student gets the opportunity to go to university. A student disclosed-

> "Although there are PG loans available, I do not consider this a viable option for me so the cost of post graduate courses is a factor which potentially prohibits me from pursuing my studies if I am unable to obtain funding." [41]

There are systemic barriers affecting entry into universities which continue to set the course for prospective students' journeys. Prior to submitting their UCAS applications, students must first obtain predicted grades from their respective colleges or sixth-forms. However, in only 16% of cases are A-Level predictions correct.[42] Meaning that many students may miss out on the opportunity to apply to their universities of preference due to an archaic system, based on biased predictions.[43] As we witnessed during the 2020 Coronavirus Pandemic, algorithmic predictions can be just as disastrous, as algorithms themselves are not objective.[44]

As previously stated, Muslim students in UK HEIs are made up of a diverse group of students – predominately that of Pakistani, Black African and Bangladeshi backgrounds. Research conducted in 2014 revealed that students from these three groups received more university rejections than their white counterparts, even in instances of equal prior attainment- painting a stark image of racial bias in admissions processes.[45]

Looking at more recent university admissions data from 2017/18, Muslim students make up 22.6% of students at Russell Group Universities. By contrast 51.8% Jewish and 33.9% Hindu students are disproportionately represented in greater numbers to their overall student population at elite universities.[46]

Outside of Russell Group Universities, 96% of Muslim students attend post-1992 universities, or other pre-1992 institutions, meaning that they are underrepresented in the 'most academically selective' institutions.[47,48]

39 Princeton University, "What Does Shari'ah Actually Mean? | IslamFYI: An Educational Resource on Islam for the Public," *Islamfyi.Princeton.Edu*, July 2, 2017, https://islamfyi.princeton.edu/what-does-shariah-actually-mean/.
40 Gov.org, "Sharia-Compliant Student Finance," *GOV.UK*, April 3, 2014, https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/sharia-compliant-student-finance.
41 Zain Sardar, "Intersectionality of Race and Religion: Widening Participation and the Experience of British Muslim Students at the PGT Level," 2020.
42 Sofia Akel, "Predicted Grades Are a Lottery of Privilege Where Black Students Almost Always Lose," *Medium*, May 4, 2020, https://medium.com/age-of-awareness/predicted-grades-are-a-lottery-of-privilege-where-black-students-almost-always-lose-d85fc3d6f041.
43 Richard Murphy & Gill Wyness (2020) Minority report: the impact of predicted grades on university admissions of disadvantaged groups, Education Economics, 28:4, 333-350, pp. 347
44 Fiona McIntyre, "1,500 Students Still Missing out on Courses after A-Levels Crisis," *Research Professional News*, September 11, 2020, https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-he-agencies-ucas-2020-9-thousands-of-students-miss-out-on-courses-after-a-levels-crisis/.
45 Advance HE and Natasha Codiroli Mcmaster, "Research Insight: Religion and Belief in UK Higher Education," pp.16
46 *Ibid* pp.17
47 Bridge Institute and Jacqueline Stevenson, "Muslim Students in UK Higher Education: Issues of Inequality and Inequity," Https://Azizfoundation.Org.Uk/Wp-Content/Uploads/2019/04/Bridge-Higher-Education-Report-2-FINAL.Pdf, October 2018. pp.3
48 Advance HE and Natasha Codiroli Mcmaster, "Research Insight: Religion and Belief in UK Higher Education," pp.3

Continuation Rates

Sector

Of the more populous religious groups, Muslim students are the more likely to discontinue their studies with a sector average drop-out rate of 8.8%- Buddhists, who make up a much smaller proportion of students, have a non-continuation rate of 9.9%. In contrast, Jewish and Hindu students, have the highest continuation rates of 93.1% and 90.9% respectively.[49]

Overall, 6.8% of all students across the sector left higher education with no award.[50]

London Metropolitan University

At London Metropolitan University, Muslim undergraduate students are the least likely to continue their studies through to completion, with the highest drop-out rate of all other religions and beliefs. In the year 2019/20 14% of Muslim students did not continue with their studies, in contrast 'no religion' and 'Christian' (the two most populous groups at London Met) had lower rates of non-continuation- 8.7% and 10.2% respectively.

Breaking this down further along intersectional lines, Black African, Bangladeshi and Pakistani students make up the largest ethnic groups within the London Met Muslim student population. Respectively, these groups have non-continuation rates of 14%, 16% and 11%. Though, other groups such as Arab and Black Caribbean also have high non-continuation rates.

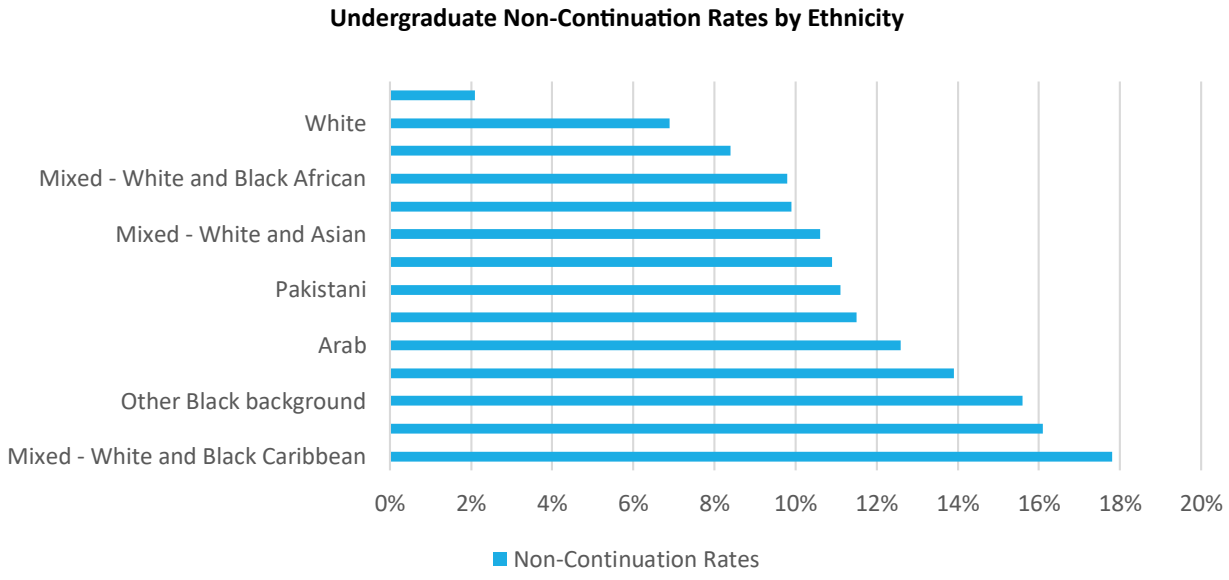

Figure 5: Undergraduate Non-Continuation Rates of All Students by Ethnicity at London Metropolitan University (2019-20)

At a postgraduate taught level, Muslims also make up the highest proportion of non-continuation rates, however at a postgraduate research level, Hindu students make up 16.7% compared to 3.2% Muslim.

Along racial lines, the non-continuation rates are most pronounced within the category 'other Black background' with 28% dropping out of their postgraduate taught degrees. This is followed by Black Caribbean (19%) and Black African (17%). Within this breakdown, there is a significant gap between Black students' non-continuation rates and Bangladeshi students who have the lowest dropout rates of known ethnic groups- 2%.

This data reflects the most recent academic year (2019-20), therefore sector data does not yet reflect this year, hindering comparability.

49 Advance HE, "Equality and Higher Education- Student Statistical Report 2020," pp.283
50 *Ibid* pp. 19

Degree Awarding Gap: Religion x Race

Sector

The degree awarding gap is the difference between the proportion of 1st/2:1 degree classifications (also known as 'good honours') awarded to students of colour and their white counterparts. This is also known as the 'BME Attainment Gap,' although this terminology is archaic as it sits within a student deficit frame, and does not acknowledge the responsibility of the institution for creating the gap.

The degree awarding gap focuses specifically on differential attainment by that of racial categories, however when examining differential degree outcomes by religious groups, it is less straight forward to delineate. Linking back to the section on de-homogenising Muslim students, we must look at degree attainment through an intersectional lens that account for both race and religion.

If we look at this in relation to degree awarding gaps, we can see that the widest awarding gaps are between that of Muslim students (64% awarded a 1st/2:1 degree classification) and Jewish students (87% awarded a 1st/2:1) – the highest of all student groups by religion and belief. Non-religious students are the second largest group to obtain a 1st/2:1 (80% are awarded a 1st/2:1).[51]

Using a sample of two of the top-attaining groups, 'no religion' and 'Jewish,' as well as the most populous religious group in the sector (Christianity) we can compare the attainment of Muslim students and their ethnicities to gauge the depth of the awarding gap along intersectional lines. (***Figure 6*** is based on self-declared religion and ethnicity by students, collected by Advance HE).

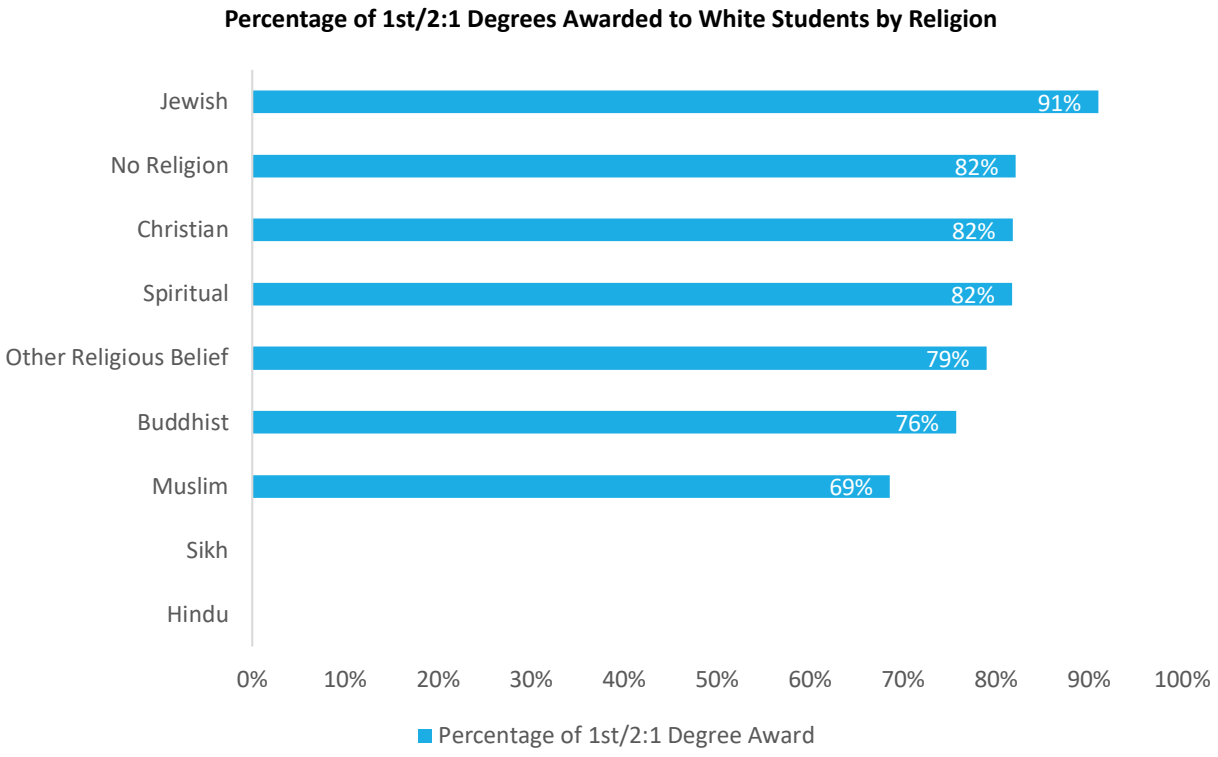

Figure 6: Percentage of First/2:1 Degrees Awarded to White Students by Religion (2017-18)[52]

Interestingly, when comparing the attainment of white students – which is typically highest along racial lines - white Muslims' attainment drops to 68.6%, in comparison to 82.1% white non-religious, 81.8% Christian and 91% Jewish attainment.

To illustrate this further, white students overall are awarded 1st/2:1 degrees at a rate of 81.4% compared to 68% of students of colour – white Muslims are also awarded 68%.

51 *Ibid* pp.284.
52 Advance HE and Natasha Codiroli Mcmaster, "Research Insight: Religion and Belief in UK Higher Education," pp. 38-39.

Indian, Bangladeshi and mixed-race Muslim students are also awarded higher grades than their white Muslim counterparts- all other racial groups, are awarded lesser rates. Muslim Black African students however, achieve slightly higher outcomes than their ethnic group overall with 60% awarded 'good honours' compared to 58% of ***all*** Black Students that same year.[53]

Whilst conclusions cannot be drawn from data in absence of more in-depth, qualitative analysis, this does pose questions as to how and why the degree awarding gap changes most pointedly in relation to Muslim students' intersectional identities. Once categorised as Muslim, white students' attainment suddenly drops, almost entirely replicating the disproportionately low degree outcomes of their counterparts from racialised backgrounds. Further research is warranted to explore the extent to which institutional Islamophobia and anti-Muslim prejudice impact the attainment of white Muslim students and students of colour.

London Metropolitan University

At London Metropolitan University the degree awarding gap mirrors that of the sector in terms of the predictability of which races are awarded a higher proportion of first/2:1 degrees, also known as 'good honours'. As we know from research across the sector, awarding gaps that are drawn upon racial lines, are a consequence of institutional racism in its many forms and manifestations. Unfortunately, London Met is no exception and the overall attainment of students is relatively low to that of the wider sector.

Breaking down the awarding gap data, at its widest white students are awarded 'good honours' at a rate of 78% compared to 48% of Black African – an awarding gap of 30%. This is significantly larger than the sectors biggest gap – 24.4% between 'Black other' and white.

With the exception of Chinese, Indian, Arab and 'other' the awarding gap at London Met is worse in varying extents to that of the sector average. This gap is most pronounced for students of 'Asian Other' and 'Black Caribbean' heritage, where London Met is 12% behind the sector average.

Almost half (48%) of Black African students are awarded significantly low rates of 1st/2:1 degrees. This is not only incredibly concerning, but it highlights a failure of responsibility that the university has, to ensure that their students are given the strongest chances of graduating with high outcomes. By contrast, the sector awards Black African students 1st/2:1 at rates of 58%, still significantly low in comparison to the 81% of white students.

First/2:1 Degree Attainment at London Metropolitan University and UK HEIs (2018-19)

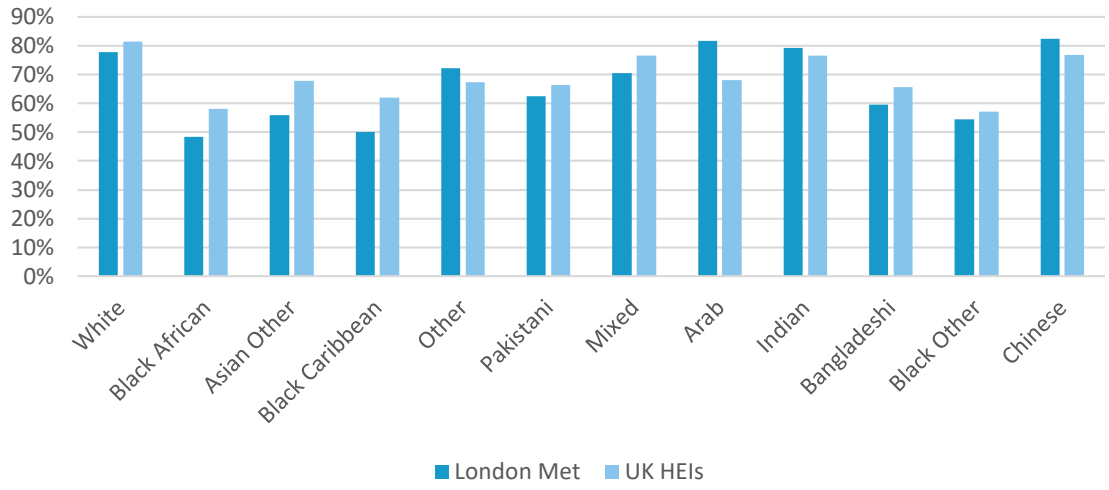

Figure 7: First/2:1 Degree Attainment at London Metropolitan University and UK HEIs (2018-19)[54]

53 Advance HE, "Students Statistical Report 2019," Https://Www.Advance-He.Ac.Uk/Knowledge-Hub/Equality-Higher-Education-Statistical-Report-2019, September 25, 2019. pp. 132.

54 Advance HE, "Equality and Higher Education- Student Statistical Report 2020," pp.150.

As discussed in sector degree awarding gap: religion x race, Muslim students across the sector (and within London Met) are one of the most racially diverse religious groups both regionally and inter-continentally. Using a sample of two of the top-attaining groups, 'no religion' and Jewish, as well as the most populous religious group at London Met (Christianity) we can compare the degree awards of Muslim students' intersectional identities to gauge the depth of the awarding gap. [***Figure 8*** is based on self-declared religion and ethnicity by students].

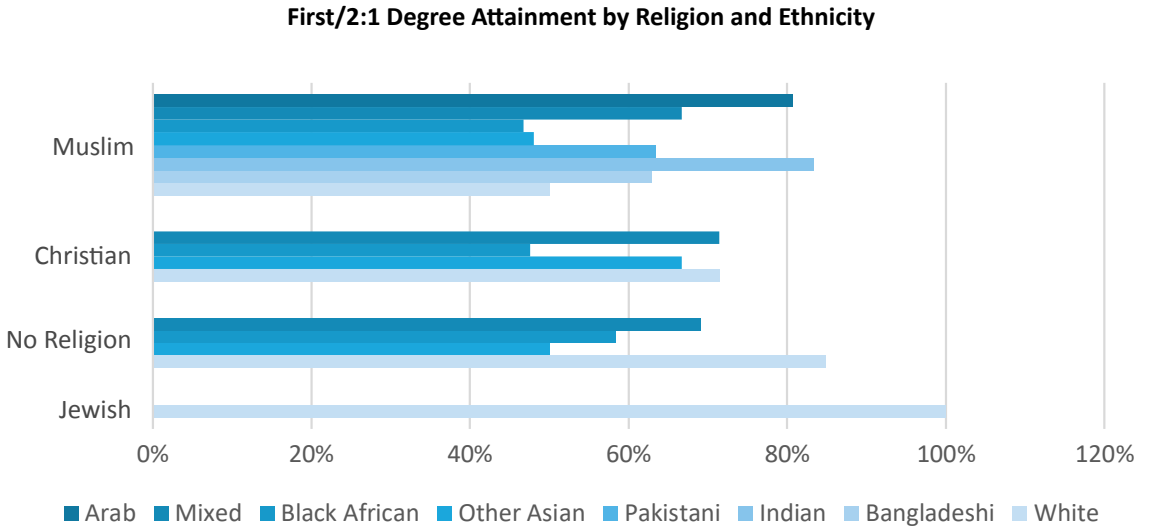

Figure 8: First/2:1 Degree Attainment at London Metropolitan University by Religion and Ethnicity (2018-19) (comparison of the two top attaining groups and the most populous religious group – any raw data equalling less than 5, have been removed due to statistical significance)

London Met aligns with the sector in relation to white non-religious and Jewish students being awarded the highest percentage of first/2:1 degrees. However, London Met also mirrors the drop in attainment for white Muslim students, dropping to 50%, in comparison to 100% Jewish, 71% non-religious, and 57% white Christian students.

To illustrate this further, white students overall are awarded 1st/2:1 degrees at a rate of 78% compared to 58% of students of colour – white Muslims are awarded 50%.

However, Black African and 'Other Asian' Muslims are still awarded 'good honours' at rates lower than their white Muslim counterparts.

The widest gap is that of Black African students, who are only awarded 47% good honours – a statistic that has real life implications for students who are graded so disproportionately low. This is another indicator an institutional failing, whereby Black African Muslims are awarded over 10% less than Black African students in the sector.

Whilst conclusions cannot be drawn from data in absence of more in-depth, qualitative analysis, this does pose questions as to how and why the degree awarding gap changes most pointedly in relation to Muslim students' intersectional identities. Once categorised as Muslim, white students' attainment suddenly drops, almost entirely replicating the disproportionately low degree outcomes of their counterparts from racialised backgrounds. Further research is warranted to explore the extent to which institutional Islamophobia and anti-Muslim prejudice impact the attainment of white Muslim students and students of colour.

MUSLIM STAFF IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Sector

Understanding the religious demographics of staff in UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) is an important part of building the contextual basis upon which to explore the experiences of Muslim staff. However, data on the religion and beliefs of staff working within UK HEIs is not routinely collected, hindering the opportunity for meaningful intersectional analysis.

Less than a quarter of UK HEI staff declare their religion or belief, with a disclosure rate of just 23%.[55] However, this may provide a loose insight into the religious composition of sector staff in the absence of reliable data. Mirroring the student sector demographics, figure 9 reveals non-religious, Christian and Muslim staff to be the most populous 'known' groupings.

Demographics of UK Higher Education Staff By Declared Religion And Belief (2018/19)

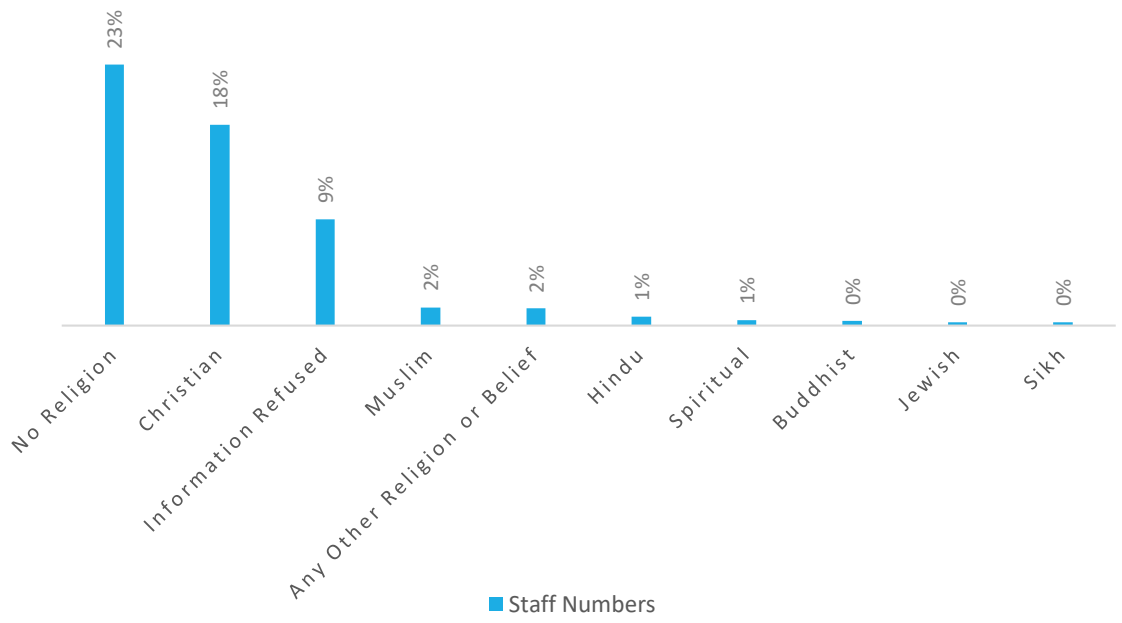

Figure 9: Demographics of UK Higher Education Staff by Declared Religion and Belief (2018-19)[56]

Due to the limited data it is not possible to analyse how religion and race converge in shaping areas such as career progression, salaries or potential gaps in employment across the sector.

55 Advance HE, "Equality and Higher Education- Staff Statistical Report 2020," *Advance HE*, October 22, 2020, https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/equality-higher-education-statistical-report-2020. pp.25

56 *Ibid* pp.267

De-homogenising Muslim Staff

London Metropolitan University

At London Met Muslim staff currently make up 6% of the entire staff body. By contrast, 'no religion' and Christian staff make up the highest proportions of the staff body- 23.06% and 21.76% respectively, whilst Buddhists make up less than 1% (0.59%).

It is important to note that HESA does not require staff to disclose religion or belief, therefore at London Met it is optional. Consequently, the following data corresponds only to the 122 Muslim staff who have disclosed their religion.

Using the institutional data that is available, a general breakdown of the racial composition of Muslim staff can be used to gauge the demographics at London Met.

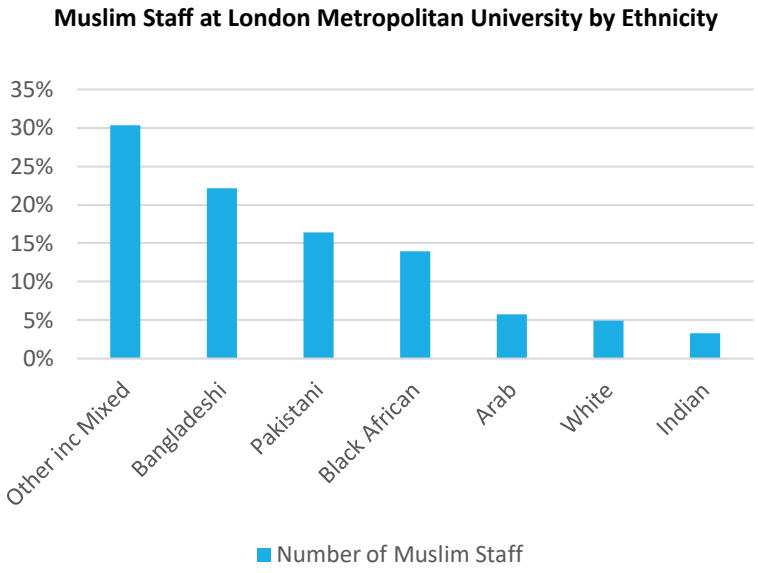

Figure 10: Muslim Staff at London Metropolitan University by Ethnicity (2020)

Figure 10 reflects trends within the student population, in terms of the racial diversity of Muslims within higher education – Black African, Bangladeshi, Pakistani and 'Other' (including 'mixed other') contribute the largest numbers of Muslim staff. It is not currently possible to compare this to the sector.

An Intersectional Look at Staff Contracts

London Metropolitan University

Due to the low numbers of Muslim staff at London Metropolitan University, this report does not offer a breakdown of Muslim staff per department or school. However, we can see which roles Muslim staff tend to occupy within London Met and the types of contracts held. Looking at this through the intersectional lens of both race and religion is important, as there are some racial disparities in the contracts held by academic and professional services staff at London Met- Muslim staff here are predominately made up of staff of colour.

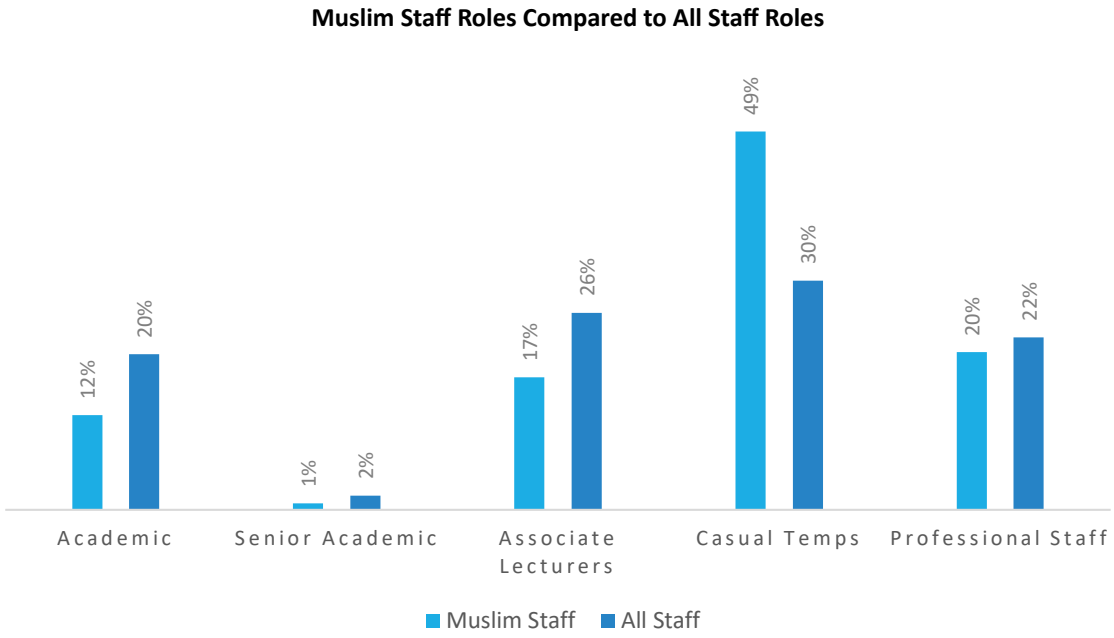

Figure 11: Muslim Staff Roles Compared to All Staff Roles at London Metropolitan University (2020)

The table above illustrates the type and quantity of contracts held by Muslim staff in relation to the entire staff population. Looking at casual temporary contracts, we can see that overall 30% of London Met's employees are on casualised contracts.

In order to generate more granular comparisons, figure 12 compares Muslim staff to those of 'no religion' and Christianity – the two most populous groups ahead of Muslims, making up 23%, 22% and 6% respectively. Using the data available, we can see that Muslim staff are more likely to be on temporary contracts compared to that of their Christian and non-religious counterparts. This is an important distinction, as typically the nature of casual contracts can have an adverse effect on career progression and well-being.

Casual contracts at London Met consist of a range of roles including student positions and maternity cover. There is a greater frequency of casual contracts awarded to students, who make up a greater proportion of Muslims at London Met in comparison to staff. Therefore this may explain the high precarity of Muslim employee contracts. Roles such as cleaning, maintenance and catering (which are also typically casualised) are outsourced by the university.

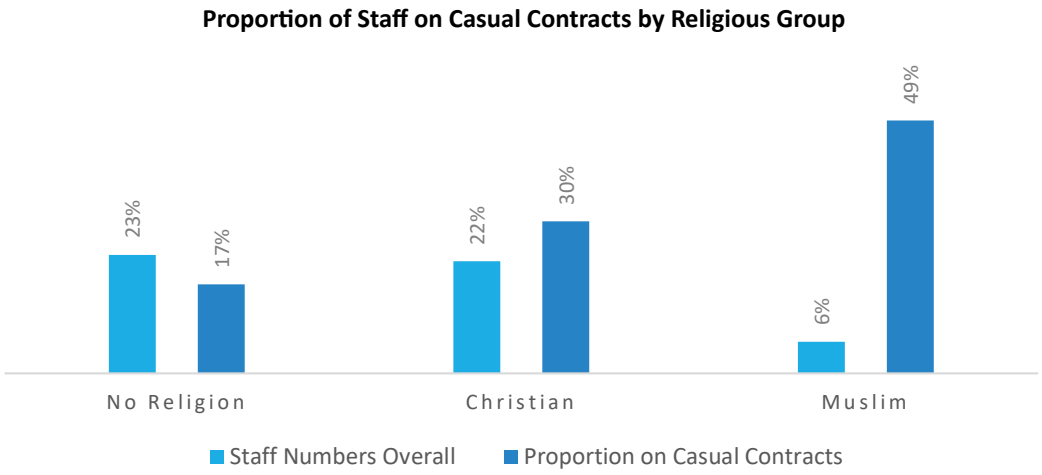

Figure 12: Proportion of Staff on Casual Contracts by Religious Group at London Metropolitan University (2020)

Through the intersectional lens of race and religion, the data suggests racial disparities within the types of roles that Muslim staff hold. Over three quarters of Black African Muslim staff are on casual or temporary contracts, compared to 18% who are hired on a permanent basis. Indian Muslims are the highest population of Muslims to be on fixed-term contracts, whilst the highest rates of permanent contracts are awarded to white staff members, who make up less than 5% of the entire Muslim staff population.

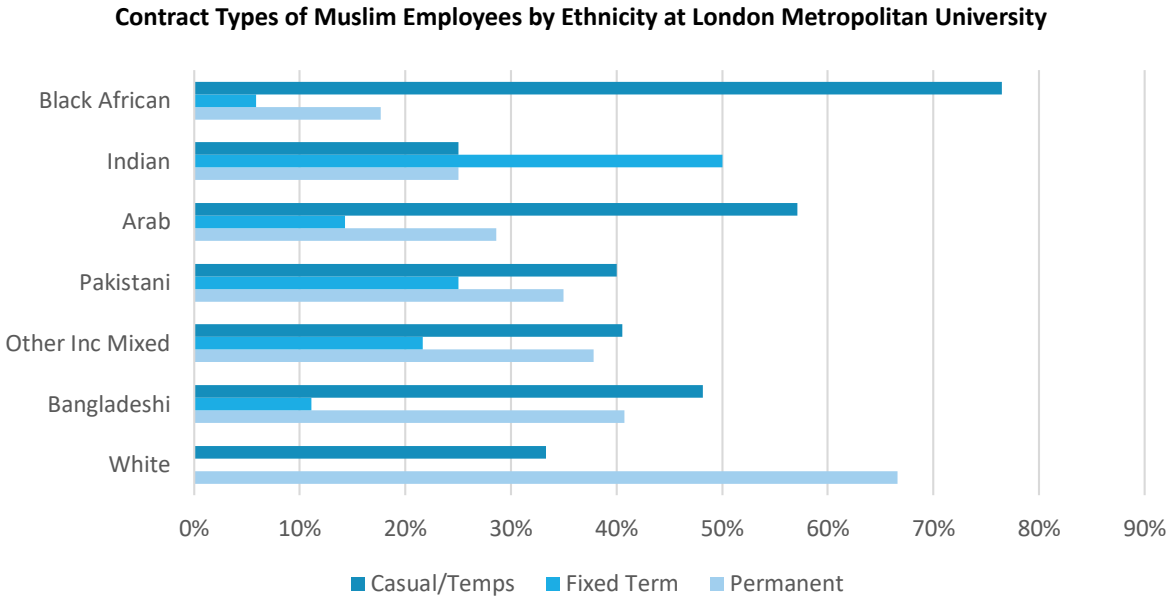

Figure 13: Contract Types of Muslim Employees by Ethnicity at London Metropolitan University (2020)

In providing a bench march, overall white staff at London Met are given the highest number of permanent contracts (66%), in comparison to Arab staff, where only 31% are on permanent contracts – a proportion that halves for Arab Muslims (14%).

Interestingly, when comparing the career stages of white Muslims to their white Christian and non-religious counterparts, white Muslims are also more likely to be on casual terms with the university. Although the numbers of white Muslim staff are very low, we can see that proportionally, 33% are on casual contracts, compared to 19% of white Christians and 17% of white non-religious people – both of which have over 600 white staff combined.

It is not possible to make a Sector comparison due to the limitations in available data.

Methodology

Methodology

In this report, the primary research sought to understand the following question:
To what extent does Institutional Islamophobia shape the experiences of Muslim students and staff at London Metropolitan University?

This question was broken down in to a number of research sub-questions that enabled the methodology to delve into the differing experiences of students and staff, as well as the nuances of navigating an institution with the 'double-burden' of religious and racial oppression.[57]

What are the experiences of Muslim staff and students in relation to practicing Islam on campus?

This question was concerned with understanding the extent to which Muslim students and staff are afforded the freedom of practising their religion on campus in relation to work and academic-related responsibilities (e.g. timetable clashes, etc), using prayer spaces, the provision of Halal food and how comfortable or safe they feel in accessing these.

What are the experiences of Muslim staff and students within academic settings?

This question sought to understand if any experiences, be it positive or negative impacted Muslim staff and students in an academic setting. In particular, this question sought to examine the interactions and treatment that Muslim staff receive from their peers, as well as examining if anti-Muslim prejudice impacts their engagement, quality of contributions and confidence in lecture settings.

What are the experiences of Muslim staff and students in relation to Institutional Islamophobia, and the intersections of race and religion?

This question was concerned with understanding how institutional manifestations of Islamophobia, such as Prevent Duty, awarding gaps, career progression, representation and more may impact the experiences of Muslim staff and students on campus. Additionally, this question sought to understand the role of race in relation to religion – understanding the two identities to be inextricably linked.

How does Islamophobia on campus impact the safety of Muslim students and staff, and their confidence in reporting it?

This question sought to examine how safe Muslim students and staff may feel on our campuses in relation to their religious identity. Islamophobic hate-crimes have risen over the past decade – with London Metropolitan University being a campus within a city, it Is vital to understand if a sense of safety is compromised. Additionally, this question sought to understand Muslim staff and students' views on reporting incidences of Islamophobia and to what extent they had confidence in the institution to appropriately investigate.

57 Zain Sardar, "Intersectionality of Race and Religion: Widening Participation and the Experience of British Muslim Students at the PGT Level," 2020.

RESEARCH METHODS

Two surveys comprising of closed and open-ended questions were used to collect responses from staff and students separately. Overall the surveys collected 93 student respondents, whilst the staff survey collected 13 respondents. Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, face-to-face interviews and focus groups were not possible - online versions were not carried out due to the sensitive nature of the topic, both in terms of providing a safe space for respondents to disclose their experiences, as well as ensuring privacy. Therefore, the lack of qualitative research in this instance is a weakness of the research methods.

Total Number of Muslim Respondents

Figure 14: Total Number of Muslim Respondents

In terms of individual responses, a higher number of students completed the survey. Of those who declared their religion, a higher proportion of staff completed the survey.

Due to the low number of staff respondents, granular detail has not been shared as this may compromise anonymity. However, all staff respondents were UK nationals, split across academic and professional services staff. The majority of respondents identified as female.

Ethnic Breakdown of Student Respondents

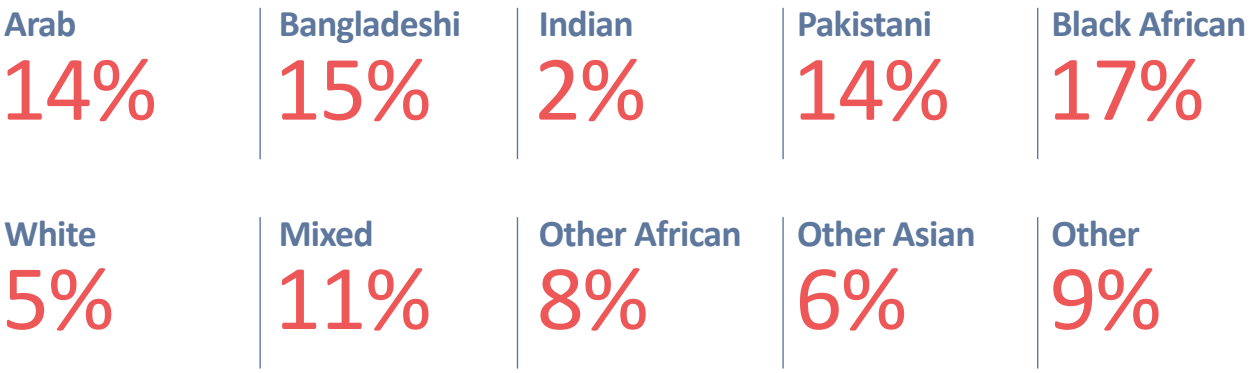

Figure 15: Ethnic Breakdown of Student Respondents (ethnicities that are less than 5 have been grouped)

Breakdown of Respondents by Gender Identity

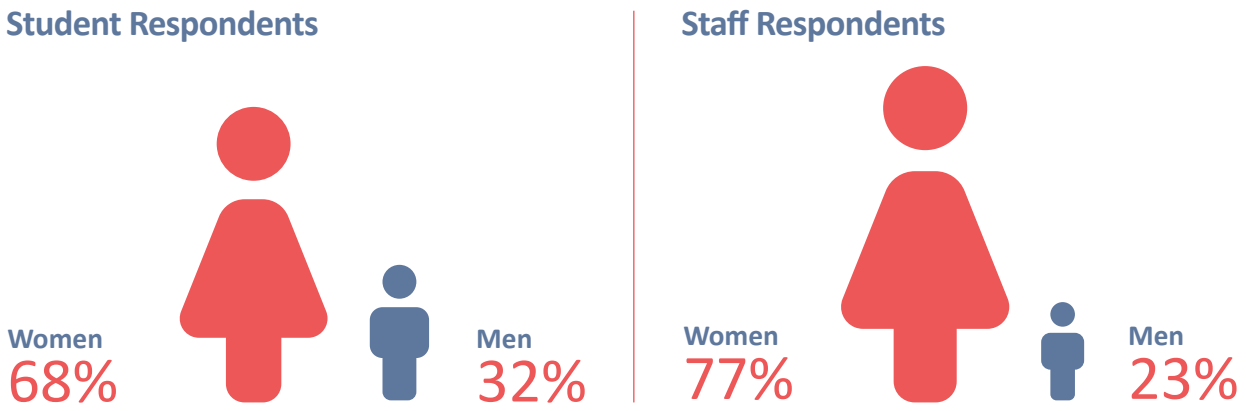

Figure 16: Gender Breakdown of Staff and Student Respondents
[2% of student respondents 'refused information' regarding their gender identity]

Student Respondents' Level of Study

Figure 17: Student Respondents' Level of Study

DATA COLLECTION

Data collection took place during November 2020. Potential survey respondents were invited to take part in the survey by the Vice-Chancellor of London Metropolitan University, London Metropolitan Students' Union, respective communications and marketing departments as well as various key staff members who disseminated the survey internally.

In all communications regarding this research it was made clear that only Muslim students and staff may take part, as is the focus of the research. Islamophobia is often rife on social media, therefore the decision was taken to not share the survey publicly other than to remind staff and students that they can take part should they wish. This decision was in light of ensuring the protection of our Muslim staff as well as taking proactive steps to avoid survey tampering.

In total 5 responses were completed by non-Muslim people despite advisories on the intended target group.

ETHICS AND CONFIDENTIALITY

Respondents were not asked to offer any identifying information or information of a granular detail that may hinder their anonymity. Standard demographic questions as well as school/department, level of study/contract types was asked of students and staff where appropriate, in order to gauge a broad understanding of their experiences in relation to their academic or career journeys.

Findings

Findings

Islamophobia in the Student Experience

This following section outlines the findings taken from the Muslim student survey at London Metropolitan University (London Met), therefore these findings relate specifically to university and not necessarily to the sector.

Observing Religion on Campus

Observing Prayer and following religious principles can form essential parts of a Muslim students' identity and daily practices. At London Metropolitan University some students report being in a near constant state of negotiation, between that of their religion and that of the expectations placed upon them as students. As such, there are instances where students have been forced to decide between missing essential lecture time, or missing important prayers and religious holidays. Almost half have felt pressured to make a decision. Of the 46%, many stated that they were likely to choose prayer or religious holidays, citing that the disproportionate burden placed upon Muslims to make a decision is in contrast to Christian students, who are given time off during key religious holidays such as Christmas or Easter:

> "[I would choose] Religious holidays because surely I should be allowed one, when it comes to Christmas they get time off to celebrate their holidays so why shouldn't I be allowed authorised absences when I celebrate Eid."

> "Congregation Friday prayers, Eid prayers and Ashura mourning would result in me not going to [my] lecture if there [is] one."

This would undoubtedly have an impact on a Muslim students learning, which may have an adverse effect on their attainment. However, further analysis is required to determine the impact of missed lectures on overall attainment.

Some students reported that they would choose their lecture, but one respondent in particular raised this in relation to their visa status, thus placing a triple burden of decision on the student – to miss lectures? to miss prayers/religious holidays? or to risk deportation?

> "Lectures, as I'm an international student and my attendance gets sent to the Home Office."

International students can be placed on conditional visas whereby they must reach a threshold of attendance to be granted a stay for the duration of their studies. Therefore, this student was ultimately left with a decision that could have real-life and immediate impacts on their residency, studies or religious practices. However, with the advent of online teaching in relation to the Coronavirus pandemic, students have found that they do not necessarily have to compromise on either their learning or their religious practices as recorded lectures have afforded them some flexibility.

Positively, some lecturers were very supportive and active in ensuring that their students do not have to decide between class or prayer:

> "During a Friday online lecture someone asked if they could take a break to pray and the lecturer was very happy to take a break so she does not miss anything in the lecture."

However, 9% of respondents reported that their lecturers had made allowances for this, whilst over half (66%) did not feel comfortable approaching their lecturer to request this.

During periods of extended religious observance, 30% of students felt that fasting during Ramadan has a negative impact on their exam performance. This could be due to periods without water or food, in addition to the late prayer times, which when combined with early morning exams or exams in the afternoon, students may experience fatigue. However, 17% of students felt that this religious period had a positive impact on their performance. This is something that universities must take into consideration when scheduling examinations.

At London Met both campuses have designated prayer spaces segregated by gender, with changing and wash room facilities for Muslim students to perform Wudu. Despite this, a quarter of respondents did not feel comfortable utilising these spaces. Instead preferring to either pray at home, or across locations including the prayer spaces on campus, local mosques and at home.

> "[By praying at home I am] able to do Wudu, and feel more comfortable out of watchful eyes."

When visiting campus it is essential that food options cater to a range of dietary requirements, including religious. Although Halal food is stocked at various on-campus restaurants and cafes, not all students feel comfortable eating from these outlets. Of the 19% who didn't, many cited key areas of concern such as: cross-contamination of Halal and non-Halal food, queries on the certification of Halal food offered, or lack of trust in the institutions that claim to serve Halal. However, some students simply did not know that Halal food was offered on campus.

> "I normally check the certificates of the halal food since there are lot of halal outlets which do not satisfy the criteria of making a food halal. There are strict segregation and processing rules. I personally do not prefer any chicken if it's not certified by any recognised authority such as HMC [Halal Monitoring Committee]."

A student cited that a number of catering staff were not aware of what Halal meat is, nor could they answer confidently if they were serving this.

> "Not all cooks seem to understand what halal is and give different answers including conflicting ones when asked. In the end I end up asking the Muslim worker who seems to understand more about halal and haram food or I just avoid eating at the university."

In the absence of confidence in the catering staff, students are unlikely to then have confidence in the catering facilities' ability to be Halal-compliant.

Academic Success and Attainment

Academic settings can be spaces that nourish your intellect, shaping you into a critical thinker whereby you discover and form interests of your own. However, these spaces, can also become forums for ridicule, injustice and discrimination – as a number of respondents experienced.

> "Sometimes comments on belief or believing in God – [I] felt ridiculed at times. I did not get offended but it was [an] awkward feeling and could tell others did not like it."

Often under the guise of 'academic discussion,' bias, including that of a prejudicial manner, can be freely and openly discussed without filter nor sensitivity in the classroom. Although it is unavoidable that in certain, relevant courses, discussions relating to various identities, groups or communities of people are facilitated. What is avoidable, is ensuring that lecturers do not bring their prejudices into the classroom, and that discriminatory or prejudicial comments by both students and staff are not left unfettered. For when this occurs, these 'lines of enquiry' are given permissible status and legitimacy.

> "Once a lecturer was speaking about Shar'iah Law and was describing it as medieval, basically saying it does not fit with today's world. The lecturer only sought to talk about the negative points, [it] felt quite bad to sit and listen to that narrow minded viewpoint."

The impact of having your beliefs, and by extension your identity called into question or described as an archaic mechanism incompatible with the modern world, can be traumatic for students to sit through. One of the most common forms of 'othering,' is the deployment of a dichotomy pitting 'them' and 'us,' in this instance 'medieval' religious beliefs pitted against an imagined incompatibility with the western world.

What is also important to pull here is that the "lecturer only sought to talk about the negative points," therefore what could have been a sensitive discussion on the etymology of Shar'iah law, or at the very least a balanced dialogue – turned into a promulgation of biased, subjectivity. Discussions of this kind have led to a number of Muslim students feeling isolated or ostracised from their classrooms, whereby they cannot challenge prejudicial views for fear of victimisation or reprisal.

> "A lecturer made a remark 'I bet you get searched everywhere you go with a name like that' to a student in a large gathering. The student was lost for words and clearly upset."

> "I also felt uncomfortable in class when discussions would come up that would somehow relate to Islam or even terrorism. When looking at 9/11 I feel uncomfortable and like I have to defend myself."

Within this context, 5.4% of students felt that their contributions to academic discussions were disproportionately scrutinised due to prejudices held against their religion. Which therefore makes academic settings an inhospitable place for the sharing of knowledge, whereby Muslim students may have apprehensions or reservations that deter them from engaging with course material to the fullest extent – a privilege that is offered to those who do not have to fear this. This also extends to visual indicators of religion, such as wearing religious garments.

> "I don't feel comfortable and feel that since I am the only hijab wearing visible Muslim in class I may be looked down upon."

Consequently, this does not only apply to physical forums of discussion, but also in the students' ability to research relevant topics of interest. 10% of respondents felt unable to research in line with their interests for fear that their work may be misconstrued or bring judgement in relation to the denigration of their belief.

> "My religion is a strong part of who I am but I'm quite scared to show it. Just in case or judgement or misunderstanding."

> "There is the assumption that because I am of Islamic faith, studying or wanting to pursue Middle Eastern studies is somehow dangerous, or radical."

Overall, 80% of respondents did not perceive there to be any barriers to the topics that they wished to research. But looking beyond the numbers, it is clear how Islamophobia in academia has taken root, thus shaping how students engage with their degrees- negotiating, strategizing and navigating fear.

Inclusion

In relation to students' sense of belonging and inclusion, various elements of their identity may determine which situations and spaces they feel most comfortable or are welcomed into. Of those asked, 91.4% never felt excluded from participating in elements of university life, such as events, socials, etc due to religious discrimination. However, 29% of Muslim students felt that they were viewed through their ethnicity first, in so much that their interactions were filtered through a prism of race. 25% felt that their religious identity was more prominent.

Within on-campus Muslim communities themselves, 7% of respondents felt that their ethnicity excluded them from participating in or joining said communities. For example discrimination on racial lines, such as anti-Blackness can be prevalent amongst communities of colour.

> "The Muslim communities in the UK are very different compared to where I'm from. There's segregation with the different types of Muslims, the ethnicities and background and so forth."

Additionally, a student reported being directly discriminated against and deterred from applying for a role in a student society due to their denomination.

> "I wanted to apply for a role in the [redacted] but was told no because I'm a Shia Muslim."

At a broader level, 26% of respondents also stated that they would not nominate themselves for student elections, or take up leadership positions such as course representatives due to fear of religious discrimination. These types of roles can be pivotal in changing the student representational structures as well as the socio-political context within which a university operates. For example, student campaigning led to a number of significant shifts in higher education – such as decolonial initiatives and tackling the degree awarding gap.

Although there has been a marked decrease in the centralisation of alcohol culture on campuses over the years, many events and socials still include elements of drinking or may be held in spaces where alcohol is served. In cases such as these, some Muslim students may feel excluded from such events.

> "At one of the student fresher events alcohol was being consumed so I decided to leave but was laughed at and peer pressured to stay by some disrespectful students."

A total of 15% of respondents felt pressured to alter their religious practices in order to fit prevailing western social norms such as the aforementioned. Again, this can pose an ultimatum for Muslim students, where they may be forced to choose between following religious principles or attending social events/spaces. Some students have gone on to modify their appearance in relation to their religious identities in order to avoid prejudicial, discriminatory or Islamophobic treatment:

> "I do not wear hijab (head covering) or abaya (long dress to ankles) anymore because of direct Islamophobia which has left me with PTSD, depression, hopelessness and unfulfillment in life, because I am not able to practice my religion freely in the country of my birth."

A couple of students had altered, or felt anxious about their appearance in direct relation to living in a city:

> "Not wearing hijab to avoid discrimination in London in general e.g. Tubes [London Underground]."

> "Just recently became comfortable to grow a beard... even then I've had racist remarks on London streets."

Institutional Islamophobia: Prevent

As discussed in the background section of this report, sector research into Islamophobia revealed the detrimental impact that Prevent Duty has had on Muslims who are historically and disproportionately the focus 'counter-terrorism.' The National Union of Students found that one-third of their respondents felt negatively affected by Prevent, from being referred to the authorities under the scheme, to having events cancelled or supervised.[58] In anthology ***I Refuse to Condemn***, authors report cameras being installed in Islamic prayer spaces, where Islamic student societies are forced to handover information on their membership.[59]

London Met students were asked If they had ever felt that their interactions with university staff or peers had been shaped by a 'Prevent' way of thinking, for example if questions relating to belief and extremism were disproportionately directed at Muslim students. A small percentage of 4.3%, believed their interactions to be along these lines, however 40.9% were not sure.

> "I need to think twice before speaking when someone asks about my beliefs. It's mainly because of the experience [that] my friends have went through. Someone [might] take something I said out of context. [redacted] I'm cautious because I feel that any student or staff member can coerce me to say something. I heard lots of scary stories about prevent."

In this quote from a student respondent, it is clear that Prevent Duty has created fear among some Muslim students, either directly or indirectly. As a result this particular student has demonstrated the necessity to exercise great caution, fearing that they may be embroiled in a Prevent-related situation as a result of coercion. This is an incredibly serious concern, that can have a vast negative impact on the wellbeing and mental health of the student.

> "As I said [redacted] I feel that I'm the number one target to any prevent officer."

Other students also expressed the same fears. Some describe how they must deploy a high level of awareness of the multitude of ways that their views, work, or even simple conversations can be viewed under the lens of Islamophobia and counter-extremism.

> "Feeling pressured to be careful of how I speak in case someone misinterprets it, as almost anything can be seen as extreme"

Whilst some students did not directly reference Prevent, it can be understood that the culture of heightened surveillance and criminalisation of Muslims as a 'suspect community,' has led students to self-police in the pursuit of self-preservation. In the quotation below, a student discusses how they must self-sensor when religion and culture is mistakenly conflated in class discussions:

> "I feel uncomfortable [raising an issue in class] because most of the time [the issue] has been a more cultural aspect than religious and I don't speak up because they may think I'm undermining their experience and make me seem like an extremist."

One of the key ways that people exercise Islamophobia is in the request for Muslims to condemn acts of terrorism. These requests are not innocent, they are built on presumed guilt within a framework of imaged responsibility that Muslims are pressured to take. The question seeks confirmation of innocence, under the shadow of culpability. At London Met, 8% of students had been called upon by their lecturer or peers to answer such questions – to condemn.

> "In the culture of condemnation, presenting yourself outside of the good citizen/bad citizen binary can result in a great deal of harm."[60]

58 Ilyas Nagdee, Hareem Ghani, and Zamzam Ibrahim, "Preventing Prevent: Handbook 2017" (NUS, 2017). pp.35.
59 Asim Qureshi, I Refuse to Condemn: Resisting Racism in Times of National Security. (Manchester University Press, 2020). pp.14
60 Asim Qureshi, I Refuse to Condemn: Resisting Racism in Times of National Security. (Manchester University Press, 2020). pp.10

Students are left with little option when posed with such a question, to refuse answer is to risk being seen as a 'sympathiser,' but to condemn, is to engage with a question rooted in suspicion of your identity.

> "I wear long dress, I have a hat and I have beard. I may look a bit different and easily identifiable. I understand that some of the security guards know me by my name and I am not sure how."

With suspicion, comes surveillance. Of those asked, 3.2% had feared being put under surveillance at university. One student reported how they had become 'known' by name to university security, inferring that their 'easily identifiable' Muslim identity may have played a role in how this came to be.

Microaggressions and Safety

By the very nature of microaggressions, they can be small, difficult to identify and often hard to evidence. Many people have experienced them in their lifetime, but may not have the tools to articulate their experiences in this way. Of those asked, 7.5% of respondents had either personally experienced or witnessed Islamophobic microaggressions at London Met. However, 17.2% were not sure.

> "I have experienced questions about Islam and how 'oppressive' it is from London Met staff."

> "asked by a female friend to show her my hair in the bathroom"

> "A student in my class refused to sit next to me and told me to sit somewhere else. He told me to leave in a very aggressive manner."

As exemplified by the examples above, microaggressions can range from 'seemingly' innocent, yet highly loaded questions, to aggressive comments and demands. Over time this can chip away at the person on the receiving end of what can feel like a continuous onslaught of commentary, othering and vocalised prejudices. In one student's experience, this has led them to reluctantly accept the multitude of ways that their identities come under attack, in so much that they've resigned themselves to "keeping it in:"

> "Being an Asian Muslim female [I] wouldn't really complain about any discrimination made against me. Whether it is religion, race or gender. [I am] used to keeping it in."

Gendered Islamophobia

During 2017, 56% of victims of Islamophobia in the UK were women, citing that they were more likely to be attacked if seen wearing distinctly Islamic garments.[61] As a result, visibly Muslim sisters reported higher levels of safety concern and fear of abuse or physical attacks.[62] Across the sector, one-in-three Muslim students live in fear of Islamophobic attacks on their campuses, whilst a third have experienced online abuse.

> "Meeting people who aren't Muslim was also hard because I felt uncomfortable because I wore a scarf and people would automatically assume I'm a certain way or be hesitant to speak to me. I've also had multiple interactions where people have bumped into me, made comments and made me feel uncomfortable."

61 Tell Mama, "Beyond the Incident: Outcomes for Victims of Anti-Muslim Prejudice," July 23, 2018.

62 Eleanor Busby, "Living in Fear: One in Three Muslim Students Attacked on Campus as Islamophobic Hate Crime Surges," *The Independent*, March 18, 2018, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/muslim-students-universities-islamophobic-national-union-students-nus-prevent-duty-a8260176.html.

Religious garments such as the Niqab or Hijab have been weaponised and politicised as tools through which repressive media (and in some cases governments) promulgate the narrative that Islam oppresses Muslim women. This translates into modern society, which ultimately enters our university spaces. 29% of Muslim students at London Met have had to defend their right to wear religious garments against those who harbour prejudicial views.

> "When I moved, I got a lot of comments from people where they seemed shocked that I'm not oppressed. They've thought I was forced into wearing Hijab and was shocked to find out otherwise, as well as that I'm a female who moved halfway across the world alone to study, [this] was a big shock too."

Consequently, this has also impacted on students' sense of safety on campus, resulting in 15.7% of respondents feeling unsafe wearing religious garments, some of whom have been physically or verbally assaulted. In their quote below, a student reveals exactly how the negative media coverage of Muslims has impacted their safety and thus their student experience, resulting in them making the "disheartening" decision to no longer wear their Hijab.

> "I took it [Hijab] off, and as horrible and disheartening as it is, I'm more comfortable and have had more pleasant interactions whilst [not] wearing a scarf, even though my dressing, lifestyle and personality is the same. I would like to wear it again but for the time being, it's much safer without it. Especially with the media labelling Muslims as terrorists."

> "I was called a 'p***' even though I am of Arab descent and have faced a lot of derogatory insults by some students."

Not only must Muslim students defend their right to exercise religious freedoms, some students noted having to commit the emotional labour to debunking the conflation of culture and religion, which can lead people to misinterpret Islam – 38% of students feel that their peers understand their religion.

> "When you wear a scarf (Hijab), people look at you differently and assume you are a certain way slightly due to religious discrimination but also the way people view Islam. There's a whole misconception about Islam because culture is confused with it - people who aren't Muslim and people who are Muslim confuse the two. People won't really speak to you or approach you so making friends initially was a bit difficult because only a small portion of people approached me and the friends I initially met were Muslim and they wear Hijab too."

In the case of the student below, they have faced inquisition on clothing choices from non-Muslims and fellow Muslims at university, leading them to feel "judged."

> "I wore hijab but people would ask if I'm Muslim and they'd inquire to understand but sometimes I kind of felt judged by both people who aren't Muslim and people who are Muslim, e.g., I was asked why I was wearing jeans if I'm a Muslim, why is my scarf tied like that, a little bit of my hair is showing."

From the findings so far, it is clear that Muslims must be proactive in seeking and ensuring self-preservation, and protection from those who may wish to do them harm or seek to impose their prejudice upon them. Yet, despite having to face down significant challenges within university, 45% of students disclosed that they have no safe space to discuss the experiences and issues that they face at London Met in relation to Islamophobia.

Ultimately leaving students with no outlet to share, heal and confront their experiences.

As part of their self-preservation strategies, 16% of respondents have gone so far as to hide their religious beliefs from their university peers. The quotations below will starkly demonstrate the lengths at which Muslim students must go to protect their safety and to avoid Islamophobic interactions, altercations and denigrations.

> "I don't outwardly portray any signs of being Muslim and people assume I am not. I feel they will view me differently if I share my faith with them."

> "I'd prefer to prevent any possible questions, comments, or maybe a change in the way [people] treat me."

> "To avoid being judged by peoples' perception of Islam and also by the community. i.e. not being seen as Muslim enough due to not praying, being accepting of LGBTQ+ identities [-] that is not in opposition to my religion."

> "Afraid of getting attacked, and also I'm a university student; I'm here just to study and not talk about my religion; because religion is part of my personal life, so you'll find me keeping my business and not socialising with others."

> "People feel that they're treated differently, and can change how people treat you for the worse."

Complaints Procedures

There are many reasons why minoritised or oppressed groups may choose not to file complaints in relation to discriminatory treatment. Sometimes this may come down to a lack of faith in an institution or workplace to handle complaints seriously whilst other times this may come down to fear of victimisation or targeting.

Students were asked to what extent they'd feel comfortable reporting religious discrimination as Islamophobia – almost a quarter of respondents disclosed that they would not feel comfortable doing so. Additionally, respondents were asked to what extent they'd feel comfortable reporting religious discrimination to the university and students' union (see figure 18).

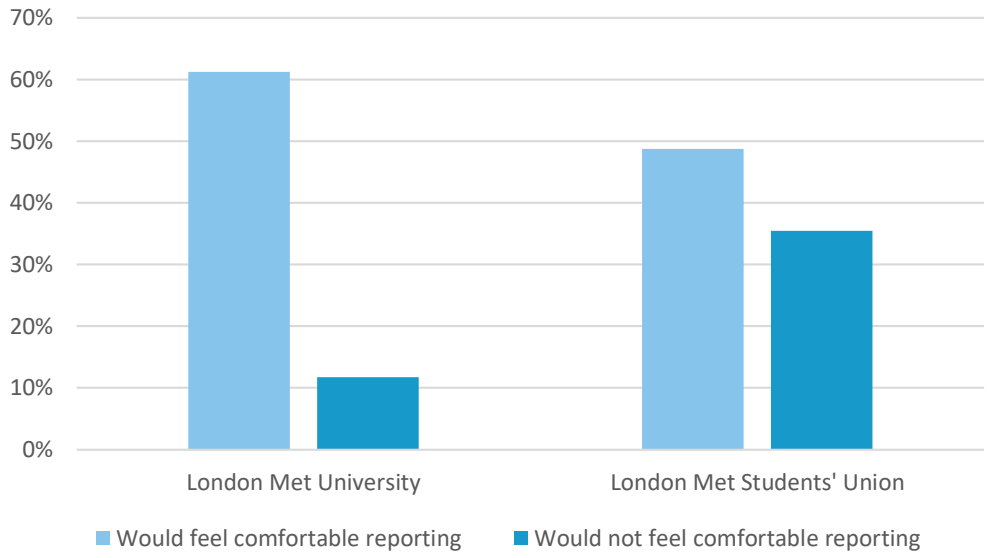

Figure 18: Percentage of students who would and would not feel comfortable reporting Islamophobia to London Met and London Met's Students' Union

From the table, a higher proportion of students feel comfortable reporting Islamophobia to the University in comparison to the Students' Union – whilst 12% did not feel comfortable reporting to the university. However, there was a closer divide between those who do and those who do not feel comfortable reporting Islamophobia to the Students' Union. Students cited the following reasons:

> "I don't feel like Islamophobia is taken seriously, it is almost like it is accepted"

> "I feel that they won't think it is a big deal and that I am overreacting."

> "I feel like it wouldn't be taken seriously as there wouldn't be any proof except my word of mouth."

Some students cited fear of reprisal or victimisation as their leading deterrent from reporting Islamophobia.

> "If I was reporting the incident about a staff [member] to London Met, I would feel conscious around the building or feel like I won't be able to talk."

> "I feel there is a high risk of being ostracized by my peers because I was 'the one that told the teacher'"

> "I wouldn't know how and I'd be a bit scared to. There's been instances where I have reported an issue, although it was a different place, nothing was done."

Conclusion

While the responses from students were typically more positive overall, these were in contrast to a number of deeply candid, detailed and often-times, emotive accounts of Islamophobia at London Metropolitan University.

Throughout the research, what became clear are the ways in which Islamophobia operates in a higher education setting - from direct discrimination, through to challenges to their identity and belief system under the guise of 'academic discussion.'

Muslim students at London Met predominately comprise of students of colour. By examining Muslim students' experiences through an intersectional lens a more stark picture was revealed, illustrating how both institutional racism and institutional Islamophobia collude. These students face the double-tax of religion and ethnicity as a barrier to their success. Whereby students of all racial heritages (including white) are disproportionately awarded lower grades to their counterparts, when categorised as Muslim - perhaps changing how we understand the awarding gap. Although findings from this report can allude to possible causes, such as hostile classroom environments or explicit Islamophobic biases from staff, it does leave this report with some questions for future lines of inquiry.

An additional tax, on the basis of sex has also revealed the intricacies of navigating multiple identities as a Muslim student. To be an identifiably Muslim sister, is to risk your safety – as highlighted by a number of students.

Perhaps clearest of all then, is that Muslim students must keep their boundaries closely guarded in the pursuit of self-preservation and protection from individuals, the institution and to an extent the government (through Prevent Duty).

The burden of negotiating between your identity, prevailing cultural norms and your education, characterises a number of experiences shared. This constant exchange results in students having to wear multiple identities tailored to conform to multiple scenarios, from adapting their religious dress, to adapting their religious practices to conform with prevailing societal norms – a burden that has led one student to suffer with PTSD. To this extent, the disproportionate vilification of Muslims has become the framework through which students police themselves, their research, their contributions to the classroom and even their everyday interactions.

The rise of Institutionalised Islamophobia in society has permeated our public spaces, including our universities. Educational institutions must recognise this and take decisive action against it.

We do not only have a responsibility to eradicate Islamophobia from our universities, but also from the society in which all live.

Findings

Islamophobia in the Staff Experience

Observing Religion on Campus

Having access to prayer spaces on campus is an essential part of ensuring that the university's facilities cater to staff and students of a variety of backgrounds. At London Met, there are segregated prayer rooms with wash facilities available to all who use the campus. Of those who pray, 46% are more likely to pray in the on campus prayer rooms, compared to other venues such as domestically. A staff member noted that they chose their office to pray in, although clarifying that it is "not an ideal location to pray in."

However, 23% of respondents do not feel comfortable praying on campus, citing potential conflicts or expectations related to their work, whereby prayer may be deemed disruptive to a work schedule. Similar to that of the student experience, this particular staff member may feel that an ultimatum between work and prayer is a requirement of them, resulting in this staff member having to be "discreet" with their faith.

> "I pray all the prayers but I do not feel comfortable letting people know that I need to pray when the time comes. People have not been receptive to me talking about my faith even though I am visibly Muslim in appearance. When I started my job, I was asked whether praying will interfere with me doing my job. The message I get is that it is unprofessional so I am discreet in order to stay true to my faith."

During key religious event such as Ramadan, almost half of respondents positively disclosed that they were able to adjust their work schedule or work flexibly where possible. However, this was not an option for a few members of staff, whose work does not allow for flexibility e.g. academic staff and their scheduled lecture times. Conversely, 31% of staff did not feel comfortable asking their line managers for allowances.

When visiting campus it is essential that food options cater to a range of dietary requirements, including religious. Although Halal food is stocked at various on-campus restaurants and cafes, not all staff feel comfortable eating from these outlets. Just shy of 40% of respondents did not feel comfortable, raising concerns related to: cross-contamination of Halal and non-Halal food, the source of the Halal meat served and a lack of trust in the institutions that claim to serve Halal.

A staff member described how they witnessed not only cross-contamination of Halal and non-Halal, but also between meat and vegetarian food, where utensils and trays were shared across diets. This is despite raising concerns with catering staff.

> "I have witnessed cross contamination of utensils and trays, both with Halal and vegetarian foods. I have raised this with catering staff but I have witnessed a number of times when food is handled in a cross contaminated way. E.g. veg pasties being cooked on the same tray as sausage rolls. Colour coded utensils being used across different dishes. I cannot be confident with the way the food is prepared and handled."

> "I just do not trust that its completely Halal, as it may have been contaminated with other food that isn't Halal as there is both types of food prepared."

Workplace Culture, Inclusion and Progression

In relation to staff members' sense of belonging and inclusion, various elements of their identity may determine which situations and spaces they feel most comfortable or are welcomed into. In order to understand this, staff were asked their opinions on how they believed they were viewed by colleagues along racial and religious lines.

Muslim staff felt that they were viewed through their ethnicity first (33%), in so much that their interactions were filtered through a prism of race, however 42% were not sure, whilst 25% disagreed. By contrast only 27% of respondents felt that their religion was their most prominent identity, influencing their interactions through perceptions of their faith.

Within on-campus Muslim communities themselves, 18% of respondents felt that they were excluded due to their ethnicity- anti-Blackness for example can be prevalent amongst communities of colour.[63]

In terms of workplace related events or staff socials, just over half (54%) have never felt excluded from participating in elements of university life, such as staff events or socials.

However, a large proportion of respondents (31%) felt excluded because of the presence of alcohol. Whilst just under a quarter of respondents cited issues such as lack of diversity, inclusivity and conflicts with religious principles as causes for why they may feel directly or indirectly excluded.

Furthermore, 23% of staff believe that exclusion from related events or socials, not only has an impact on their sense of inclusivity and belonging, but that it also will negatively impact their career progression. Access to workplace events or staff socials, can be influential in building relationships with colleagues, work collaborations and impact career progression and development. However if Muslim staff are excluded from these settings, they are effectively excluded from the opportunities afforded to those who attend.

A staff member suggested that their absence from work socials would mean that they would not be:

> "viewed as interested or serious about progression."

Exclusion based on your identity can have negative repercussions in terms of how this can become internalised, for example how you act or present yourself.[64] Whilst 85% have never felt pressured to alter their religious practices to fit prevailing western societal norms, 15% have. In addition to this pressure, some members of staff (23%) have modified, or considered modifying their appearance in relation to their religious identity in order to avoid prejudicial treatment.

A respondent described how they have witnessed Muslim staff members getting "side-lined" due to "not fitting in." Islamophobic discrimination in this sense has immediate implications on career progression.

> "I have seen members of staff in [redacted] side lined and marginalised due to the not 'fitting in', so they may have 10 to 20 years' experience but when an opportunity comes up it will always be the non-Muslim colleague with less experience that gets considered. This has happened on too many occasions leading to demoralisation and then eventually having to leave the institution."

Once within these staff spaces, Muslim staff may find themselves up against a different challenge – confronting Islamophobia. 39% believe that Islamophobia is normalised at London Met, in so much that staff may freely espouse Islamophobia rhetoric in the workplace.

> "[A male colleague] made a comment how he wouldn't be surprised if he heard that a particular student were to 'get in a truck'. This was mentioned in front of 3 other members of staff, one of whom was the acting head of school who made light of the situation after I asked for clarification of what he meant from the offending colleague."

63 Janice Gassam Asare, "How Communities Of Color Perpetuate Anti-Blackness," *Forbes*, July 19, 2020, zzzhttps://www.forbes.com/sites/janicegassam/2020/07/19/how-communities-of-color-perpetuate-anti-blackness/

64 Sofia Akel, "Insider-Outsider," October 2019, https://www.gold.ac.uk/media/docs/reports/Insider-Outsider-Report-191008.pdf

Additionally, a respondent details how this same openly Islamophobic rhetoric has and can be used by colleagues in the demonisation and targeting of Muslim students. Rhetoric that is analogous of the centuries-old narrative that Muslims are allegedly a threat to 'social cohesion' or 'culture' of one's country.

> "I have also seen Niqab wearing students being framed as people who are deliberately working against social cohesion because they choose to sit with other Muslim female students in their breaks. This has been characterised as anti-social behaviour."

> "Another example, is where a member of staff had profiled two Muslim students to blame them for an incident that had occurred. There was no factual evidence just supposition qualified with the fact that the students were Muslim."

These same prejudices can negatively impact how Muslim staff are received in staff spaces, especially in relation to their contributions and interactions. 23% of respondents had felt disproportionately scrutinised or invalidated due to prejudices their peers may have against Islam.

> "[I feel] marginalised and invisible like our opinions do not count as much. This is not across all departments but still exists."

One respondent in particular, shared the pride that a fellow staff member took in persuading a Muslims student to leave Islam.

> "I have been told by another member of staff that they took responsibility for a student converting away from Islam. I found this deeply troubling on a number of levels."

Academic Environment

In our academic settings, codes of conduct, power (im)balances and lecturer-student dynamics typically govern acceptable and not-acceptable forms of behaviour. However, this is not a guarantee, for example certain forms of discrimination has to an extent become normalised in academic spaces. This was the experience of 17% of academic staff who have been discriminated against or targeted by a student in relation to their religious identity.

> "It was a combination of racist and Islamophobic behaviour. Disruptive behaviour in class, comments being made about my professional integrity and comments made on Facebook about me. Students made complaints against me also."

Sector research has shown that hostile exchanges such as these can lead to Muslim staff avoiding specific topics in the classroom for fear of discriminatory comments or hostile reprisals.[65] At London Met, 17% of academic respondents have avoided specific topics in their classroom. One academic noted avoiding discussions relating to "religion and politics."

Institutional Islamophobia: Prevent

As discussed in the background section of this report, sector research into Islamophobia revealed the detrimental impact that Prevent Duty has had on Muslims who are historically and disproportionately the focus 'counter-terrorism.' In the anthology ***I Refuse to Condemn***, authors report cameras being installed in Islamic prayer spaces, where Islamic student societies are forced to handover information on their membership.[66]

Data is not routinely collected on religion and belief of staff in the sector, therefore much of the literature on Prevent in HE, often focuses on students not staff.

65 Dr Ibtihal Ramadan to Sofia Akel, "Consultation on Dr Ramadan's Research into Experiences of Muslim Staff in HEI," November 24, 2020.
66 Asim Qureshi, I Refuse to Condemn: Resisting Racism in Times of National Security. (Manchester University Press, 2020). pp.14.

London Met staff were asked if they had ever felt that their interactions with colleagues or students had been shaped by a 'Prevent' way of thinking, for example if questions relating to belief and extremism were disproportionately directed at Muslim staff. 54% of respondents had not experienced this, however 46% did not known. This may in part, be due to varying degrees of understanding and knowledge of Prevent. As 8% of staff later declared that they had felt under surveillance at London Met, in contrast to the majority who did not.

One of the key ways that people exercise Islamophobia is in the request for Muslims to condemn acts of terrorism. These requests are premised on a presumption of guilt within a framework of imaged responsibility that Muslims are pressured to take. The question seeks confirmation of innocence, under the shadow of culpability. At London Met, 23% of staff had been called upon by their colleagues or students to answer such questions – to condemn.

Microaggressions and Safety

Microaggressions can range from seemingly innocent, yet highly loaded questions, to aggressive comments and demands. Over time this can chip away at the person on the receiving end of what can feel like a continuous onslaught of commentary, othering and vocalised prejudices.

Staff have disclosed a multitude of microaggressions that they have personally witnessed or experienced, such as a lack of support regarding workplace issues or loaded comments. Overall, 31% of respondents had experienced this.

> "Unsupported in the same issues/problems faced by white colleagues. Have been left to solve problems on my own."

However, more flagrant Islamophobic comments have been directed toward Muslim staff relating to terrorism, the homogenisation of Muslims, and offensive lines of questioning regarding religious garments.

> "A male colleague asking me 'What is wrong with your men?' after reading an article about a man cutting off his wife's hands because she wanted an education."

> "Comments related to Muslims/terrorism"

> "Inappropriate comments towards a female member of staff who does not wear a headscarf but on this one occasion wore a bandana type of scarf to help with a headache."

Comments whereby religious garments are under question and observation, can result in Muslim staff having to defend their right to wear them. Of those who do wear religious garments such as the Hijab or Jubbah, 8% have had to defend their religious freedoms in this sense. However, respondents unanimously felt that their safety was not impacted by wearing visibly Islamic garments. Furthermore, no respondents had been physically or verbally assaulted at London Met due to religious discrimination.

Whilst respondents have demonstrated a high level of comfortability in expressing their faith, 15% have hidden their religious beliefs from colleagues and students in order to avoid Islamophobic treatment. This reveals that some staff exercise caution in relation to whom they disclose their religion to, and that they take steps of 'self-preservation' in order to minimise the risk of a prejudicial experiences whilst navigating the institution.

Complaints Procedures

Almost a quarter of Muslim staff would not feel comfortable lodging a complaint as 'Islamophobia' at London Met, in comparison to 77% staff who would. Staff expressed awareness of the relatively new terrain that London Met has entered in its ambition to understand institutional Islamophobia. In November 2020 London Metropolitan University became the first university to adopt the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims' definition of Islamophobia. Which reveals just how relatively absent understanding or even recognition of Islamophobia is across the sector.

"Until now, there has never been clear parameters for this type of conversation to happen"

"There is a lot of work to do in setting parameters and understanding just what islamophobia is."

Over half of respondents also expressed reservations about reporting Islamophobia to the university, fearing that they will miss out on promotions and opportunities related to career progression and development if they were to challenge discrimination in their place of work. Additionally, 15% of staff did not believe that the university would take complaints of Islamophobia seriously, with some disclosing that they would fear "future victimisation or discrimination" if they did report. This may be due to a possible culture of normalised Islamophobia in the workplace, as believed by 39% of Muslim staff.

"This has just been acknowledged at London Met as being recognised. Now the battle will be taking it seriously. Need more awareness and educating training for staff."

Of those who did feel comfortable lodging complaints, 46% would most likely report directly to their line managers. However, a quarter of respondents have been actively discouraged from lodging complaints by their colleagues.

Conclusion

The responses from staff were typically more positive overall, however these were contrasted by a number of candid and detailed experiences of Islamophobia at London Metropolitan University.

Through the research it was clear that staff respondents were cognisant of the ways their faith and visible religious identities may impact their relationships with colleagues and students, in terms of discriminatory treatment. In practice, this can (for example) look like exclusion from staff events and social spaces, either subtly where alcohol is served, or more overtly prejudicial whereby Muslim staff face derogatory lines of questioning.

Whilst most staff did not feel impacted by Prevent Duty, some did describe instances of microaggressions, surveillance and markedly, the normalisation of Islamophobia in the workplace. Whereby plentiful conversations have been overtly discriminatory yet overlooked by staff - in one case a senior member of faculty. The result of unfettered Islamophobia is that it has consequently disempowered a number of staff in terms of career progression optimism, as well as leading to a culture of fear where Muslim staff do not speak up due to concerns of victimisation or reprisal.

These same concerns have led a number of academic staff to avoid certain topics in their lectures such as religion and politics, for fear of Islamophobic comments from staff or students. Furthermore, self-preservation tactics such as hiding your religious beliefs from staff and students had also been deployed as a prevention strategy from Islamophobic treatment. However, steps taken to protect oneself does not always provide fruitful, as a number of staff had experienced at the receiving end of various forms of Islamophobia from both staff and students.

Much like the student experience, this can lead to a triple burden, whereby staff must constantly negotiate and strategise between adhering to cultural norms, their beliefs and minimising the impact of Islamophobia on their treatment and career progression.

To quote a respondent "there is a lot of work to do in setting parameters and understanding just what Islamophobia is." This is task set for London Metropolitan University and a call to the sector – decisive action must be taken.

Institutionalised Islamophobia in society has permeated our insitutions. Therefore, we do not only have a responsibility to eradicate Islamophobia from our universities, but also from the society in which all live.

Recommendations

Recommendations

Eradicating Islamophobia in the Student Experience

In line with the findings of this research, this section outlines some key recommendations for London Metropolitan University. As a larger number of survey responses came from Muslim students, related recommendations may provide greater detail than that of the staff recommendations.

The issue of Islamophobia in higher education is not exclusive to London Metropolitan, as this is an issue that negatively impacts many students and staff across UK higher education institutions. In order to tackle religious inequalities, such as the intersectional awarding gap, safety and inclusion, it is imperative that anti-Islamophobia is embedded throughout the institutions core values, strategies and academic output.

Although the experiences of students do range from positive to negative, a key amount of work is required for the university to proactively root out institutional Islamophobia. Through these recommendations, a non-exhaustive guide is offered on how to make some changes that would positively impact Muslim students.

Observing Religion on Campus & Inclusion

Widening Participation: Student finance options whereby the students accrue interest on their loans is not Shar'iah compliant. Therefore potential Muslim student applicants may be deterred from attending university if their only option is to take out a government loan with interest repayments.

1. As part of London Met's widening participation, the university should offer guidance related to the governments support of Shar'iah compliant student loans.
2. Additionally, students are able open Shar'iah compliant bank accounts, the university could offer guidance on this as part of their student service support.

Prayer, Religious Holidays and Class Conflicts: Almost half of student respondents have had to choose between attending lectures or religious events and practices. Although logistically it may not be possible to avoid all prayer times, steps should be taken to minimise this ultimatum for students.

1. Key religious holidays such as Eid should be a recognised holiday in the university calendar, whereby students have the choice to have approved absence.
    a. This must also be reflected in the attendance of international students, to ensure that their visas are not compromised.
2. Exploring the potential of offering recorded online lecturers to students (post-Coronavirus), where possible, when scheduled classes conflict with prayer times or religious holidays.
3. Hold consultations with students on the best times to avoid academic activity which clashes with significant religious periods such as Ramadan. Whilst it may not be possible to make wholesale adjustments, steps can be taken to ensure that exams are held when students might be less fatigued.

Halal Food Options: While most of the student respondents felt comfortable eating from the Halal meat options available on campus, others did not and raised valid concerns which can be easily addressed.

1. Food of various dietary requirements should not be mixed, this must be taken seriously and actioned in similar vein to that of allergies (this includes all diets e.g. vegetarian, gluten free, etc).
2. Clear signage, including which authority has certified the Halal meat offered.
3. To avoid cross-contamination of Halal and non-Halal food, catering staff should use separate utensils, change gloves and prepare food on separate surfaces (where possible) to non-Halal food.
4. All catering staff should be confident in their knowledge of different dietary needs including food which has been prepared to meet religious requirements. This is particularly important when handling meat.

Academic Success and Attainment

Islamophobia in Academic Settings: Students reported the bias and prejudices that have gone unchallenged and sometimes shared by their lecturers. As a result, a number of students feel that their academic freedoms and engagement is hindered– sometimes out of fear of reprisal, but also out of self-preservation against discrimination.

1. As part of mandatory training, staff should be trained on how to deal with Islamophobia if and when conversations of this nature take place in the learning environment.
2. It must be part of the expected behaviours of our staff that they do not allow their own prejudices or biases to influence or lead their teaching.
    a. Additionally, power dynamics of knowledge sharing should be addressed, whereby academic staff make it clear to their students that they too hold biases and are not above accountability in relation to this.
3. Any academic focus that examines peoples identities, cultures, communities and so on should be done in line with the University's commitment to decoloniality and in accordance with the Education for Social Justice Framework.

Defining Islamophobia: As part of London Met's work following the adoption of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims' definition of Islamophobia, the following recommendations form part of the work needed to education those on Islamophobia:

1. Those who hold leadership positions throughout the university should receive tailored training on the nuances, manifestations and forms that Islamophobia takes in an educational setting and workplace.
2. A wider-piece of work must be done to ensure that staff feel confident in their knowledge of Islamophobia and how to identify it, including through which mechanisms this can be reported.
3. Steps must be taken to ensure that anti-Islamophobic practises are recognised within our policies and other related documentation that serve to protect those who come under the Equalities Act 2010.

Prevent

Prevent Duty: Many academics, civil liberties campaigners, politicians and more have raised concerns over the controversial Prevent Duty and how this may impede innocent peoples' lives.

1. Whilst this is a legal requirement, universities should consider how they may counteract increased surveillance, and the resultant hyper-visibility of minoritised groups.
2. Those who must receive Prevent training (including the Prevent officer), should also receive tailored training in understanding structural Islamophobia and how this may manifest in higher education settings.
3. The consequences of Prevent, as explored in this report, must be counteracted in order to not only minimise, but eradicate its disproportionate impact on Muslim staff and students.

Inclusion and Complaints Procedure

Complaints Procedures: There were mixed reviews on whether or not students had faith in the University and Students' Union to handle complaints of Islamophobia seriously. In relation to the concerns made, the following changes can help to increase confidence in reporting and in the aforementioned institutions.

1. Expert-led investigations and panels who decide outcomes of complaints procedures. It is essential that those who investigate complaints of Islamophobia, understand the nuances, manifestations and forms that it may take.
    a. It is also important that within these panels and investigations, a diverse range of people are involved.
2. The burden of evidence – often a strong emphasis is placed on the complainant to provide evidence of their experiences in relation to their complaint. Whilst this is important, it is not always possible as discrimination, racism and Islamophobia can take many covert forms. Therefore, this should be reflected in our policies and procedures, accounting for microaggressions and more.
3. Currently complaints can be dealt with in isolation within schools, however this can make it extremely difficult to ensure impartiality, and protection for all parties involved. This could inadvertently be a deterrent for reporting.
    a. A centralised internal system of complaints should be created, for the purposes of impartiality and protection. Additionally, this will enable the lead to have better oversight on the extent, type and nature of complaints lodged across the university and how the institution might tackle trends.

Recommendations

Eradicating Islamophobia in the Staff Experience

In line with the findings of this research, this section outlines some key recommendations for London Metropolitan University. These should be understood as non-exhaustive. As a larger number of survey responses came from Muslim students, related recommendations may provide greater detail than that of the staff recommendations.

The issue of Islamophobia in higher education is not exclusive to London Metropolitan, as this is an issue that negatively impacts students and staff across UK higher education institutions. In order to tackle religious inequalities, such as the career gaps, safety and inclusion, it is imperative that anti-Islamophobia is embedded throughout the institutions core values, strategies and academic output.

Observing Religion on Campus & Inclusion

Halal Food Options: While over 50% of staff felt comfortable eating from the Halal meat options available on campus, others did not and raised valid concerns which can be easily addressed.

1. Food of various dietary requirements should not be mixed, this must be taken seriously and actioned in similar vein to that of allergies (this includes all diets e.g. vegetarian, gluten free, etc).
2. Clear signage, including which authority has certified the Halal meat offered.
3. To avoid cross-contamination of Halal and non-Halal food options, catering staff should use separate utensils, change gloves and prepare food on separate surfaces (where possible) to non-Halal food.
4. All catering staff should be confident in their knowledge of different dietary requirements including food which has been prepared to meet religious requirements. This is particularly important when handling meat, for example ensuring that they serve only Halal food when requested.

Prayer, Religious Holidays and Work Conflicts: Not all staff are equally afforded the opportunity to work flexibility around religious commitments and practices such as Ramadan. To ensure greater parity the following actions could be taken:

1. Key religious holidays such as Eid should be a recognised holiday in the university calendar, whereby staff can have leave from work that does not lessen their annual leave allowance.
2. Hold consultations with Muslim staff on the best ways to support staff who balance religious obligations with work obligations.
3. Where possible, staff should equally have the right to work flexibly as to reduce the likelihood of staff having to choose.
4. Management should not dissuade or pressure staff to not observe prayer during work times – this should be seen as discriminatory treatment.

Workplace Culture and Academic Settings

Normalisation of Islamophobia: 39% of staff believe that Islamophobia is normalised at London Met, as part of changing the culture of the institution, this includes taking steps to make staff and students more aware of Islamophobia and its many manifestations and iterations.

1. All codes of conduct and behavioural policies must reflect and include the recognition of Islamophobia as a form of racial and religious discrimination.
2. Training sessions must include anti-Islamophobia where possible, to ensure that staff are given space to be educated and to reflect on their own potential biases or prejudices.
3. The above must be applied to lecture settings too, where students must be also be aware of Islamophobia and how it can negatively impact staff and student experiences.

Staff Demographics and Career Pipeline: The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) does not make it mandatory for staff to disclose, or for universities to share data on the religious demographics of their staff population. Therefore posing a limitation to the extent that we can examine the progression of Muslim staff – including the impact of institutionalised Islamophobia.

1. London Metropolitan University should routinely and sensitively collect staff data on religion and beliefs.
2. Human Resources and hiring managers must assess their recruitment practices and existing positions of Muslim staff in relation to this reports findings. Assessing how Islamophobia may be facilitating career pipeline inequalities, with the aim of rectifying these, setting new, equitable practices.

   This must also address potential nepotism, ensuring that opportunities that are offered to staff members, are not determined by their involvement in extra-curricular staff activities and socials.

Complaints Procedure and Mental Health

Complaints Procedures:

1. Expert-led investigations and panels who decide outcomes of complaints procedures. It is essential that those who investigate complaints of Islamophobia, understand the nuances, manifestations and forms that it may take.
   a. It is also important that within these panels and investigations, a diverse range of people are involved.
2. The burden of evidence – often a strong emphasis is placed on the complainant to provide evidence of their experiences in relation to complaints. Whilst this is important, it is not always possible as discrimination, racism and Islamophobia can take many covert forms. Therefore, this should be reflected in our policies and procedures, accounting for microaggressions and more.
3. A centralised internal system of complaints should be created, for the purposes of impartiality and protection. Additionally, this will enable the lead to have better oversight on the extent, type and nature of complaints lodged across the university and how the institution might tackle trends.

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