

## **Equity and Inclusion at Central Action Plan 2021-2023**

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This Action Plan consolidates the actions undertaken since the Halpin Review (2018) and the Anti-Racism Action Plan (2020). It runs concurrently with the Strategic Plan 2021-23 that will lay the ground for longer-term planning by Central's incoming Principal, Josette Bushell-Mingo.

Central is committed to creating a culture that:

- Practices equity and inclusion at all levels
- Fosters awareness of power, responsibility, and accountability
- Promotes accountability for equity and inclusion at an individual and community level
- Values and celebrates the lived experiences, identities, and positionalities of all our students, staff and alumni
- Does not tolerate discrimination, harassment, exclusion, and marginalization and challenges this behaviour wherever it arises
- Actively seeks to address historic underrepresentation of marginalized groups in the field of theatre and performance training and study

This Equity and Inclusion Action Plan has a particular focus on race equity. This is because over the past year Central's response to the Black Lives Matter movement and testimonies from former students has meant that the School has worked towards becoming actively anti-racist. However, the Action Plan also recognizes the intersectionality of race with other identities, including (but not limited to) gender, sexuality, disability, and class.

## **1. A Culture of Inclusion**

Responsibility for supporting inclusive cultures is often placed on those most affected by oppression. To challenge this disproportionate burden, Central must foster a culture in which all members of the community have a responsibility to foster equity and inclusion.

### **Aims and objectives**

*Establish and sustain a professional culture that embeds principles of equity and inclusion in all levels and departments, including mandatory training and development for all staff and students*

*Acknowledging and owning Central's history in a transparent and accountable manner*

### **Actions**

- Build an infrastructure of ongoing mandatory training and inclusion literacy to promote ideological shifts at an institutional level, through a 5 Year Inclusion training strategy working with current partners MA Education Consultancy as well as other providers as appropriate
- Create and continually review Central's *Dignity at Work and Study* policy to foster a respectful and humanized working culture
- Embed inclusion in formal and informal review processes such as annual monitoring, course committees, and appraisals
- Review of existing systems and processes from an inclusion perspective
- Launch research project to consider Central's history and identity in an open and transparent manner
- Review and strengthen existing disciplinary and capability frameworks and clarify to all in the community how these will be drawn on to address prejudicial behaviours, microaggressions, and/or hate speech
- Establish a culture of internal and external civic engagement across Central, using formal and informal staff review processes

## **2. Decentring, Decolonizing and Repairing the Curriculum: Inclusive Learning and Teaching**

In her article, "A Manifesto to Decentre Theatre and Performance Studies", Swati Arora writes: "the decolonisation movement in Anglophone academic centres is increasingly adopting the additive approach to fix the problem: altering the curricula by adding a few artists from Asia, Africa, the Americas, and the Middle East, and hiring a handful of Black and Global Majority scholars. While such efforts are well meaning, this approach does not aim at structural change but works within it [...]." Arora's words emphasize that equity and inclusion is not simply a matter of "including more" but needs to be accompanied by reflexive critique about what we consider central to our practices.

### **Aims and objectives**

*Ensure principles of equity and inclusion are embedded in all Learning and Teaching at Central via evolving EDI framework for course development and review, validation, and annual monitoring*

*Decentring, decolonizing, and repairing the curriculum and practicing equity and inclusion in our learning and teaching through an ongoing reflective process*

### **Actions**

- Consolidate course level work on equity and inclusion in Learning and Teaching by creating a new EDI framework for course development and review, validation, and annual monitoring
- Consolidate work on equity and inclusion in production processes by reviewing and revising Central's artistic policy considering (but not exclusive to) play choices, casting, accessibility, and relaxed performances
- Embed discussions of equity and inclusion in student voice processes, starting with Course Committees
- Revise unit evaluations to include anti-racism/equity and inclusion focus
- Bring in practice-based external training on being an active bystander and challenging racism/discrimination in a classroom, studio, placement, or learning context
- Establish full visiting lecturer induction with a package of mandatory training, including anti-racism, teaching and learning for neurodivergent learners, and being an active bystander
- Full audit of reading lists with the support of library staff (NB: some individual courses are conducting/have conducted this review)
- Provide substantive and accessible resources for equity, inclusion and anti-racism through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Brightspace, including readings, videos, and training

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- Embed professional development for equity and inclusion into the Continuous Professional Development strategy for all staff who teach. Equity and inclusion to be foregrounded in the Advance HE Fellowship Programme with recognition (FHEA/SFHEA) targets agreed in appraisal processes
- Consolidate cycle of listening, reflection, dialogue and action by establishing a framework for periodic auditing and review of course content and reading lists (aligned harmoniously with the review and revalidation cycle)
- Establish concrete strategies for diversification of our teaching body (work underway) at all levels – permanent staff, visiting lecturers, and visiting professionals
- Invest in equity and inclusion long term through monetary resources supporting course-level and school-wide projects for enhancement and development

### **3. Student Support, Communication, and Accountability**

Reducing barriers to students reporting problems is an important step towards an open, transparent, and accountable culture of equity and inclusion. Building on the positive actions taken in the Anti-Racism Action Plan, Central will continue to ensure that mechanisms of reporting, student support, and communication are joined up.

#### **Aims and objectives**

*Establish a clear framework for alignment between course teams and student support teams to ensure inclusive support for learning and reducing barriers to access*

*Ensure Central's commitment to all the protected characteristics in a culture of equality by continually reviewing our Dignity at Work and Study policies and reducing barriers to reporting*

#### **Actions**

- Continue to ensure students receive inclusion training and are briefed appropriately on the support and processes available to them through the *How to Central* Student Induction
- Draw on the *Dignity at Work and Study Policy* to address issues of intimidating, prejudicial and microaggressive behaviour.
- Review and refine processes of reporting of formal and informal complaints to ensure as few barriers as possible
- Continually review processes of student support (for example, hardship funding, counselling, Student Advisors)
- Continually review quality assurance processes such as course reviews and deployment of external examiners

#### **4. Building a Representative Community**

According to 2019-20 Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data, 20.5% of staff at Central and 19% of students identify as Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME). However, these overall statistics disguise inequalities of representation within different job grades and areas of the School and the diversity homogenized by the term "BAME." These statistics are also not reflective of Central's position as a London-based institution, nor of the theatre industry we wish to build.

##### **Aims and objectives**

*Create a representative staff body that reflects our students and communities through [positive action](#) and targeted interventions*

*Continually review our Access and Widening Participation policies to increase the recruitment of under-represented groups*

*Build a talent pipeline into the field of Theatre and Performance for underrepresented groups*

##### **Actions**

- Effective use of data to improve processes of recruitment of both staff and students; producing annual reports that will establish targets both in terms of the School as a whole and by job level
- Establish concrete strategies for diversification of our teaching staff at all levels – permanent staff, visiting lecturers, and visiting professionals
- Continue targeted outreach activity for courses with historical underrepresentation of Black and Global Majority students
- Continue to build an pipeline for Black and Global Majority academics to diversify the field through strategic doctoral funding, building upon successes of Collaborative Doctoral Funding strategy and reparative education programme (to support doctoral funding applications for those students underserved by prior educational experiences)
- Implement Equality Impact Assessments for all new and reviewed processes to reduce barriers to promotion

## **5. Internal and External Reflection**

Central is part of a wider ecosystem of conservatoire training and higher education. Our identity as a school is a matter of reflecting internally on our successes and challenges as well as externally on our place in the sector and in relation to comparator institutions.

### **Aims and Objectives**

*Establish routine processes of internal and external review, informed by use of qualitative and quantitative data*

*Work towards eventual inclusion focused charter marks: Athena SWAN Charter; Disability Confident; Race Equality Charter*

### **Actions**

- Create a robust system of internal and external data capture, culminating in an annual benchmarking exercise
- Establish and review mechanisms for capturing localised internal data on inclusion
- Continue to publish regular reports on progress to all stakeholders