Decolonising UK universities: A systematic review of improvements and challenges in decolonising activities and initiatives in UK higher education

Final report

July 2024

Society for Research in Higher Education

Dr Jawiria Naseem
University of Birmingham
School of Education

Acknowledgments

I extend my heartfelt thanks to the Society for Research into Higher Education for providing the funding that made this scoping study possible. I would like to thank Ms Mazeenath Reyal for the screening and retrieving of the data as well as support in organising the roundtable discussion and presentation. My gratitude also goes to Ms Atka Naseem for her assistance in finalising the screening and retrieving data from the Web of Science. Finally, I am deeply appreciative of Dr Manny Madriaga and Professor Karl Kitching for their encouragements and comments on earlier drafts of this report.

Table of Contents

List of tables

List of appendices

1. Executive summary……p.1
2. Background……p.2
3. Methodology……p.3
    a. Research questions……p.4
    b. The PRISMA method……p.4
    c. Data collection……p.5
    d. Analysis procedure……p.6
    e. Co-participatory approach……p.7
4. Findings……p.8
    a. Overview……p.8
    b. Key drivers of decolonial activities and initiatives……p.8
    c. Focus of decolonial activities and initiatives ……p.9
        i. Curriculum……p.11
        ii. Reading list……p.12
        iii. Holistic approach……p.14
        iv. Student engagement……p.15
        v. Library catalogue……p.17
    d. Challenges and opportunities for the implementation of decolonial activities and initiatives……p.17
5. Conclusion……p.21
6. References……p.23

Appendix A: Overview of all references included for analysis

Appendix B: PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram PROQUEST

Appendix C: PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram SCOPUS

Appendix D: PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram WEB OF SCIENCE

Appendix E: PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram OPENGREY

Appendix F: List of references inaccessible for review

Appendix G: Mapping of decolonial activities

Appendix H: Questions for the roundtable discussion

List of tables

Table 1: Overview of the screening and inclusion procedure……..p.6
Table 2: Who or what is driving decolonial agenda in UK universities?……..…….p.8
Table 3: What is the focus of decolonial activities and initiatives in UK universities?……..……p.9
Table 4: List of universities identified as hubs of decolonial activities……p.10

List of Appendices

Appendix A: Overview of all references included for analysis……..……p.26

Appendix B: PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram PROQUEST…….……p.29

Appendix C: PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram SCOPUS…..……..p.30

Appendix D: PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram WEB OF SCIENCE…….……p.31

Appendix E: PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram OPENGREY…….……p.32

Appendix F: List of references inaccessible for review……..p.33

Appendix G: Mapping of Decolonial Activities……p.34

Appendix H: Questions for the roundtable discussion……p.35

Executive Summary

This project addresses the slow progression of the decolonising education agenda in UK Higher Education (HE) (Batty, 2022). A systematic review of the literature was conducted to map existing initiatives and to understand the factors that either hinder or facilitate the implementation of decolonial activities focused on teaching and learning in UK universities. To date, current work on decolonisation in higher education mainly offers conceptual or empirical evidence (e.g. student/staff experiences). This project brings together, for the first time, isolated efforts to decolonise UK HE by profiling the current developments, advancements, and challenges within the sector with potential to have direct and concrete impact on teaching and learning-related activities.

A comprehensive search across multiple databases identified 14,227 references (from ProQuest, Scopus, Web of Science and OpenGrey). The PRISMA method was used to screen, review and finally include 25 eligible papers for the analysis. However, the review shows a significant scarcity of published work on specific activities or initiatives related to the decolonial agenda in UK HE, revealing a gap in structured institutional efforts. Most of the existing research focuses on defining decolonisation, offering conceptual discussions, or sharing experiences among staff and students. Nevertheless, despite the lack of formal publications, individual and collaborative efforts at decolonisation are evident, highlighting the fragmented yet passionate attempts to challenge colonial legacies within the educational sector.

This study contributes to the decolonial discourse by highlighting the necessity of grassroots initiatives, institutional commitment, and a co-participatory approach to effectively address and dismantle colonial structures in UK HE. It suggests next steps for pursuing research in this area, notably by examining university strategy/policy, research, community engagement to enable a comprehensive understanding of decolonial work in the sector beyond educational activities.

Background

Ever since the Rhodes Must Fall campaign in Cape Town, South Africa in 2015, where students called for the removal of Rhodes's statue, a British Imperialist, decolonisation of the curriculum has become a prominent concern internationally in higher education (Nyamnjoh, 2016). Today, decolonising the curriculum has become a pedagogical matter, especially in predominantly White universities located in the Global North, that is to say, in countries with a historic colonising role (Bhambra et al., 2018). Within the UK, there have been several student-led campaigns that demand a review of their university curriculum and the importance of seeing themselves reflected in all aspects of their learning (e.g. UCL students' campaign on 'Why is My Curriculum White?' in 2014) which echo similar efforts from within the sector (e.g. Universities UK and NUS's '#ClosingtheGap' report in 2019).

Why universities should engage in decolonial work has received much attention in recent years (for detailed discussions, see Arday and Mirza (2018), Mamdani (2019) and Morreira and colleagues (2020)). The decolonising agenda particularly suits other sector wide policies in relation to student satisfaction, retention, progression and attainment as well as universities' on-going efforts to reduce the awarding gap (Codiroli Mcmaster, 2021). The latter is especially significant as UK universities have historically been elite spaces rooted in racial inequalities (Hall et al., 2021), with long-standing gaps in achievements between minority ethnic students and their white peers (Jankowski, 2020). This suggests that the decolonial agenda is inextricably linked to both policy and practice at institutional level, bringing into question the role of universities in academic achievements and outcomes (Chikoko, 2021; Gholami, 2021).

In a post-colonial UK context, belonging, or feeling 'at home', continues to imply a binary relationship between those perceived to be part of this home and those who fall outside of this realm, because they are viewed and feared as the 'other' (Said, 1978). Higher education as a space where knowledge systems mirror the knowledge systems of the white elite classes (Bourdieu, 1980), the educational curricula are dis-empowering and alienating students who

feel a sense of non-belonging, mirroring societal racism (Joseph-Salisbury, 2019). This legacy of the Empire contributes to the hierarchical experience of belonging in higher education whereby minority ethnic students are seen as illegitimate members of the academy; those who cannot belong and are thus excluded (Naseem, 2019). Ultimately, difficulties to belong and to relate to others, struggles in engaging with studies and with the dominant academic culture, and to connect with tutors and peers will lead to minority ethnic students' failure (e.g. Reay et al., 2005; Read et al., 2003). The reluctance, or lack of understanding on how, to reform academic syllabus will inevitably continue to contribute to poor student engagement, graduate outcomes and employability. Decolonising the curriculum, although of benefit to all students (Naseem and Zhu Hua, 2023), is central to fostering a sense of belonging among minority ethnic students which in turn will positively contribute to retention, progression and success.

Yet almost a decade since the Rhodes Must Fall campaign and despite the pressing demand from students, increasing coverage in the media and news as well as growing commitment among HE staff, only a limited number of UK universities are openly committed to decolonising work (Batty, 2020). In addition, there is very little, and often scattered, knowledge about how to translate commitment to decolonisation into practice and how to reframe knowledge and pedagogies from both an individual and institutional perspective (c.f. Keele University, Kingston University).

Therefore, this study aims to establish what work has been implementing by higher education institutions in the UK to bring the decolonising agenda at the forefront of their commitment to students from all backgrounds. It notably focuses on educational activities or initiatives that have been, or are being, conducted in an effort to decolonise higher education with a direct impact on student learning.

Methodology

Research questions

Keeping in focus the slow progress of decolonial activities and initiatives[1], this scoping study sought to answer four questions:

RQ1-Who or what is driving decolonial agenda in UK universities?

RQ2-What is the focus of decolonial activities and initiatives in UK universities?

RQ3-Who or what prevents and/or facilitates the implementation of decolonial activities and initiatives in UK universities?

RQ4- How can UK universities, at individual and institutional level, best implement decolonising activities and initiatives to promote an anti-racist and inclusive culture?

The PRISMA method

This study utilised the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) method for conducting the systematic review focused on decolonial activities in UK HE (Page et al., 2021). The PRISMA method provided a comprehensive set of guidelines to ensure transparency, rigor, and reproducibility in the review process. Three stages were implemented: (1) identification, (2) screening and (3) inclusion.

For the first step, a thorough search strategy was applied to capture the breath of evidence from the following electronic databases: Scopus, Web of Science Core Collection and ProQuest. This allowed retrieval of peer-reviewed academic articles and grey literature published between 2014 to 2022. OpenGrey was also used to access any additional grey literature. The start date for the review is reflective of the launch of 'Why is My Curriculum White?' campaign in the UK. The inclusion criteria were[2]:

1) Published peer-reviewed academic journals or grey literature
2) Earliest acceptance date or date of publication of 2014
3) Articles discussing implementation (or methodology for doing so) of decolonial activities and initiatives in UK higher education
4) Written in English language

[1] In this study, decolonial activities and initiatives refer to educational activities which have a direct link to teaching pedagogy and practice and impact on student learning and experience.
[2] For a reference to be eligible for the second screening step, all criteria needed to be met.

The key search terms included were: decolonisation, decolonising education, decolonising curriculum, decolonising higher education, decoloniality, colonialism, colonisation, transforming higher education, transforming education. For a reference to be considered for screening, these terms needed to appear in the title, abstract and/or key words.

An Excel spreadsheet was used to plan, organise and retrieve the data from all databases before the screening step. The screening and inclusion process is detailed next.

Data collection

Data collection began in May 2023. Using the above-mentioned inclusion terms, the following combination was applied to search all databases:

- decolonisation OR decolonising OR colonialism OR colonisation OR transforming
- AND education OR higher education OR university OR tertiary education OR curriculum

A total of 14,227 references were identified as follows[3]:

- ProQuest: 1,697 eligible search results
- Scopus: 878 eligible search results
- Web of Science: 11,645 eligible search results
- OpenGrey: 7 eligible search results

Three reasons for exclusion were applied during the screening process (in order):

- Reason 1: not focused on the UK
- Reason 2: not focused on higher education
- Reason 3: not related to decolonial activity/initiative implementation

A total of 113 references were identified as potentially eligible for inclusion following this screening step.

Analysis procedure

All 113 references were organised and analysed in Excel. The following information was included:

- Author(s) details
- Date of publication
- Title of reference
- Abstract

[3] Search results from ProQuest were screened first, followed by Scopus. All duplicates from ProQuest were removed from Scopus. Similarly, duplicates from ProQuest and Scopus were removed from the Web of Science list of references before screening. Total eligible references shown here include the duplicates. See Appendices C and D for details of duplicates in Scopus and Web of Science.

Each of the 113 references was downloaded and read to check for final inclusion. A total of 88 references were excluded for at the least one of the following reasons (in no particular order):

- Reason 1: no outline or discussion of activity or initiative
- Reason 2: focused on personal reflections of contribution to decolonial work
- Reason 3: recommendations made without discussion of activities implemented (i.e. based on review of personal practice without detailing it, or selective literature)
- Reason 4: reference not accessible[4]

Following this final step, a total of 25 references were included for the analysis.[5] The following table offers an overview of the screening and inclusion procedure.

Database	Total number of references screened[6]	Total number excluded following screening	Total number retrieved for reading	Total number included for analysis
ProQuest	1,697	1,684	13	4
Scopus	875	807	71	14
Web of Science	11,217	11,188	29	7
OpenGrey	7	7	-	0
			Total	**25**

Table 1: Overview of the screening and inclusion procedure

The following information was collated on the Excel file for each of the 25 references:

- Purpose of the study
- University where the research was conducted
- Course/Subject which was the focus on the decolonial activity/initiative
- Dates during which the project was conducted (or started if still on-going)
- Research questions
- Method implemented for the decolonial activity
- Results of the project
- Challenges experienced by the author(s) while conducting the project
- Recommendations for future decolonial work

[4] A total of 3 references were not accessible. See Appendix F for details.
[5] For a detailed overview of the identification, screening and inclusion process for each database, see Appendices B-E.
[6] Total shown excludes all identified duplicates. See Appendices B-E for details of duplicates.

Co-participatory approach

A co-participatory approach, whereby students and staff, collaborate was central to ensuring each and everyone's voices are included in discussions of white curriculum and knowledge production (Arday et al., 2020). A roundtable discussion[7] complemented the systematic literature review by bringing together key students and staff in UK HE to examine the ways in which policies and practice at institutional level can best support the implementation of decolonial activities and initiatives. Invitations were accepted by 5 guests:

- Two student representatives of a decolonial network at one English university[8]
- One member of staff who co-founded a decolonial project at one English university
- Chair of an anti-racist curriculum project supported by the Scottish government
- Student lead of a decolonial project at one Russell group university

The roundtable discussion took place in February 2024. Before the discussion, all guests were provided with a first report outlining the work to date. On the day, the research team presented an overview of initial findings, followed by short presentations from all guests of the work they conducted/are still involved in at their respective institutions. For the discussion, a list of questions, challenges and recommendations (as identified in the first report) was shared with all guests after the presentations (see Appendix H).

[7] The discussion was audio-recorded with ethics approval.

[8] One guest could not attend the roundtable due to poor health. An online 1-2-1 discussion was organised at a later date to gather their insights. This was not recorded; instead notes were taken.

Findings

Overview

The analysis indicates that there has been minimal *published* work detailing initiatives or activities aimed at implementing a decolonial agenda in UK universities. However, this does not imply the absence of efforts in this direction. Several references included personal reflections by individuals or teams on their decolonial activities, and some work may not have been published within the study's timeframe (or at all)[9]. Additionally, the search terms used might have limited access to references employing alternative terminology[10].

It is also noteworthy that given the diversity of meanings associated with the term 'decolonisation', it is not possible to offer a single definition that reflects the meanings within the 25 references identified for analysis. However, despite distinctions, all studies suggest that decolonising higher education involves a critical examination and restructuring of the curriculum, teaching methods and institutional role to challenge and dismantle the dominance of Eurocentric knowledge systems. Below findings from all 25 references included for analysis are detailed.

Key drivers of decolonial activities and initiatives

Five key drivers were identified as follows:

1. Institutional wide agenda
2. Individual staff
3. Staff and student
4. Library team
5. Individual or group work (staff/students/library services) as part of wider institutional agenda

In most cases, it is individual members of staff who engaged in decolonial work as outlined in the table below:

Drivers	Reference count
Institution	5
Individual staff	12
Student and staff	3
Library team	1
Individual or group work as part of wider institutional agenda	4

Table 2: Who or what is driving decolonial agenda in UK universities?

[9] For example, the work my colleagues and I started at the University of Birmingham in 2020, led to a publication only in 2023.
[10] For example, see the University of Leicester's work on racially inclusive curriculum.

Focus of decolonial activities and initiatives

Following the second screening step, it was concluded that the majority of work published in the area of decolonisation of higher education offered 1) a review of selective literature, 2) personal reflections based on the literature and/or personal contributions to this agenda, 3) a discussion of the meaning of decolonisation, 4) conceptual discussions and/or 5) insights into staff and students' experiences. These studies echoe previous research examining decolonial work in higher education worldwide (Shahjahan et al., 2021).

Appendix G offers a visual mapping of all decolonial activities identified in the 25 references. Fourteen studies unequivocally linked their decolonising efforts to the awarding gap, that is the difference between the percentage of white UK students awarded first-class or 2:1 degrees compared to their minority ethnic UK peers. However, this decolonial work translated into varied projects:

Number of references	Focus of decolonial activity
8	Curriculum[11]
6	Reading list[12]
5	Student engagement[13]
4	Holistic approach[14]
2	Library catalogue[15]

Table 3: What is the focus of decolonial activities and initiatives in UK universities?

The focus of decolonial activities differed substantially depending on the key driver of the agenda. For example, institutional wide efforts to decolonise higher education, resulted in multiple projects addressing multiple teaching and learning areas across the institution. As such, some of the 25 eligible references discussed the same institution-wide decolonial project. The table below gives an overview of these projects identifying the relevant institution where the specific project took/is taking place.

[11] Although it can be argued that reading lists are part of the curriculum, for the sake of clarity of the specific projects identified in the references, the term curriculum in this report does not include reading lists. For example, the references identified as focusing on 'curriculum' directed their work towards reviews of modules that may include content of lectures, seminars, authors selected for discussion, visual supporting material and/or teaching strategies in class. These references did not consider reading lists.

[12] These references exclusively focused on reading lists.

[13] Student engagement involved work conducted in the classroom often building on reflective and collaborative pedagogical strategies, drawing on students' experiences.

[14] A holistic approach is defined as work that considered both curriculum and reading lists across multiple modules.

[15] The term is used to identify decolonial work led by the library services teams, including physical and digital catalogues and, archives.

Focus of decolonial activity	**Name of university**
Curriculum	University of Sussex University of Nottingham King's College London Kingston University UCL No named university[16] 92 anonymised universities[17]
Reading list	University of Kent UCL (two different projects) Imperial College London University of Sussex
Holistic approach	University of York University of Exeter University of Winchester Coventry University
Student engagement	University of East London University of Bristol Royal College of Art in London University of Oxford University of Kent
Library catalogue	Goldsmiths, University of London London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

Table 4: List of universities identified as hubs of decolonial activities

The sub-sections below outline the focus of these projects in more details.

[16] This is reference 25 in Appendix A. The research team discussed teaching of quantitative methods in political sciences. As such, the team did not examine any particular university but instead focused on the subject discipline and the ways in which the teaching of political sciences can be decolonised.

[17] This is reference 8 in Appendix A. The author outlines two stages of the decolonial project they are leading. During the first stage, the author examined why and how political theory curricula might be decolonised by reviewing degrees offered at 92 universities UK wide. The author analysed one module on political theory at each of the 92 universities through publicly available information. During the second stage, the author made changes to their own module content with the aim to address the attainment gap at their respective institution. This entry under 'curriculum' acknowledges both stages of the project.

Curriculum

Studies, focused on curriculum reviews, predominantly discussed ways to incorporate concepts and knowledge from scholars from the 'Global South' into teaching and learning material and the implications these have for students and broader learning culture. These studies covered the following disciplines:

- Medicine (Wong et al., 2021; Mbaki et al., 2021)
- Political sciences (Zwiener-Collins et al., 2023; Choat, 2021)
- Geography (Nayeri and Rushton, 2022; Laing, 2021)
- Chemistry (Williams, 2022)
- Engineering (Collins, 2022)

The integration of such material involves discussion of data and examples from around the globe, though Zwiener-Collins and colleagues (2023) highlight the challenge of ensuring these examples are not superficially added without contextual understanding. For example, Collins (2022) redesigned a postgraduate software engineering module through flipped lectures on AI ethics taught through a decolonial lens, revising the reading list to include Global South authors and inviting guest speakers from diverse backgrounds; students valued the range of perspectives. Additionally, acknowledging female and minority ethnic scientists by name and photograph in lectures, as suggested by Taylor and colleagues (2021), can help address visual representation gaps, though they critique the potential for these acknowledgments to remain symbolic without deeper curriculum integration[18]. The concerns highlighted in these two studies are mirror those raised by Choat (2021) who emphasised the risk of tokenism with such incorporations in teaching material. While the importance of decolonisation is acknowledged, the tokenistic manner in which issues are considered raises questions about motivations and the extent to which 'commitments to actual racial justice' are evidenced more broadly in higher education (Shain et al., 2023, p45).

To address these concerns, an exploration of historical perspectives of concepts, data, and examples could offer a starting point in an effort to move beyond superficiality. It would foster critical thinking among students, enabling them to recognise their own assumptions and those of the scholars who produced the material they engage with. However, Zwiener-Collins and colleagues (2023) caution against an oversimplified presentation of these perspectives; the need for a critical pedagogy that challenges students to engage deeply with the material is vital (Choat, 2021).

Providing a space for students to connect their future practice to their learning can also be valuable, especially in the context of teacher education. Nayeri and Rushton (2022) argue for the importance of contextualising teaching practices within a decolonial framework but note

[18] Taylor et al. (2021) is included in the reading list category because its main focus was an audit of reading lists. It is mentioned here because the authors also discuss curriculum changes, such as naming minority ethnic scientists in lectures. The study is discussed in detail under 'Reading list' (pp12-14).

the difficulty of aligning institutional policies with these goals. Some studies also engaged in student-led mapping exercises but raised similar concerns. For example, Wong and colleagues (2021) critically examine the potential for these exercises to empower students, though they note the institutional resistance that can undermine such efforts. Similarly, Laing (2021) discusses the benefits of linking discussion of decoloniality with employability but also points out the need for sustained institutional support to ensure long-term impact. As such, institutional role and responsibility are seen as foundational in many studies. Yet, the challenges these studies point out are exacerbated by current trends that shape institutional policies, not only in the UK but also globally: opposing the idea of contextual and collective responsibility in favour of 'economic and academic globalisation' (Fomunyam, 2019, p18).

Even with institutional support the need for consistent commitment from university leadership is necessary. For example, some of the student-staff collaborations discussed in the studies are part of a broader institutional decolonial agenda, such as UCL's Liberating the Curriculum initiative (Wong et al., 2021). However, Wong and colleagues (2021) critique the uneven implementation across departments which uncovers gaps in universities responsiveness to decolonisation. Similarly, Williams (2022), who discusses the student-staff decolonising curriculum initiative at Kingston University, notes its success in reducing the awarding gap for their first-year Chemistry programme but such initiatives require ongoing evaluation and adaptation to maintain their effectiveness.

Bias in assessment and its negative impact on minority ethnic students' performance in UK universities are well-documented (e.g. Mahmud and Gagnon, 2023). Decolonising assessment, and especially assessment criteria is another aspect of the curriculum that is seen as central to the awarding gap endeavour. Laing (2021), for example, stresses the importance of this approach and considers the extent to which these hinder or facilitate students but, echoing the concerns identified in the above studies, also highlights the challenge of overcoming entrenched assessment practices that may resist change.

In an effort to support those involved in initiatives to undo the effects of colonialism and diversify their curriculum, the study by Mbaki and colleagues (2021) developed a toolbox. However, they critique the lack of widespread adoption and the need for more comprehensive training to effectively utilise these tools.

The role of the institution was also discussed by the roundtable panellists. With competition for students and reducing the awarding gaps very high on universities agenda, decolonisation needs to become central to not only universities' strategic advancements but also as their social responsibility. However, any steps taken need to be genuine, beyond face value. One staff panellist at the English university shared how their institution, which has been at the forefront of decolonial efforts, is now slowly 'backtracking' collaborative work done by staff and pointing at the 'constraints that arise from neoliberal university context' (McLean et al., 2019, p125). Feelings of frustrations were shared across the panel in terms of the role of their respective institutions and the lack of real impact, even when, the institution initiates decolonial efforts but cannot sustain these.

Reading list

The complexities surrounding the reproduction of whiteness in higher education, which disproportionately benefits white students over minority ethnic students, have gained significant attention in decolonisation efforts, especially with the rise of the widening participation agenda in the UK (Day et al., 2022). Studies focused on a review of reading lists collectively underscore the pervasive Eurocentrism in reading lists across various disciplines and recognise these as a key contributing factor to the awarding gap. They covered the following disciplines:

- Life sciences (Taylor et al., 2021)
- Social policy and religious studies (Adewumi et al., 2022; Adewumi and Mitton, 2022)
- Science and Social Sciences (Schucan Bird and Pitman, 2020)
- Public health (Skopec et al., 2021; Price et al., 2022)

All studies hypothesised that their reading lists were mainly representative of white male authors from the UK, USA and other Northwestern European countries. This hypothesis was confirmed in all instances. When minority ethnic scholars were included, these were relegated under the 'additional readings' category, evidencing systemic marginalisation.

It has long been argued that White male authors are not representative of student bodies (e.g. Ahmed, 2012). All these studies posited that perception of publications originating within Western and Nordic countries contributes to widespread and long-term disparities in higher education since these publications are considered to be more 'reliable, valuable, and useful to students' learning', leading to the under-representation of work from minority ethnic authors and/or from other geographical regions (Taylor et al., 2021, p359).

The importance of institutional role and responsibility were again highlighted in these studies. Taylor and colleagues (2021) note that merely identifying bias in reading list compilation without actionable steps limits the impact of any meaningful and long-term change to existing racial disparities in student outcome. Multiple studies used Critical Race Theory (CRT) to examine reading lists and tied these discussions to sustained institutional strategies (e.g. Adewumi et al., 2022; Adewumi and Mitton, 2022). This theoretical framework is particularly effective in highlighting systemic biases in educational reforms and yet, institutions do not fully integrate these insights into policy changes (Gillborn, 2005). A few studies conducted the review of reading lists as part of a wider institutional effort to decolonise teaching and learning (e.g. University of Kent's Diversity Mark project and toolkit discussed by Adewumi et al., 2022 and, Adewumi and Mitton, 2022; Imperial College London's two-phase project on public health programmes between 2017 and 2019 discussed by Skopec et al., 2021). However, Skopec and colleagues (2021) note the challenges in maintaining momentum for these projects once initial funding ends, echoing call for sustained change (Adewumi et al., 2022). A comprehensive institutional strategy to address these issues is needed (UUK and NUS, 2019).

The purpose of a decolonised reading list is two-fold: (1) to create a more universal collection of knowledge promoting equality and diversity in academia (Adewumi et al., 2022) and (2) to offer a space for genuine parity of participation in higher education by way of representation and recognition of all student perspectives (Schucan Bird and Pitman, 2020). Mandating a 50% gender split or a minimum representation of minority ethnic authors on the reading lists can be a start in reviewing reading lists (ibid).

Two projects developed a method for auditing the authorship on reading lists that can be replicated in other institutions and for any level of study and any subject discipline (i.e. Schucan Bird and Pitman (2020) and Price et al. (2022)). The auditing tool developed by Schucan Bird and Pitman (2020) was used at another institution and in a different subject discipline with success (Taylor et al., 2021). The method developed by Price and colleagues (2022) is focused on public health and offers a non-manual way of auditing authorship.

A key challenge of these auditing methods relates to the identification of the authors' ethnicity and the focus on specific dimensions only (i.e. gender, ethnicity and geographical affiliation). This restricts understanding of identity categories and 'inadvertently re-affirm[s] rigid and static categories of difference' to identify ethnicity of authors in reading lists (Schucan Bird and Pitman, 2020, p914). However, in the absence of explicit information to identify authors, this proposed method remains the most suited for the auditing work.

The work on reading lists is essential but for it to be effective, as suggested by the panellists, a strong anti-racist understanding is needed to the decolonial pedagogy. In that respect, work on reading lists, which is the second most important focus of decolonial work, were viewed by the panellists as 'add-ons' or 'quick fixes', but if combined with other activities (e.g. decolonial glossary) can offer a more comprehensive pedagogical approach[19].

Holistic approach

Studies focused on taking a more holistic approach, that is, focused on both reading lists and the curriculum, covered the following subject disciplines:

- Chemistry (Dessent et al., 2022)
- Law (Ohana et al., 2022)
- Forensic sciences (Chaussée, et al., 2022)
- Social Policy (Wilson et al., 2022)

[19] See a related point discussed by the panellists on language and terminology under 'Challenges and opportunities for the implementation of decolonial activities and initiatives' on page 18.

In considering all aspects of teaching and learning from lecture material to reading lists, the aim of these studies was to support teaching staff in this endeavour by developing reflective toolkits suggesting consideration of the followings:

1- The exploration of issues of race and representation
2- The origins and purpose of their disciplinary field
3- The integration of research, histories, and views from scholars across the globe
4- The development of critical approaches to authoritative texts and practices
5- Inclusive pedagogical approaches and assessment strategies

However, these toolkits merely 'scratch the surface', often failing to instigate deeper institutional change. For instance, Chaussée and colleagues (2022) highlight the persistent bureaucratic resistance that hinders progress, emphasising the lack of systemic commitment to decolonial initiatives. This fundamental issue is echoed in studies linking inadequacies to inconsistent institutional support (Wilson et al., 2022; Ohana et al., 2022). Additionally, best practice sharing involving both staff and students is critical yet remains underutilised, reflecting a broader issue of superficial engagement with decolonial efforts (Dessent et al., 2022). To address this superficiality, these studies advocate for broader and interconnected actions to achieve a more sustainable and symmetric decolonial agenda:

1- Linking curriculum review to quality assurance and programme approval processes is discussed as a central feature for this decolonial focus (Chaussée et al., 2022)
2- Provision of resources to staff (beyond the reflective toolkits) such as courses, direct guidance opportunity, webinars, workshops, while working collaboratively with teaching staff (Wilson et al., 2022; Ohana et al., 2022)
3- Best practice sharing including both staff and students (Dessent et al., 2022)

Some studies propose more systematic strategies, yet these recommendations frequently lack rigorous implementation (e.g. Dessent et al., 2022):

1- Curriculum and assessment steering group with staff and students
2- Fact finding and gathering of best practice on what decolonising a curriculum means
3- Collection of examples of good practice from current lecture courses delivered in departments, compiled into a document, and circulated to all academic staff with encouragement to consider refreshing lecture courses using similar examples
4- Compilation of a set of examples highlighting the work of Black scholars (subject-specific), circulated to academics to provide further examples for incorporation in lecture material
5- Compilation of a resource on internationally recognised scientists from across the globe
6- Commissioning of a set of photographic images to be displayed in department, highlighting the work of historic global scholars (subject-specific)

Despite these strategies, the actual impact often remains negligible, revealing a gap between proposed decolonial efforts and their effective execution within academic institutions.

Student engagement

The following disciplines were covered in studies examining student engagement:

- Fashion (Cheang and Suterwalla, 2020)
- Human Geography (Millner, 2023)
- Transport (Verlinghieri and Middleton, 2020)
- Social psychology (Castro Romero and Capella Palacios, 2020)
- Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (Thomas and Quinlan, 2023)

Four of these studies focused on experiential learning with the aim to lead to changes in students' perspectives, but they present various shortcomings. For example, Cheang and Suterwalla (2020) merged history and theory and their own lived experiences through storytelling and encouraged students to embrace this approach in order to question 'world orders' as reflected in fashion modules (p896). Millner's (2023) work also drew on experiences in the university classroom and lecture halls to engage students in discussions of the notion of 'safe'. This led to the development of a list of questions that can be given to students to respond to in order to embrace the notion of discomfort. This supports opening up to different perspectives and allowing personal experiences to become the basis of learning. While innovative, these approaches rely primarily on personal narrative, embedded in the commitment to the decolonial agenda of individual staff, which could limit its replicability across different contexts.

The raises the question as to whether or not staff can be 'trained' to be decolonial. The notion that decolonisation is a mindset (Ndhlovu, 2022) limits the possibility to offer a more rigorous and institutional wide change. This echoes a key point raised by the roundtable panellists. Reflecting on the potential to have a long-term impact of any decolonial work, they discussed the ways in which decoloniality is about the mindset and the identities of staff and students need to be considered within any project conducted to that end. It is as much as about *how* one teaches than it is about *what* one teaches.

Verlinghieri and Middleton (2020) aimed to dismantle the coloniality of knowledge by encouraging students to draw on experiences and thinking outside of the traditional knowledge boundaries. In a similar way, Castro Romero and Capella Palacios's (2020) work focused on cross-country participatory approach on decolonisation and a pedagogical exchange between students (in England and Ecuador). Such work aims to offer a space for constant class dialogue, so students can learn something from each other's experiences and perspectives. These strategies certainly challenge established academic standards and frameworks yet there are practical challenges in ensuring consistent and meaningful engagement across different contexts.

Some of these challenges could potentially be addressed by the work proposed by Thomas and Quinlan (2023) who took a more quantifiable approach to student engagement. They developed a set of four Culturally Sensitive Curriculum Scales to measure students' perceptions of their curriculum, and tested via a survey how these relate to students' interactions with teachers and interest in their programme. The aim was to establish how these dimensions may mediate effects of ethnicity on interest. Although the nuanced and complex nature of cultural sensitivity and engagement cannot easily be captured by scales and metrics, this quantitative approach offers an opportunity to provide measurable data.

Although, these studies contribute valuable insights into experiential learning and decolonisation efforts, they underscore the need for a balanced approach that combines innovative experiential learning practices with robust institutional support and academic standards to achieve meaningful and sustainable decolonial change in higher education.

The student panellists had very strong sentiments regarding student engagement and what form it should take and, the role of the institution in relation to these. Reflecting on their personal roles in decolonial projects, they concluded that the work they carried out voluntarily, at their respective institutions, did not culminate to any significant advancement, thus questioning the perceived value of student inputs and contributions. It is precisely this awareness of power structures that makes student involvement the most challenging at institutional level (Wane, et al., 2004).

Library catalogue

Only two projects at Goldsmiths, University of London and London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine have tackled decolonisation of library catalogues. Goldsmiths, University of London focused both on their digital and print collections. The project led to the creation of a dedicate space recognising and highlighting work of minority ethnic scholars[20].

London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine focused on archives used by students. It developed a set of principles to decolonise archives and drew an action plan which covers five areas: cataloguing practice; archival practice; dissemination; education; and inclusion (Cranna and Hirsch, 2021). This comprehensive approach addresses multiple facets of archival work, aiming for a more inclusive and reflective collection. These are on-going projects.

While these initiatives promote visibility and representation, they, too, risk being tokenistic if not accompanied by broader systemic changes within the library's acquisition and cataloguing practices. The sustainability of such a space and its integration into the wider academic framework of the university remains an ongoing challenge. Moreover, given the fact that these are on-going projects, the practical implementation of these principles and their long-term

[20] Students and staff can find this work via a search tag: 'liberatemydegree'.

effectiveness in transforming student engagement and academic practices are yet to be fully realised.

Challenges and opportunities for the implementation of decolonial activities and initiatives

Decolonising assessment practices, addressing systemic bias in reading lists, embedding dialogue and participatory methods and the importance of decolonising library resources provide a comprehensive framework to overcome entrenched prejudices and ensuring long-term impact, highlighting the importance of creating inclusive academic environments. Reflecting on these aspects of teaching and learning, the above studies discussed various challenges in successfully achieving these aims:

1- Resistance from module leads[21]
2- Decolonial work driven by individual activism (rather than collective responsibility)
3- Decolonial work conducted in isolation to the rest of the university
4- Disciplines having 'fallen prey' to misconceptions[22]
5- No consensus on the definitions or the extent of intervention required in decolonial work
6- Lack of on-going funding to support initiatives and projects
7- Difficulties in assessing long-term impact of workshops, webinars and other development sessions

These challenges prevent integration of concepts and knowledge from scholars from the 'Global South' to address representation gaps and foster critical thinking among students. However, several critiques emerge regarding the superficial incorporation of diverse perspectives without sufficient contextual understanding, which risks tokenism. Institutional support and responsibility are essential to ensure these initiatives move beyond tokenistic efforts and contribute meaningfully to decolonising education. The challenge of aligning institutional policies with decolonial goals, as well as the necessity for sustained commitment from university leadership, remains significant.

However, these efforts to dismantle colonial knowledge will fall short of driving deeper systemic change if these are not continuously evaluated and adapted to maintain effectiveness.

To bridge the gap between these proposed strategies and their effective execution, the roundtable panellists offered a perspective on avenues for future change. Decolonisation

[21] Resistance is covered by defensive arguments such as ''adding' work from minority ethnic scholars would be mere tokenism'; being defensive about minority ethnic students 'advising' module leads about the quality of the reading lists.
[22] Such as STEM or discipline working with quantitative data primarily whereby statistics are seen as more reliable and universally valid. See for example Chapters 6 and 7 in Mlamuli Nkosingphile Hlatshwayo and colleagues (2022) which focuses on decolonial conversations in STEM and the ways in which these are downplayed in the name of objectivity, reliability and truth.

being a 'polysemous term', a starting point could be to go back to 'basics' and reflecting on language and terminology and the context within which these are deployed (Le Grange, 2022, p10). Similarly, while anti-racism and decolonisation were seen as intersecting, questions were raised by the panel as to whether the notion of anti-racism and decolonisation should be disentangled to offer a space to reflect on different dynamics of power (Grosfoguel, 2007). The 'dilemma' came to the following: anti-racism is perceived as a too powerful term that may become a deterrent for any engagement but at the same time, there is already an anti-racism ethos and space in place in the sector which may pave a smoother way for decolonial work. There is a need for a new language to talk about decolonisation. Since decolonisation conversations are too painful, often close to personal experiences, embedded in events, there is a need to find a way to talk about decolonisation without it being a deterrent. As such language was perceived by the panellists to be central to ensuring long-term impact.

Clarity in terminology could provide a useful foundation to implement the multiple recommendations (identified in the 25 studies) that may facilitate current and/or future work (in no particular order):

1- Step-by-step instruction, based on evidence, to support teachers in higher education to start the process of analysing their modules through a critical lens
2- Ensuring diversity of teaching staff
3- Collaboration between students, academics and senior management team
4- A transparent and informed discussion of decolonial matters and how these affect learning community sector wide
5- Institutions need to support programme teams with time and resources if decolonial initiatives are encouraged centrally; otherwise, practices risk being superficial, inconsistent and asymmetric
6- Sector wide response is required
7- Introducing compulsory modules on decolonisation
8- Appointing decolonising the curriculum officers

There is a clear need for more integrated and sustained actions that include curriculum review, resource provision, and collaborative efforts among staff and students. A balanced strategy combining experiential learning with robust institutional support with practical changes to pedagogy and practice are essential for achieving sustainable decolonial change in higher education. While these set important precedents and offer a clear direction for future work, their true impact will depend on sustained institutional commitment and the integration of decolonial principles into everyday academic practices.

When concluding the roundtable discussion, the panellists drafted a list of recommendations which echoed the above recommendations, which may start to pave the way for decolonising activities and initiatives (in priority):

1. Universities' curriculum framework and quality assurance framework need to embed a clear guide for review of programmes that focus on decolonisation

2. Acknowledgment from the university of the resources required (e.g. through development of role such as decolonisation officers/leads, workload recognition)
3. Ethnic diversity in leadership
4. 'Independence' for staff engaged in decolonial activity but still supported by the institution
5. Students as co-producer of pedagogy (e.g. module reviews led in collaboration with students, regular conversations with students and involvement of students in working groups, meetings)
6. Digital and physical spaces with a record of decolonial work (to outlive the members of staff and students who may have initiated it)
7. Cross-institutional network to share practice and resources (e.g. modules that are being offered, student groups).

It goes without saying that these steps can be prey to becoming 'tick-box' exercises or 'add-ons' if colonial forms of knowledge, being and doing are not challenged in a systematic and embedded way (Gopal, 2021).

Conclusion

This report provides an in-depth exploration into the ongoing efforts to decolonise UK universities, reflecting both the challenges and progress in this vital area. The analysis suggests that more robust and committed approaches to truly decolonise higher education are needed.

Key findings indicate that decolonial activities in UK universities are often driven by individual or small groups of staff members and students who are passionate about this cause. These efforts can be supported by institutional agendas that recognise the importance of addressing colonial legacies in higher education. The primary focus areas of decolonial activities include curriculum reform, diversification of reading lists, and increased student engagement. These initiatives aim to provide a more inclusive and representative educational experience that acknowledges and values diverse perspectives.

The report emphasises the importance of a co-participatory approach, where both students and staff are actively involved in decolonial work. This collaborative effort is crucial for fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion, as it ensures that diverse voices are heard and valued. Building a decolonisation terminology among staff and students is also highlighted as a critical component of this process, as it equips individuals with the knowledge and skills to navigate and challenge the power dynamics that underpin exclusionary practices.

The development of auditing methods offers a promising avenue for systematic change, though their scalability and long-term impact require further evaluation. Overall, a sustained commitment to decolonising curricula is essential for achieving genuine equality and diversity in higher education.

The report concludes with a call to action for UK universities to remain committed to the decolonial agenda. By fostering an anti-racist and inclusive culture within higher education, institutions can create environments where all students and staff feel valued and empowered. This commitment to decolonisation is not only a moral imperative but also essential for the continued relevance and excellence of UK universities in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world. Moving forward, UK universities must sustain and advance these decolonial initiatives by implementing inclusive policies at both individual and institutional levels. This involves creating structures that support continuous learning and development in this area, as well as providing resources and platforms for ongoing dialogue and collaboration. Institutions should also consider ways to document and share successful decolonial practices, both to recognise the work being done and to provide models for others to follow.

Decolonising HE will be a long and painful process but radical change in society is needed too to address imperial mindsets. Until such a radical change takes place, universities need to become accountable as they are structurally not built to deal with the idea of decolonisation. From the limited number of projects implemented *and* published, it can be argued that not

much has been done in terms of building theory into practice. This is particularly striking given the fact that there are over 160 universities in the UK but only 17[23] are hubs of decolonial efforts *and* have published their work. Broader efforts and networks are needed to have a meaningful impact more widely in the sector. Some of the challenges highlighted above and next steps suggested during the roundtable discussion offer a direction for moving forward by creating an environment more conducive to the decolonial endeavour.

This project focused specifically on the educational dimensions of decolonial work within UK higher education institutions, particularly those related to teaching pedagogy and practice directly impacting student learning. While this focus provides a critical foundation for understanding the current decolonial climate in the sector, it did not explore institutional aspects. Notably, this review did not examine broader structural dimensions such as university strategy and policymaking, research agendas, or community engagement efforts, all of which play crucial roles in shaping a holistic and sustainable decolonial framework.

Future research could address these gaps by investigating 'top-down' approaches to decolonial work, examining how institutional strategies and policies align (or fail to do so) with grassroots efforts within pedagogy and practice. This could include exploring the extent to which (as well as how) universities prioritise the decolonisation agenda within their research strategies; the extent to which community partnerships reflect these principles; and how these efforts could contribute to systemic change over time. Such work would complement this study's findings by situating pedagogical initiatives within a broader institutional context, thereby providing a more comprehensive understanding of decolonial efforts across multiple dimensions of higher education.

[23] See Table 4 on page 10.

References

Ahmed, S. (2012). *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Arday, J. and Mirza, H.S. (2018) *Dismantling race in higher education: Racism, whiteness and decolonising the academy*. Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-60261-5

Arday, J., Zoe Belluigi, D. and Thomas, D. (2020) Attempting to break the chain: Reimaging inclusive pedagogy and decolonising the curriculum within the academy. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 53(3), pp. 298-313. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2020.1773257

Batty, D. (2020). Only a fifth of UK universities say they are 'decolonising' curriculum. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/11/only-fifth-of-uk-universities-have -said-they-will-decolonise-curriculum. [Accessed 15/07/2022]

Bhambra, G.K., Gebrial, D. and Nişancıoğlu, K. (2018). *Decolonising the university*. London: Pluto Press. http://library.oapen.org/handle/20.500.12657/25936

Bourdieu, P. (1980). L'identité et la représentation. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, *35*(1), pp.63-72.

Chikoko, V., 2021. Re-visiting the decolonising of South African higher education question: a systematic literature review. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, *35*(1), pp.21-36.

Codiroli Mcmaster, N. (2021). Ethnicity awarding gaps in UK higher education in 2019/20. *Advance HE, https://www. advance-he. ac. uk/knowledge-hub/ethnicity-awarding-gaps-uk-highereducation-201920*.

Day, A., Lee, L., Thomas, D. S., & Spickard, J. (Eds.). (2022). *Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization: Practical Tools for Improving Teaching, Research, and Scholarship*. Policy Press.

Fomunyam, K. G. (2019). *Decolonising higher education in the era of globalisation and internationalisation* (p. 291). Sun Press.

Gillborn, D. (2005). Education policy as an act of white supremacy: Whiteness, critical race theory and education reform. *Journal of education policy*, *20*(4), 485-505.

Gholami, R. (2021). Critical race theory and Islamophobia: challenging inequity in higher education, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, DOI: 10.1080/13613324.2021.1879770
Grosfoguel, R. (2007). The epistemic Decolonial turn. Cultural Studies, 21(2–3), 211–223.

Hall, R., Ansley, L., Connolly, P., Loonat, S., Patel, K., and Whitham, B. (2021). Struggling for the anti-racist university: learning from an institution-wide response to curriculum

decolonisation, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 26(7-8), pp.902-919, DOI: 10.1080/13562517.2021.1911987

Hlatshwayo, M. N., Adendorff, H., Blackie, M. A., Fataar, A., & Maluleka, P. (2022). Introducing 'decolonising knowledge and knowers'. In *Decolonising Knowledge and Knowers* (pp. 1-10). Routledge.

Jankowski, G.S. (2020). The 'Race' Awarding Gap : What can be done? *Psychology of Women Section Review*, 3 (1&2). ISSN 1466-3724

Joseph-Salisbury, R. (2019). Institutionalised whiteness, racial microaggressions and black bodies out of place in Higher Education. *Whiteness and Education*, 4(1), pp. 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1080/23793406.2019.1620629

Le Grange, L. (2023). Decolonisation and anti-racism: Challenges and opportunities for (teacher) education. *The Curriculum Journal*, *34*(1), 8-21.

Mahmud, A., and Gagnon, J. (2023). Racial disparities in student outcomes in British higher education: Examining mindsets and bias. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *28*(2), 254-269.

Mamdani, M. (2019). Decolonising Universities. In Jansen, J. (Ed) *Decolonisation in Universities: The politics of knowledge*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press. https://doi.org/10.18772/22019083351

McLean, J., Graham, M., Suchet-Pearson, S., Simon, H., Salt, J., & Parashar, A. (2019). Decolonising strategies and neoliberal dilemmas in a tertiary institution: Nurturing care-full approaches in a blended learning environment. *Geoforum*, *101*, 122-131.

Morreira, S., Luckett, K., Kumalo, S.H. and Ramgotra, M. (2020). Confronting the complexities of decolonising curricula and pedagogy in higher education. *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal*, 5(1-2), pp. 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/23802014.2020.1798278

Naseem, J. (2019). '" I Didn't Have the Luxury to Wait": Understanding the University-to-Work Transition among Second-Generations in Britain', *Social Inclusion*, 7(3), pp.270-281, https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v7i3.2033

Naseem, J. and Zhu, H. (2023). 'Inclusive Curriculum Matters: creating a decolonised curriculum through student voices in education studies' in Pulsford, M., Morris, R. and Purves, R. (eds.) *What is Education Studies? Thinking about learning and teaching on undergraduate education programmes*. London: Routledge.

Ndhlovu, F. (2022). Revisiting the true purpose of the discourse on decolonising. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, *17*(3), 240-254.

Nyamnjoh, F. B (2016). *# RhodesMustFall: Nibbling at resilient colonialism in South Africa*. Langaa RPCIG. Available at: muse.jhu.edu/book/67106. (Accessed 4 January 2022)

Page, M.J., McKenzie, J.E., Bossuyt, P.M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T.C., Mulrow, C.D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J.M., Akl, E.A., Brennan, S.E. and Chou, R. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *Systematic reviews*, 10(1), pp.1-11.

Read, B., Archer, L. and Leathwood, C. (2003). Challenging cultures? Student conceptions of 'belonging' and 'isolation' at a post-1992 university. *Studies in higher education*, 28(3), pp.261-277.

Reay, D., David, M.E. and Ball, S.J. (2005). *Degrees of choice: Class, race, gender and higher education*. Trentham Books.

Said, E. (1978). *Orientialism*. Harmondsworth: Penguin

Shahjahan, R. A., Estera, A. L., Surla, K. L., & Edwards, K. T. (2021). "Decolonizing" curriculum and pedagogy: A comparative review across disciplines and global higher education contexts. *Review of Educational Research*, *92*(1), 73-113.

Shain, F., Yıldız, Ü.K., Poku, V. and Gokay, B. (2023). From silence to 'strategic advancement': institutional responses to 'decolonising' in higher education in England. In *Possibilities and Complexities of Decolonising Higher Education* (pp. 34-50). Routledge.

UUK and NUS (2019) *Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Student Attainment at UK Universities: #Closing the Gap*. Available at: https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2019/bame-student-attainment-uk-universities-closing-the-gap.pdf. (Accessed 4 January 2022)

Wane, N., Shahjahan, R. A., & Wagner, A. (2004). Walking the talk: Decolonizing the politics of equity of knowledge and charting the course for an inclusive curriculum in higher education. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue canadienne d'études du développement*, *25*(3), 499-510.

Appendix A

Overview of all references included for analysis

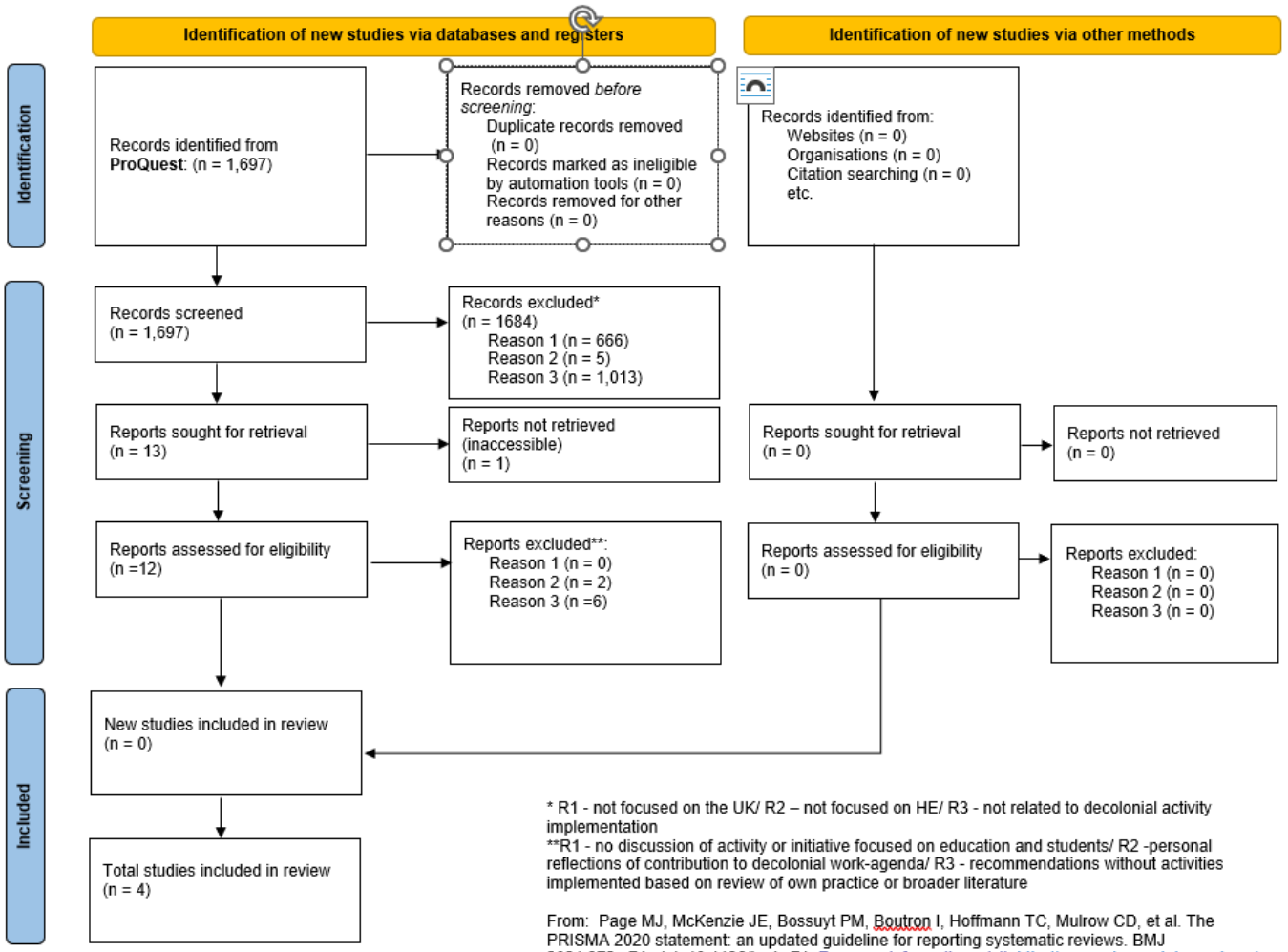
	FULL REFERENCE	DATABASE	SUBJECT	FOCUS	UNIVERSITY
1	Adewumi, B., Bailey, L. R., Mires-Richards, E., Quinlan, K. M., Agyeman, E., Alabi, A., ... & Wassamba-Wabelua, N. (2022). Cross-Disciplinary, Collaborative and Student-Led: Developing a Change Process for Diversifying Reading Lists. *London Review of Education*, *20*(1), n1.	Scopus	Social Policy And Religious Studies	Reading list	University of Kent
2	Adewumi, B., & Mitton, L. (2022). Diversifying the social policy curriculum: A collaborative approach. *Social Policy and Society*, 21(1), 54-67.	ProQuest	Social Policy	Reading list	University of Kent
3	Castro Romero, M., & Capella Palacios, M. (2020). Co-constructing a decolonising praxis in academia through dialogues and pedagogical experiences between the UK and Ecuador. *International Review of Psychiatry*, 32(4), 365-373.	Scopus	Social Psychology	Student engagement	University of East London
4	Chaussée, A. S., Winter, J., & Ayres, P. (2022). Approaches to decolonising forensic curricula. *Science & Justice*, *62*(6), 795-804.	Scopus	Forensic Sciences	Holistic Approach	University of Winchester
5	Cheang, S., & Suterwalla, S. (2020). Decolonizing the curriculum? Transformation, emotion, and positionality in teaching. *Fashion Theory*, *24*(6), 879-900.	Web of Science	Fashion	Student Engagement	Royal College of Art in London
6	Clarke, M. (2020). Liberate our Library: doing decolonisation work at Goldsmiths Library. *Art Libraries Journal*, *45*(4), 148-154.	ProQuest	Library Services	Digital catalogue	Goldsmith University
7	Collins, G. (2022). Can decolonising the curriculum provide an enhanced engineering education?. *In Towards a new future in engineering education, new scenarios that European alliances of tech universities open up* (pp. 1085-1094). Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya.	Scopus	Engineering	Curriculum	UCL
8	Choat, S. (2021). Decolonising the political theory curriculum. *Politics*, *41*(3), 404-420.	Web of Science	Politics	Curriculum	Kingston (but covered 92 universities)

9	Cranna, V., & Hirsch, L. (2021). Decolonising the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine's Archives Service. *Archives and Records*, 42(3), 248-265.	Scopus	Archives Services	Catalogue	London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine
10	Dessent, C. E., Dawood, R. A., Jones, L. C., Matharu, A. S., Smith, D. K., & Uleanya, K. O. (2022). Decolonizing the undergraduate chemistry curriculum: An account of how to start. *Journal of Chemical Education*, *99*(1), 5-9.	Web of Science	Chemistry	Holistic Approach	University of York
11	Laing, A. F. (2021). Decolonising pedagogies in undergraduate geography: Student perspectives on a decolonial movements module. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, *45*(1), 1-19.	Scopus	Geography	Curriculum	University of Sussex
12	Mbaki, Y., Todorova, E., & Hagan, P. (2021). Diversifying the medical curriculum as part of the wider decolonising effort: A proposed framework and self-assessment resource toolbox. *The Clinical Teacher*, 18(5), 459-466.	Web of Science	Medicine	Curriculum	University of Nottingham
13	Millner, N. (2023). Unsettling feelings in the classroom: scaffolding pedagogies of discomfort as part of decolonising human geography in higher education. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 47(5), 805-824.	Scopus	Human Geography	Student engagement	University of Bristol
14	Nayeri, C., & Rushton, E. A. (2022). Methodologies for Decolonising Geography Curricula in the Secondary School and in Initial Teacher Education. *London Review of Education*, 20(1), n1.	Scopus	Teacher Training (Geography)	Curriculum	King's College London
15	Ohana, N., Barazi, T., Barrett, D., Bedeau, J., Bhuckory, P., Bosch, G., ... & Walsh, K. (2022). Rationale and recommendations on decolonising the pedagogy and curriculum of the Law School at the University of Exeter. *The Law Teacher*, *56*(4), 536-551.	Scopus	Law	Holistic approach	University of Exeter
16	Price, R., Skopec, M., Mackenzie, S., Nijhoff, C., Harrison, R., Seabrook, G., & Harris, M. (2022). A novel data solution to inform curriculum decolonisation: the case of the Imperial College London Masters of Public Health. *Scientometrics*, 127(2), 1021-1037.	Scopus	Public Health	Reading list	Imperial College London
17	Skopec, M., Fyfe, M., Issa, H., Ippolito, K., Anderson, M., & Harris, M. (2021). Decolonization in a higher education STEMM institution–is 'epistemic fragility' a barrier?. *London Review of Education*, *19*(1), 1-21.	Scopus	Public Health	Reading list	Imperial College London

18	Schucan Bird, K., & Pitman, L. (2020). How diverse is your reading list? Exploring issues of representation and decolonisation in the UK. *Higher Education*, 79(5), 903-920.	ProQuest	Science and Social Sciences	Reading list	UCL
19	Taylor, M., Hung, J., Che, T. E., Akinbosede, D., Petherick, K. J., & Pranjol, M. Z. I. (2021). Laying the groundwork to investigate diversity of life sciences reading lists in higher education and its link to awarding gaps. *Education Sciences*, *11*(7), 359.	ProQuest	Life Sciences	Reading list	University of Sussex
20	Thomas, D. S., & Quinlan, K. M. (2023). Reimagining curricula: Effects of cultural (in) sensitivity of curricula on racially minoritised students' engagement. *Studies in Higher Education*, *48*(2), 283-298.	Web of Science	Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences	Student engagement	University of Kent
21	Verlinghieri, E., & Middleton, J. (2020). Decolonising and provincializing knowledge within the neoliberal university? The challenge of teaching about sustainable transport. *Journal of Transport Geography*, *88*, 102785.	Web of Science	Transport	Student engagement	University of Oxford
22	Williams, N. A. (2022). Using an inclusive curriculum framework to address an awarding gap in a first-year chemistry module. *Journal of Chemical Education*, 99(1), 171-176.	Web of Science	Environmental And Inorganic Chemistry	Curriculum	Kingston University
23	Wilson, C., Broughan, C., & Daly, G. (2022). Case study: Decolonising the curriculum–An exemplification. *Social Policy and Society*, *21*(1), 142-150.	Scopus	Social Policy	Holistic Approach	Coventry University
24	Wong, S. H., Gishen, F., & Lokugamage, A. U. (2021). 'Decolonising the Medical Curriculum ': Humanising medicine through epistemic pluralism, cultural safety and critical consciousness. *London review of education*, 19(1).	Scopus	Medicine	Curriculum	UCL
25	Zwiener-Collins, N., Jafri, J., Saini, R., & Poulter, T. (2023). Decolonising quantitative research methods pedagogy: Teaching contemporary politics to challenge hierarchies from data. *Politics*, 43(1), 122-138.	Scopus	Political Sciences	Curriculum (with focus on quantitative methods)	N/A

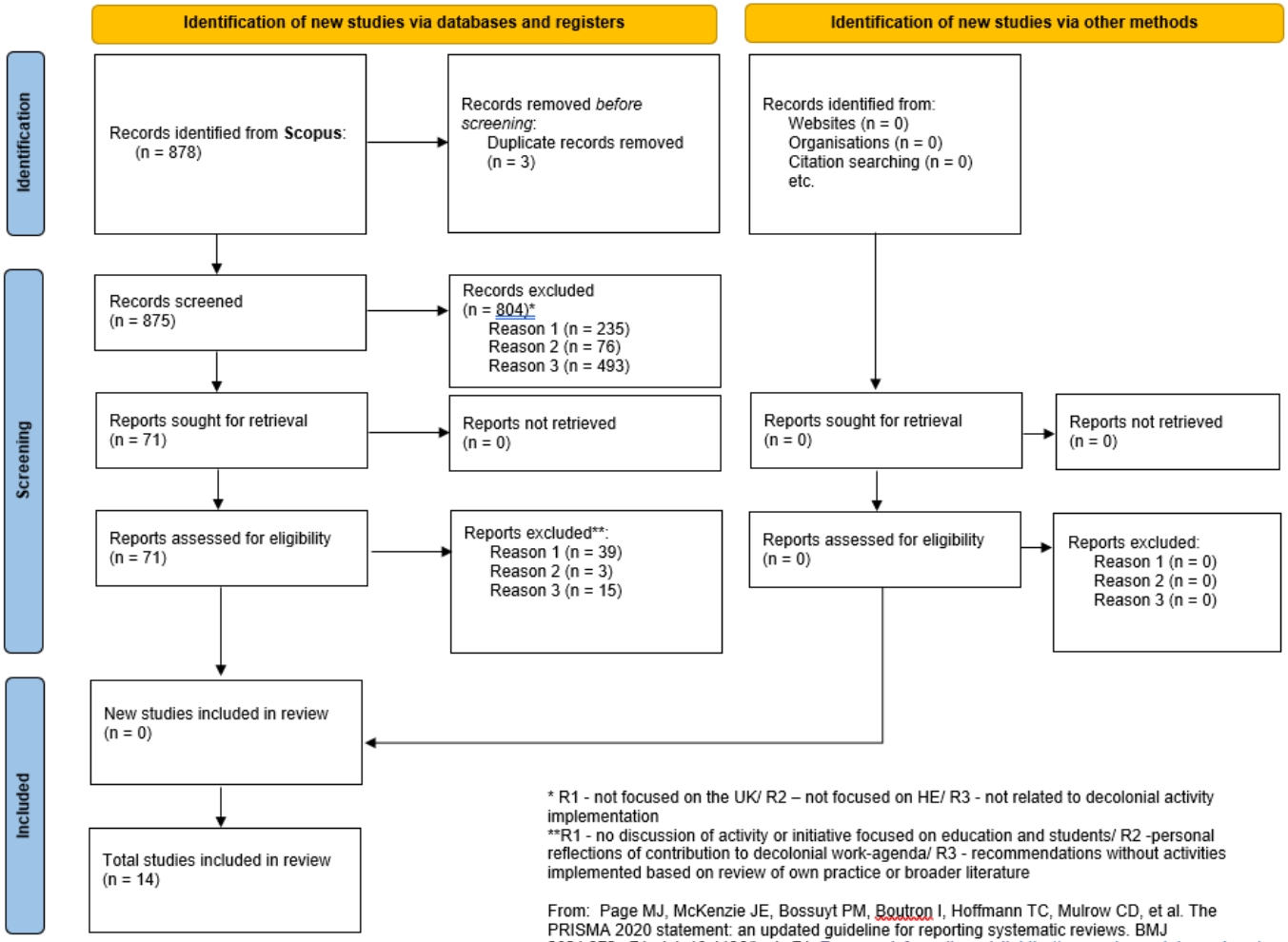
Appendix B

PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for updated systematic reviews which included searches of databases, registers and other sources



Appendix C

PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for updated systematic reviews which included searches of databases, registers and other sources

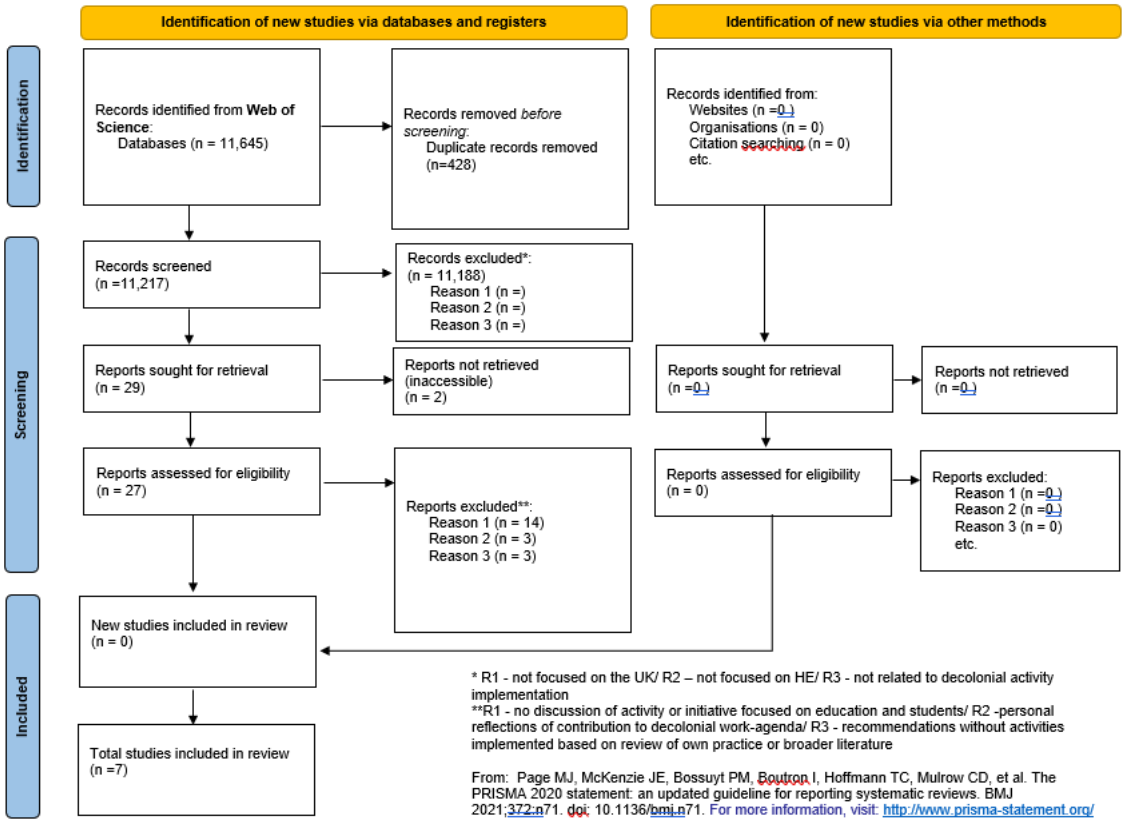


* R1 - not focused on the UK/ R2 – not focused on HE/ R3 - not related to decolonial activity implementation
**R1 - no discussion of activity or initiative focused on education and students/ R2 -personal reflections of contribution to decolonial work-agenda/ R3 - recommendations without activities implemented based on review of own practice or broader literature

From: Page MJ, McKenzie JE, Bossuyt PM, Boutron I, Hoffmann TC, Mulrow CD, et al. The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. BMJ 2021;372:n71. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n71. For more information, visit: http://www.prisma-statement.org/

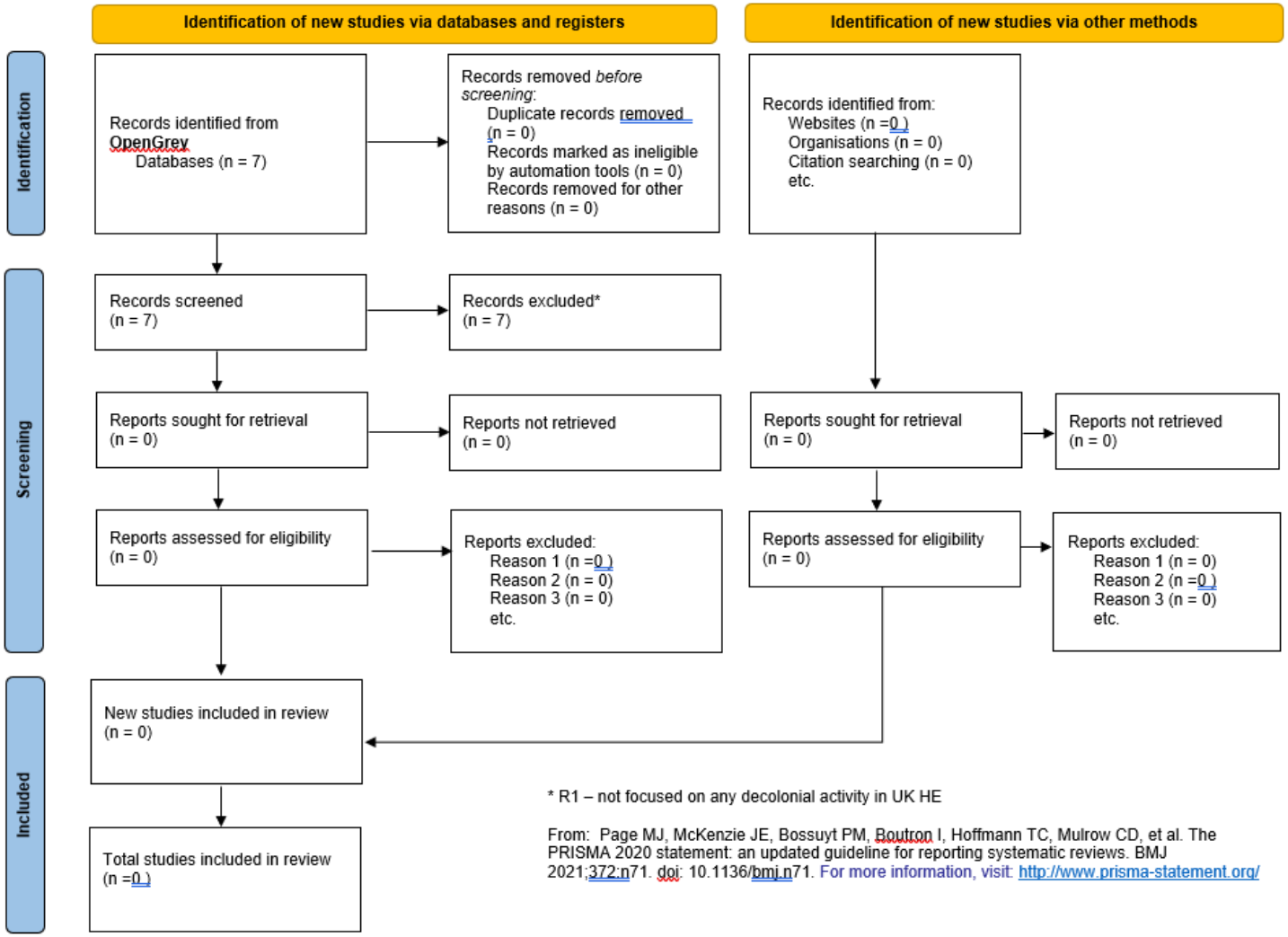
Appendix D

PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for updated systematic reviews which included searches of databases, registers and other sources



Appendix E

PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for updated systematic reviews which included searches of databases, registers and other sources



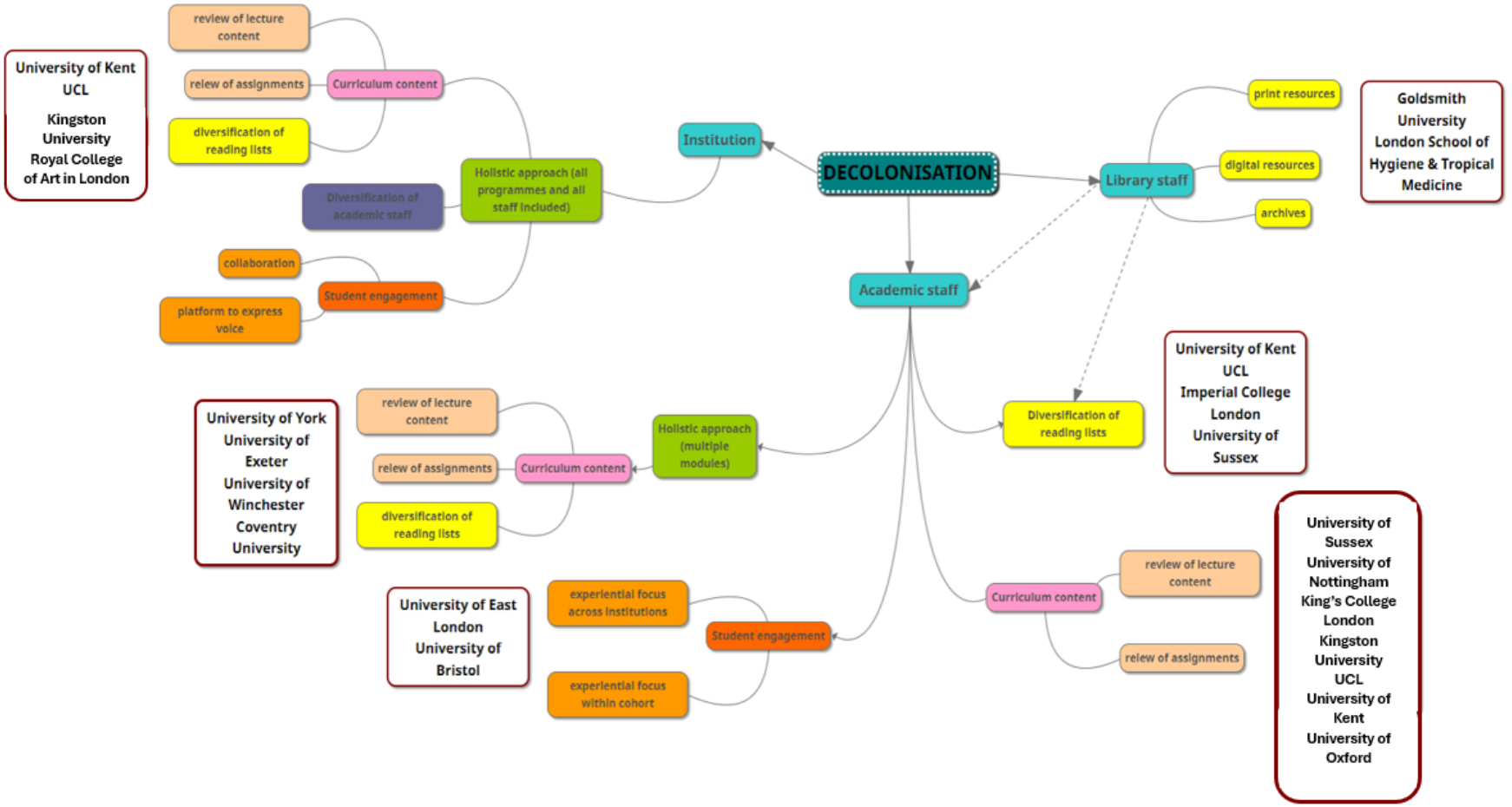
Appendix F

List of references inaccessible for review

	TITLE	AUTHOR	DATE	DATABASE	REASON
1	Decolonising education	No author listed	No date	ProQuest	Not identifiable for search
2	Diversifying Occupational Therapy Education Through Collaborative Decolonisation of Curricula	Lau et al.	2021	Web of Science	Not available online
3	Developing a decolonising occupational therapy curriculum checklist	Thomson et al.	2021	Web of Science	Conference paper not available for review

Appendix G

Mapping of Decolonial Activities



Appendix H

Questions for the roundtable discussion

Research questions

1. Who or what is driving decolonial agenda in UK universities?
2. What is the focus of decolonial activities and initiatives in UK universities?
3. Who or what prevents and/or facilitates the implementation of decolonial activities and initiatives in UK universities?
4. How can UK universities, at individual and institutional level, best implement decolonising activities and initiatives to promote an anti-racist and inclusive culture?

Some initial answers

1. Individual staff or isolated teams
2. Priority is given to a comprehensive approach including more than just reading list
3. Isolated efforts, lack of resources and support
4. ?

New questions

1. Why is this an isolated effort (i.e. individual activism)?
2. Why engage in a comprehensive approach? If it is important, why are colleagues focused on reading lists?
3. Can challenges be overcome? If so, how? Are recommendations realistic?
4. How can UK universities, at individual and institutional level, best implement decolonising activities and initiatives to promote an anti-racist and inclusive culture?

List of Challenges

1. Resistance
2. Individual activism
3. Isolated efforts
4. Misconception in certain disciplines
5. Lack of consensus
6. Lack of funding
7. Absence of evaluation of long-term impact

List of Recommendations

1. Step-by-step guidance
2. Diversification of staff
3. Collaboration between staff, students and SMT
4. University's formal commitment
5. Recognition of decolonial work in times and resource allocation
6. Introduction of compulsory modules
7. Appointment of decolonising curriculum officers
8. Sector wide response need

This page has been left blank intentionally.