



UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

INSTITUTE FOR
SUSTAINABILITY LEADERSHIP

Equality Action Plan: Stage 1

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What is the vision?

“Racism is unacceptable. It undermines societies, it divides communities, and it prevents people from coming together with a shared purpose”.

Professor Stephen J Toope Vice-Chancellor, University of Cambridge

Without diversity and inclusion, we lack the perspectives, knowledge, skills and collaborative culture essential to thrive.

CISL works to accelerate leadership and solutions for truly sustainable societies and economies. We cannot deliver better outcomes and influence others to act if we fail to counter racism and structural injustice.

I want CISL to be a leader in defending and embracing equality and opportunity. This is central to our purpose, our values and the long-term impact we pursue for people and planet.

For decades, our education programmes have brought the scourge of inequality to the attention of business audiences. However, our own research tells us that we have much more to do to improve our own practices.

- **We need to unlock greater participation of people from ethnically diverse and underserved backgrounds across our work.**
- **We need to attract and support fuller representation of diverse voices across our staff, our partners and our global network.**
- **We need to use our influence - as an employer, a University institute, a client and a partner - to challenge and call out racism and exclusion in all their forms.**

This Equality Action Plan commits CISL to take action, measure progress and be open about what is working or not.

2021 laid important foundations and you can find out about our progress at the end of this report. The Plan’s delivery group now brings together 16 staff and Fellows from across the world. We recognise this is only the start. We are committed to listen, act and be open to change as we follow this path and learn from our global community.

Clare Shine

CEO and Director

Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership



The Scope

We recognise that racism is just one of many historic inequalities in society, many of which are interrelated. As we move forward with this action plan we will undoubtedly find more to do in other areas such as gender equality, fair treatment of disabled people, of LGBTQ+ people, of different religions and other differences in the population.

The first stage of CISL's Equality Action Plan focuses on racial equality. Through the plan we have sought to unlock greater participation of people from ethnically diverse backgrounds in our work, ensure fuller representation of their voices, and do our utmost to counter racism as an employer, client and partner.

The plan was drawn up following a staff survey conducted in 2020 CISL where staff were asked to share their perspectives on racism – in particular what they felt CISL could do at an individual staff member and organisational level to: ensure people are treated equally irrespective of colour; reduce systemic barriers that people from ethnically diverse backgrounds may face in working with us; develop insight into racism and fluidity in representing the issues, and advocate for broader in societal change.



Equality Action Plan Delivery Group

In 2020 CISL established a new Equality Action Plan Delivery Group which has responsibility for implementing CISL's Equality Action Plan. Through CISL's Director and CEO, Clare Shine, the group is accountable for making progress to CISL's Management Board. Delivery of individual areas of the plan is led by identified internal Champions, representing all teams across CISL, and is chaired by CISL's Executive Director, Jake Reynolds. The group is responsible for promoting, championing and encouraging all of the actions identified in the plan and monitoring activity against them on a regular basis. The group also considers the future strategic agenda relating to diversity, inclusion and equality and advises on further actions to help CISL progress in these areas.

The next stage of the Equality Action Plan Delivery Group will focus on expanding the scope of the EAP to include a broader perspective on equality, diversity and inclusion – allowing us to continue to take action against racism, but also address issues of income, age, gender, faith and sexuality.

A key focus of the group will be on consolidating existing actions of the EAP in light of 12 months experience of delivery; and accommodating new actions resulting from the wider scope.

This year CISL has launched an Equalities Forum, which will provide a safe and open space for staff from minority groups to discuss their experiences with each other (and wider colleagues), surfacing suggestions and feeding back to the Equality Action Plan Delivery Group where action is required.

We invite all staff interested in celebrating and promoting progress and race justice and equality to participate in our Equality Action Plan Delivery Group and the Equalities Forum.



“Until recently the sustainability movement could hardly be described as geographically or ethnically diverse, hampering its ability to understand social justice as integral, in fact central, to its mission to improve planet Earth. We are now discovering how significant this gap is, and how important it is to place people at the heart of the movement – not only because this is morally correct, but that it also improves our ability to safeguard the environment.”

Jake Reynolds Executive Director, Sustainable Economy, CISL



“Diversity & inclusion fuels innovation and strengthens resilience. It not only mitigates against the risk of system collapse, but is also the essence for evolutionary adaptation. For example, in biologically diverse forests, this complexity allows organisms to adapt to continually changing environmental conditions and to maintain ecosystem functions. Similarly, when organisations can deploy a range of perspectives and ideas, it allows for constant variation and experimentation with products and strategies —essential in maintaining fitness and staying future-proof in a constantly changing environment.”

Jie Zhou Programme Manager for CISL's Accelerator Programme



“I have enjoyed being part of the EAP delivery group which has considered diversity and inclusion with great honesty and openness, creating an outcome focused plan underpinned by ambitious action. These are great foundations for the start of our work on this important topic and fundamental to creating a more sustainable and equitable society.”

Munish Datta CISL Fellow and Director at UK Green Building Council



“Placing diversity and inclusion at the heart of our work is essential to successfully accelerate transformation towards more sustainable economies and societies. Fostering this change, I look forward to continuing supporting the work of the Equality Action Plan delivery group. Working with our colleagues, partners and contributors from across the globe, we will jointly scale up action on D&I.”

Krisztina Zálnoky Research Project Manager at CISL’s Centre for Policy and Industrial Transformation



“I’m struck at the opportunities we have to integrate diversity and inclusion in what we do and how we do it. This Equality Action Plan is a positive step towards that, with early gains that are highlighted in this report and to be celebrated. Yet there is lots of work to continue, from continue our learning on the subject, developing a collective understanding of diversity and inclusion in the organisation, as well as more on what we can do to tackle these issues. I look forward to seeing further progress in the next stage of the Plan.”

Tahmid Chowdhury CISL Programme Manager

Priorities for Action





We aim to ensure our staff reflect the diversity of society, strengthening ourselves in the process.

While we do not currently collect data on ethnicity directly at CISL, we recognise that a high percentage of CISL staff are likely to self-identify as ‘white’. Progress with diversity will require changes to the way we recruit (and retain) staff, and make ourselves attractive to employees from diverse backgrounds. We encourage staff, in particular new starters to CISL to share their ethnicity on the university’s Employee Self Service System portal to help us work towards this goal.

Under the Equalities Act 2010 we are permitted to take ‘positive action’ but not ‘positive discrimination’. In other words, we cannot bias recruitment in favour of a specific group but can work actively to attract a diverse pool of applicants and remove barriers (including perceived barriers) to working at CISL, the University more generally, and within the sustainability field.

Actions

Produce equity and diversity policy for CISL, drawing on the University’s existing policy and guidance.
Compile anonymised ethnicity data from staff, and report internally Management Board
Create a new web page on equality and diversity, stating that we aim to promote and integrate equal opportunities as an employer with all the strengths that brings.
Enhance CISL’s statement used in all recruitment literature welcoming applications from ethnically diverse backgrounds.
Ensure adverts, role profiles and other literature are accessible and do not restrict candidate pools unnecessarily
Proactively reach out to under-represented audiences during recruitment
Advocate the use of use of ‘blind’ HR processes to the University’s central HR team to eliminate attributes of candidates that reveal ethnicity, gender or other protected characteristics, and monitor success rates.
Commission training on Equality & Diversity for all staff, building on the University’s provision.
Review availability of specialist partners to shape the design of a CISL internship scheme with a view to attracting a more diverse workforce, drawing on the central University equalities and diversity team.



We aim to ensure our partners reflect the diversity of society, strengthening ourselves in the transformation.

A similar ‘diversity challenge’ exists with CISL’s Senior Associates, CISL Fellows and contributors. While we do not currently collect data on ethnicity, we suspect the representation of our Senior Associates and CISL Fellows is broadly similar to our staff: about 90 per cent white representation in both groups. This means it is not representative of the UK population (roughly 14 per cent ethnically diverse), or the global population where almost 60 per cent is Asian, 14 per cent is African, while Europe and North America combined account for 18 per cent. Given that our mission is inherently international, it is important to acknowledge our comparative lack of diversity even if it would be unrealistic to target diversity on that scale. The fact that we lag UK diversity suggests we have room for improvement in the way we source our CISL Fellows, Senior Associates and contributors in future.

Actions

Request ethnicity data when renewing CISL Senior Associate and Fellow appointments/renewals, and contributor contracts, and (voluntarily) report internally to Management Board.
Proactively search for a more diverse pool of Senior Associates, CISL Fellows and contributors through specialist channels, foundations and professional bodies.
Provide a welcoming statement on our jobs page (and associated social media) to encourage applications from ethnically diverse people.



We aim to ensure our work touches a wide cross-section of society for mutual benefit.

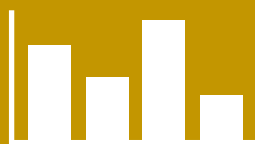
Access to our services is constrained by a number of factors including the cost of our services, which is a significant barrier to achieving greater diversity among our graduate students. Membership fees for CISL’s leadership groups tend to exclude firms based in lower-income countries. Through this plan we will explore how we can we increase the uptake of our services by ethnically diverse people through differential pricing (for example bursary schemes in the case of education) without compromising service quality.

Sustainability as a profession is perceived to lack racial diversity. This is a well-known phenomenon that needs to be addressed by the sustainability movement, reflecting the state of economic security and the stability and career preferences of its participants. Through this plan, we will project a welcoming message to people from ethnically diverse (and other disadvantaged) backgrounds, addressing misperceptions. In addition, the nature of the organisations we work with (large companies) and the seniority of people we engage means we operate above a glass ceiling that already exists for people from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Through this plan we will use our privileged access to these companies to shine a light on the issues more forcefully. Ensuring that people from ethnically diverse, as well as other minority, backgrounds are aware of our services, see them as relevant and see the potential for access is key.

Actions

Prepare fundable concept to attract external investment in larger-scale bursary and scholarship programmes.
Design facility for offering discounted places on some education programmes for learners from ethnically diverse backgrounds, with agreed selection criteria and application review mechanisms.
Critically assess where we are marketing our products and explore different channels to broaden awareness. This could include outreach to or partnership with specialist networks and diversity organisations.
Include a statement on our web site setting out our policy on equalities and diversity (including but not limited to race), the standards we expect our suppliers to uphold, and how we are seeking more ethnically diverse participation in our client-facing work.
Create visible role models by ensuring greater diversity of speakers at events/panels and education programmes.
Proactively encourage clients to field diverse colleagues for education programmes or project/platform roles, creating further role models.

Priority 4: Content and representation



We aim to ensure our content positively represents people from ethnically diverse backgrounds, while positioning inequalities – including racism – as a core concern in sustainability.

Positioning inequality – including racism – as a core challenge to sustainability is integral to CISL’s strategy. However, we recognise that our skills and capabilities in this area are currently limited and we need to invest in new content to build our understanding and profile, alongside the diversification of our intellectual community (staff, Senior Associates, CISL Fellows, contributors and partners). New research, publications, learning materials and wider content will be required and it is critical that we represent people from ethnically diverse backgrounds positively within it, avoiding stereotypes. Through this plan we will deepen our understanding further to be in a better position to critically review the messages, imagery and tone of all of our content – existing and new – with a view to projecting a consistently strong message about equality, inclusion and anti-racism, including content from third parties (eg faculty, speakers) who should align with our values. Lastly, we also have an opportunity to convene ideas on sustainability leadership beyond the usual Western orthodox, assisted by our increasing diversity.

Actions

As far as possible track the representation of contributors to all programmes as we contract them in order to better understand where improvements are needed.

Ensure all education programmes and external events actively seek contributors from diverse backgrounds.

Ensure we avoid tokenism when arranging contributors, or association of ethnically diverse contributors purely with racism, inequality or global development issues.

Continue to ensure our marketing materials, imagery, case studies and testimonials represent people from ethnically diverse backgrounds positively, avoiding stereotypes.

Continue to ensure our content does not perpetuate white saviour narratives or negative stereotypes of different parts of the world.

Include CISL’s equality and diversity policy with all suppliers, contributors, clients and partners to ensure our values are understood.

Advance the theme of ‘inclusive societies’ through our research, education and engagement activities.

Develop topics for education curricular that present equality and diversity as a key aspect of leadership, drawing on evidence from within and beyond CISL.

Where appropriate pedagogically, focus on racism in our education programmes to challenge current and future leaders to counter it in their domains.



We aim to counter racism in our external communications and partnerships, strengthening our profile on a critical sustainability concern.

The majority of this plan focuses on improving our internal practices as an organisation to ensure we play an active part in countering racism through our employment practices and core services. Being confident that we understand the issues and are taking appropriate action to develop our practice will put us in a stronger position to engage others externally.

Actions

Formulate a clear, timetabled approach to integrating the aims of this action plan in our public communications, network strategy and stakeholder engagement.
Create explicit, public-facing communication on our web site setting out our views on race, racism, diversity and inclusion.
Offer leadership development programmes that are accessible and relevant to people from ethnically diverse backgrounds.
Create regular updates on progress against this plan to staff and CISL’s network
Identify & celebrate initiatives that promote diversity and inclusivity from university and other CISL partners
When appropriate take a stance on racism externally e.g. through public statements, built on strong policy and action internally to ensure authenticity.
Ensure goals of plan are integrated into CISL org strategy (particularly its focus on people), CISL content strategy, CISL spokesperson strategy, CISL network strategy, CISL supplier policy, CISL’s people & development plan.
Agree principles for ensuring diversity at CISL events, our content & campaigns. Ensure we continue to develop a range of CISL spokespeople from diverse backgrounds for media and events.

2021 highlights



Diversity at work

The jobs section of the [CISL website](#) as well as all CISL job adverts now includes a diversity statement outlining CISL's aim to be a diverse employer with all the strengths that brings and encourage diverse applications



Diversity of partners

CISL has gathered data from 100 contributors and shared this data with CISL's Management Board. The Ethnicity field is now on CISL's CRM, which will soon be an updated to enable the capturing of ethnicity data and themes.



Access to services

CISL has established three [bursaries](#) with Chanel, Lucy Cavendish College and Darwin with a focus on increasing diversity on CISL's Master of Studies in Sustainability Leadership. CISL has also implemented a centralised approach to bursary management and is piloting an 'external' bursary decision panel for 2022/23 entry.



Content and representation

Over 60% of contributors to CISL's newest online course - [Women Leading Change: Shaping our Future](#) - are people from minority backgrounds. For most, it will be their first engagement with CISL and the University of Cambridge. CISL's showcase campaign for COP26, [#AchievingZero](#), included ethnically diverse voices from around the world on the leadership needed to accelerate climate action. This approach will be adopted for future CISL campaigns.



Advocacy

CISL has agreed its 2022 communications strategy for communicating its position and progress against this Equality Action Plan; profiling the diversity of CISL and its people and ensuring the plan's goals are integrated into CISL's organisational strategy.

Further Information

Contact the CISL's Equality Action Plan Delivery Group and Equality Forum at:
equality.action@cisl.cam.ac.uk

Contact the University of Cambridge's Equality and Diversity team at:
equality@admin.cam.ac.uk

Find out more about the University of Cambridge's Race Equality Plan here:
www.race-equality.admin.cam.ac.uk

Find out more about the University's Race Equality Network here:
www.race-equality.admin.cam.ac.uk/staff-network