



Australian  
National  
University

# **Racism & Racial Discrimination in Australian Universities: Report on the Racism@Uni Survey**

## **Part B: Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Responses to Question F12**

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The Report contains quotes and examples that some readers may find distressing and may contain harmful language and potentially racist content. Reader discretion is advised.

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## 1. Introduction

The Racism@Uni survey offers a detailed examination of racism in Australian universities, integrating structured survey items with open-ended qualitative questions.<sup>1</sup> In Part A, the quantitative component captured the range and perceived foundations of racism experienced by domestic and international students and academic and professional staff, asking respondents about exposure to racist language, jokes, comments, cultural denigration, stereotyping, and the trivialisation or blaming of racialised individuals for adverse outcome. The items reflect a continuum of racialised experiences, from casual racism and microaggressions, to overt hostility and cultural invalidation.<sup>2</sup> Additional questions explored whether these experiences were perceived to be due to the following factors: language or accent, cultural or racial background, skin colour, religion, and/or global political factors, such as conflicts in the Middle East or COVID-related racialisation. This approach recognises that racism in universities is not monolithic but shaped by intersectional and transnational factors. Collectively, these indicators offer a structured framework for assessing the prevalence and multidimensional nature of racism (Berman & Paradies, 2010; Essed, 2018).

The open-ended qualitative questions were designed to provide insight into respondents' experiences and observations of racism, how these experiences affected their study or employment at the university, and their views on addressing racism and improving inclusivity and equity.<sup>3</sup> Collectively these questions yielded more than 18,000 open-ended responses.<sup>[1]</sup> This document presents a thematic analysis of this large qualitative dataset. Through the thematic analysis of responses to the questions at F12, it was possible to gain not only an understanding of the complex lived experiences of individuals affected by racism, but also the attitudes of respondents toward the topic of racism in Australian university settings and how it could be addressed.

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<sup>1</sup> The authors wish to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of Professor Lorana Bartels, Associate Professor Elfie Shiosaki, Professor Karima Laachir, Associate Professor Bernie Baffour, Dr Francis Markham, Kate Doery, and Dr Rob Bray to the development and writing of this report, including the detailed feedback they provided on its framing and content.

<sup>2</sup> Hundreds of respondents used the term "casual racism" to describe the type of racism experienced. Section 3.2 analyses how this term is used, and its meaning in the context of the racism at Australian universities.

<sup>3</sup> Originally, the survey design included a single open-text question on university approaches to addressing racism. Following feedback from the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Research Ethics Committee, this item was revised to randomly assign respondents to one of three related open-text questions. Random allocation of following three questions: *[in proportion shown]*

(50%) Thinking about your experiences, do you have any suggestions for how [insert university] could address racism or improve inclusivity and equity?

(25%) If you have experienced being subject to, or seeing and hearing racism and/or racial discrimination at [insert university], is there anything else you would like to say about your experience?

(25%) If you have experienced racism and/or racial discrimination at [insert university], do you wish to say anything else about how this affected your university student or employment experience?

This 50/25/25% allocation ensured an even distribution of responses across the topics, enhancing representativeness while maintaining survey efficiency. The approach enabled the capture of both institutional and individual perspectives without increasing respondent burden.

While respondents used the opportunity provided by the open-ended questions to go beyond the scope of the three questions asked, and there was a richness to this data beyond what is described here, this part of the report is limited to what respondents had to say about their firsthand experiences of racism or racial discrimination, how those experiences of racism affect their university student or employment experiences, and their suggestions for how universities could address racism or improve inclusivity and equity. It is important to note though that the questions at F12 captured respondents' subjective perceptions of what they experienced.<sup>4</sup> These responses shed light on how respondents interpret and make meaning of their encounters in university settings.

In line with the scope of the Racism@Uni survey, the thematic analysis was focused on drawing insights into:

- (a) the prevalence, nature, and experiences of racism within universities (including those with dual-sector operations) affecting both students and staff, at both individual and systemic levels,
- (b) the specific cohorts of students and staff who encounter racism, particularly highlighting distinct incidents of antisemitism and Islamophobia, as well as the experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples, individuals from other negatively racialised backgrounds, and international students, and
- (c) the unique contexts and circumstances of racism experienced by different groups of students and staff.

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) identified several specific communities of interest for the Racism@Uni survey, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, Jewish communities, Muslim communities, Palestinian communities, Middle Eastern communities, South Asian, South-East Asian, and East Asian communities, African communities, Pasifika communities, and international student communities. Henceforth these are referred to as the identified communities.

#### Qualitative Data Analysis Method

The questions at F12 in the Racism@Uni survey yielded 18,663 responses totalling 1,372,557 words. Thematic analysis, a widely used qualitative data analysis method, was used to analyse this big qualitative data set.

In conducting a qualitative thematic analysis of the open-ended question at the end of the Racism@Uni survey, the goal was to systematically identify and interpret recurring patterns in how racism manifests for and impacts different communities. Since replies to a single question are often concise and varied, this approach prioritises breadth over depth, capturing a wide range of perspectives on racism at universities rather than detailed personal narratives. This approach allowed the qualitative researchers to generate insights into the nature and prevalence of racism by identifying common experiences and perceptions across a diverse group of respondents.

Thematic analysis allowed the qualitative researchers to identify patterns in encounters with racism, including microaggressions, overt discrimination, and exclusionary practices. It also facilitated exploring systemic issues beyond individual experiences, highlighting themes related to institutional policies, inadequate cultural safety, and marginalising curricula and practices. This analysis revealed the intersections of various forms of racism and demonstrated how experiences differ based on roles (e.g., students versus staff) and identities (e.g., Jewish, Muslim, Aboriginal, and Torres Strait Islander communities). While thematic analysis does not yield statistical data, the frequency and

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<sup>4</sup> The report is not making determinations or judgements on whether experiences as reported via Question F12 in the Survey are 'racism' or 'racial discrimination' in the legal sense. This Appendix is setting out respondent's experiences and perspectives as they were reported via their response to Question F12 in the Survey.

emotional resonance of identified themes offer valuable insights into the prevalence of racism in university environments. Through the thematic analysis of responses to the questions in F12, it was possible to gain not only an understanding of the complex lived experiences of individuals affected by racism and the unique context and circumstances of racism for different groups of students and staff, but also the attitudes of respondents toward the topic of racism in Australian university settings and how it could be addressed.

The process began with familiarisation, where two qualitative researchers read through a sub-set of responses multiple times to develop an overall sense of tone and content. This step enabled the researchers to note types of racism and recurring experiences, such as microaggressions, lack of institutional support, or curriculum bias, and reflect on their initial impressions of how racism is experienced or described. Then to facilitate the analysis of the experience of each of the identified communities, the full qualitative data set was split into separate community spreadsheets. The list of communities included the AHRC's identified communities, as well as others. The data from the communities outside the AHRC's scope - Americas, Southern European and other Indigenous – have contributed to the development of the general themes but no separate analysis of the experiences of these communities is presented here. Responses by international students were not gathered into a separate spreadsheet, but were considered as a subset of responses from each identified community.

The next step was initial coding. The qualitative researchers read through the sheet of F12 responses for each separate community, reviewing responses line by line, and identifying descriptive codes for segments of text that capture meaningful content. During this phase, codes remained close to the data and were often brief factual labels, such as “racial jokes,” “social exclusion from group work,” “lack of representation in leadership,” etc. These initial codes were then refined and grouped into broader categories representing different types of racism. For instance, categories were identified like interpersonal racism (including microaggressions and overt discrimination), institutional racism (biased policies or complaint systems), cultural or epistemic racism (Eurocentric curricula or tokenistic inclusion), responses and impact (emotional distress or academic impacts) and suggestions for improvement (see Appendix 1).

Within these categories, broad themes were developed to express the main patterns emerging from the data. In this context, themes included: everyday racism and microaggressions, highlighting subtle yet pervasive discriminatory behaviour; institutional neglect and bureaucratic barriers, capturing respondents' perceptions of inaction by university structures; curricular exclusion and Eurocentrism, emphasising how teaching materials reinforce racial hierarchies; the psychological toll and coping, reflecting the emotional and academic consequences of racism; and calls for accountability and reform, expressing the demand for systemic change. Each theme was supported by illustrative quotes that convey respondents' voices and demonstrate how these patterns manifest in university life.

As demographic and contextual information was available, such as respondents' country of birth, gender and whether they were an academic staff member, professional staff member, domestic student or international student, cross-analysis was conducted to compare how themes appear across different groups within each community. For instance, students describe exclusion from group work, while professional staff or academic staff emphasised institutional racism in hiring or promotion processes. Such comparative insights enhance understanding of how racism operates at different levels of the academic environment.

Unlike quantitative measures that gauge frequency, respondents' narratives expose how racism unfolds in everyday university life, including in teaching and learning settings, professional service settings, and academic departments, schools and disciplines. The analysis of these narratives shows that racism is normalised, often subtle, and embedded in the

institutional culture of Australian universities. Collectively, the qualitative data reveal patterned, repeated, and interconnected experiences across Australian universities. They confirm the commonality of experiences of racism. Negatively racialised students and staff are navigating racism that is institutional, structural, and cultural; not merely interpersonal.

From the qualitative data, important differences can be seen in how the various identified communities (see Chapter 2, Part A) experience racism within university settings. These differences are shaped by each group's historical background, cultural identity, and social context, which influence both the form and the impact of racism. While all identified communities encounter racism, it manifests in distinct ways, from overt discrimination to subtle microaggressions, and affects individuals' academic, professional, and personal lives differently. Recognising these nuances is essential for understanding the complexity of racism and for developing effective, culturally responsive institutional responses.

The commonalities that emerge highlight the need for universities to take preventative, systemic action rather than relying solely on reactive complaint-based approaches. At the interpersonal level, racism appears through interactions and behaviours among students and staff, both academic and professional. Institutionally, it is embedded in policies and decision-making processes that, intentionally or otherwise, disadvantage racialised groups. Culturally, it manifests in what is deemed "normal" or prestigious within universities, often shaped by dominant Western or Eurocentric narratives. For instance, curricula that prioritise Western thinkers and histories tend to marginalise Indigenous and non-Western perspectives. At the structural level, historical and contemporary policies, practices, and norms, such as the underrepresentation of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in academia, sustain racial inequities.

Themes of exclusion, tokenism, and cultural bias recur across negatively racialised communities. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, African, Māori, Pasifika, Middle Eastern, and Muslim students frequently reported that curricula and teaching practices overlook or distort their distinct knowledge systems, ways of knowing, cultures, languages histories and other contributions. Likewise, international students described being devalued when their accents or cultural practices were mocked or misunderstood. These patterns show that racism is not exceptional but a widespread and normalised feature of university life.

The lived experiences of negatively racialised students and staff also highlight the emotional and psychological toll of racism. Respondents reported feelings of alienation, anxiety, anger, and exhaustion, often describing the need to work harder to prove themselves in environments where they felt constantly scrutinised or underestimated. These accounts demonstrate that racism operates not only through structural barriers but also through emotional isolation and persistent social exclusion.

However, there are complex differences across identified communities. For Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff, racism is multi-layered. Interpersonal racism includes microaggressions and tokenistic inclusion in committees. Culturally, Indigenous knowledge systems and methodologies are frequently undervalued, reflecting the privileging of Western epistemologies. Structurally, limited access to leadership roles and inequities in promotion perpetuate disadvantage. Institutionally, Eurocentric curricula and policies marginalise Indigenous perspectives, making it difficult for staff to align their academic work with cultural and community responsibilities. These overlapping forms of racism compound one another, affecting professional advancement and undermining experiences of safety, belonging, and recognition.

A complex example illustrates these intersections: an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander student may encounter microaggressions from peers during a tutorial, reflecting interpersonal racism. The class, taught by a non-Indigenous lecturer in an Indigenous Studies program,

highlights institutional and structural inequities, as Indigenous academics remain underrepresented and often excluded from teaching roles in their own fields. Many students' express dissatisfaction at being taught Indigenous content by non-Indigenous educators, a situation that underscores how exclusion at one level reinforces inequity across others.

Jewish staff and students report both overt antisemitism and more subtle exclusion, such as being held collectively responsible for geopolitical conflict or feeling unsafe expressing their cultural or religious identity. These experiences have been heightened during the recent two-year period of conflict in the Middle East. Interpersonally, Jewish individuals may face stereotyping, questioning, hostility, and pressure to conceal or downplay their religion and cultural identity particularly during periods of heightened geopolitical conflict. Structurally, antisemitic stereotypes and assumptions about collective responsibility shape how these individuals are perceived. Institutionally, many feel pressure to conceal aspects of their identity to maintain safety and acceptance, reflecting an academic culture that does not fully support cultural or intellectual diversity. Together, these layers of racism are mutually reinforcing; interpersonal biases draw on structural stereotypes, which are then legitimised by institutional practices.

Middle Eastern and Muslim students and staff describe racial profiling, anti-Arab racism, Islamophobia, and cultural stereotyping, often being treated with suspicion or associated with political conflicts. They feel unsafe to raise concerns about racism. Women who wear the hijab report being stared at or questioned about their religion, while men are stereotyped as authoritarian or politically radical. Palestinian staff and students face additional challenges, including dehumanisation, alienation, self-censorship and institutional racism that limit open engagement with Palestinian history, identity, and scholarship. Many are forced to conceal aspects of their background or avoid cultural symbols such as wearing national dresses and symbols including the *keffiyeh* to protect themselves from bias, persecution or backlash. These experiences illustrate how racism is institutional in the case of Arab, Palestinian and Middle East students and staff and intersects with geopolitics and freedom of expression within the academy.

Overall, the qualitative data make clear that racism in universities is not uniform but contextually embedded and interconnected. The qualitative data indicate the co-occurrence of multiple forms of racialised and religious prejudice on campus, including Islamophobia, antisemitism, Sinophobia, and xenophobia more generally toward Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, African, Jewish, and Middle Eastern students and staff. Antisemitism and Islamophobia coexist, creating a hostile environment for both Jewish and Muslim communities. This reflects the presence of intersecting campus biases, where different forms of racialised, ethnic, and religious prejudice operate simultaneously, and individuals are targeted based on perceived group identity. Across all these forms of prejudice, a common mechanism emerges: ethnic, religious, or cultural identity is treated as inherently political, collective, and fixed. The lived experiences of students and staff illustrate how racialised individuals are associated with the actions of countries, governments, or communities with which they may have no personal connection. This conflation not only misrepresents individual identity but leads to discrimination, social exclusion, and systemic barriers, making it a central feature of racialised and xenophobic thinking. Experiences of being on the receiving end of racialised and xenophobic thinking are prevalent among student and staff responses across identified communities.

Generally, the qualitative data reveals that racism in universities is sustained through ongoing structural and cultural processes that determine who belongs, whose knowledge is valued, and whose voices are heard. Universities are not merely educational institutions but cultural entities that reproduce particular norms, values, and ways of knowing. At the cultural level, racism is evident in what is defined as “neutral,” “objective,” or “universal” knowledge—concepts often rooted in Western, colonial worldviews. This bias is reflected in judgements

about legitimate research, “good English,” or professional behaviour, all mentioned across the qualitative data. Negatively racialised staff and students, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Middle Eastern, and African individuals, are often expected to adapt to this dominant culture, rather than see their own knowledge traditions reflected and respected within it.

Further, the qualitative data across the identified communities consistently revealed that universities often respond inadequately to racism. Many respondents reported that their experiences were minimised, dismissed, or met with superficial gestures rather than meaningful action. While the manifestations of racism differ across communities, the impact is consistently profound, limiting participation, recognition, and belonging within Australian higher education. Respondents’ collective voices challenge the perception of universities as purely meritocratic spaces and expose how institutional cultures sustain racial hierarchies. While these dynamics often appear through the behaviours of individuals, individual actions feed into institutional structures and become institutional issues, when such practices are normalised and prevalent across universities, ultimately reproducing racism within the university environment.

Respondents’ collective voices illustrate how racism shifts university environments from inclusive spaces to places of exclusion. Students and staff across the identified communities report feeling unable to speak freely, participate fully, or simply exist as themselves. They report frequently assessing their safety – wondering which conversations might turn hostile, or whether their identity will make them a target. Negatively racialised students and staff emphasise that racism erodes the sense of being valued within the university community. Professional and academic staff additionally describe how racism affects their professional roles and knowledge exchange. Academic staff explain how this creates barriers to participation in academic life. For those who experience racism and racial discrimination, safety and respect are not abstract principles – they are daily necessities that determine whether a university campus feels inclusive or threatening.

In summary, the qualitative data provided a powerful lens into the nature and prevalence of racism in Australian universities. By capturing lived experiences across negatively racialised communities, the qualitative data revealed how racial inequity persists beneath the surface of academic life and underscore the urgent need for structural and cultural transformation.

The next chapter presents the qualitative findings concerning each of the identified communities. Chapter 3 explores in greater depth themes that were prevalent across communities. The effects of racism are considered in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents the array of suggestions respondents offered for how racism could be better addressed by universities and reflects on some challenges facing anti-racism initiatives.

## 2. Identified Communities

As noted in Chapter 2 of Part A, all of the identified communities reported racism and racial discrimination.<sup>5</sup> The categorisation of individual respondents into these communities helped to reveal broad patterns and shared experience.<sup>6</sup> Thematic analysis regarding the lived experiences of racism for each identified community (presented in alphabetical order), is considered within each relevant identified community. Appendix 1 contains tables for each community discussed below, with examples of their lived experiences categorised into different types of racism.

### 2.1 Lived experiences of students and staff from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities

A total of 732 qualitative responses to the questions at F12 were collected from respondents who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in response to Question A8 of the survey. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and academic and professional staff responses to these questions provided insights into the experiences of racism at Australian universities, the impact of these experiences on students and academic and professional staff, and suggestions for how racism could be addressed.

Table 2.1 in Appendix 1 presents examples of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander lived experiences of racism, coded by racism type. The thematic analysis of these experiences unveiled several interrelated themes that underscore the ongoing presence of racism and experiences of cultural unsafety and systemic exclusion within the university setting. Accounts from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and academic and professional staff highlight not only how their experiences of racism span multiple forms, including interpersonal, institutional, structural, and cultural forms, but also how these forms intersect in complex and compounding ways.

At the interpersonal level, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff are encountering the full gamut of interpersonal racism, from overt racism to microaggressions, spanning teaching, research, and administrative contexts. Many academic staff describe experiencing tokenistic inclusion in committees that prioritise diversity quotas over genuine expertise, or “cultural overload.” For example, Aboriginal academics describe frequently being asked to represent “the Indigenous perspective” on every panel, regardless of their actual research focus.

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<sup>5</sup> There is no section on Central Asian, Americas, or other Indigenous communities in Chapter 2 as they were not communities identified by the Australian Human Rights Commission. These responses were read and included in the analysis reported in Chapter 3 titled *Collective Lived Experiences and Patterns of Racism in Australian University Settings*.

<sup>6</sup> It is important to recognise that such categorisation may not accurately reflect how people perceive themselves. For many, being placed into a predefined group can feel limiting, oversimplifying the complexity of their identities and experiences. Individuals may not identify with the labels assigned to them, or they may belong to multiple communities in ways that are fluid, context-dependent, or politically sensitive. Sometimes, imposed categorisation can reinforce feelings of exclusion, marginalisation, or misrepresentation, especially when the categories used do not align with how people describe their own experiences or affiliations. This can lead to discomfort or distrust, particularly if individuals feel their voices are being interpreted through a perspective they did not choose. Even when done with good intentions, categorisation can reproduce hierarchies or assumptions that participants are actively resisting. Therefore, while our analysis uses groupings to understand collective community experiences, we acknowledge the limitations of this approach. We strive to approach categorisation critically and reflexively, remaining mindful that it may obscure as much as it reveals.

Culturally, staff and students report how Indigenous ways of knowing and research methodologies are often marginalised. This marginalisation can manifest in curricula that predominantly highlight European history, while underrepresenting Indigenous histories, knowledge systems, and perspectives. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander academic staff described feeling pressured to conform to Western academic norms to gain recognition, rather than being able to authentically integrate Indigenous knowledges into their teaching and research. Structural racism introduces further barriers, such as inequities in hiring, promotion, and leadership opportunities. At an institutional level, university policies and procedures are described as perpetuating exclusion. Curriculum design, assessment frameworks, and research priorities are often described as reflecting Western-centric standards, which is leading Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander academic staff to feel that their expertise is undervalued and excluded. Overall, university environments are described as negatively affecting professional progression, workplace well-being and safety, and a sense of belonging.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander academics have the added burden of providing support to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students who not only experience the full gamut of interpersonal racism, but also frequently encounter culturally unsafe environments including Indigenous knowledges not being valued in curriculum. The following quotes have been chosen to represent the complexity of lived experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander academic staff, not only in teaching and research contexts but also in the wider university context.

*Some experiences of racism include: - Instances of students using racial slurs in the library. - Disrespectful racist language from white Lecturers discussing minorities. - Not feeling culturally safe in classes or work meetings - Indigenous perspectives thought of as an afterthought. - Being tokenised. The university has good talk but in practice, on a systematic level, it does not support Indigenous staff and students enough. For real support and change, truth telling and educating all students and staff on Blak History should be on the forefront of all Academic Staff's minds (not just a module that everyone skips through). There is also an abundance of casual racism towards international students which needs to be addressed. The best mitigating factor for dealing with racism in my experience has been culturally diverse and aware staff such as supervisors or tutors. Indigenous Mentors and supervisors should be supported and uplifted as they are the ones doing the work to support mob (usually on their own accord).*

*As a Lecturer that teaches Indigenous subjects and knowledges, I am continually navigating a balance of ensuring a culturally safe learning environment for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and myself alongside ensuring that non-Indigenous are simultaneously supported and challenged. Challenging non-Indigenous students around misunderstandings, assumptions and stereotypes is a constant intellectual and emotional load that the university does not understand or recognise. The untold and unpaid hours spent on developing, analysing, and provisioning ways to avert experiencing racism, the deliberations and measures that are undertaken when faced with a cohort of students that direct racist remarks either in person, within feedback or within their assessments is time consuming and impacts on my wellbeing. Hours spent preparing how to deliver content in a way that students may find acceptable hearing from an Aboriginal academic, hours spent balancing how to do this that doesn't diminish my cultural authenticity and that of Indigenous students within the classes. Sometimes time spent with*

*Indigenous students post class debriefing on the racism they felt they experienced, it seems to never end, and is exhausting. I would love to just be able to do my job without worrying about whether or not I'm about to be faced with racism, and spending a good deal of my own time before and after classes and terms, reflecting on every word I said and overloading my brain with ways I can do it better next time so that I avoid the racism or address it in better ways so that I can cause some kind of impact that will make people stop and think about what they are circulating within the confines of [University] and beyond.<sup>7</sup> I'd love to be able to not think I have to work harder and achieve more than non-Indigenous colleagues to validate my existence in academia. Much is spoken about Aboriginal Peoples experiencing cultural load; however, the greatest burden is bearing the load of a culture of racism. Wading through hours of teaching and grading filled with racist remarks ideologies, and attitudes was not entirely expected, and not appreciated.*

*It was difficult to answer some questions regarding the representation of Indigenous people and knowledges at our university. The Indigenous academics, along with the topics we have developed and offer, are doing too much to counter stereotypes and engage in anti-racist praxis and critical race theory, and to centre Indigenous knowledges. However, this is not necessarily the case for other areas of teaching. Indigenous staff regularly witness the appropriation or misrepresentation of Indigenous people, knowledges and issues, taught by non-Indigenous colleagues who are not necessarily critical allies, and can in fact perpetuate further harm. This is particularly evident in the research space, where scholars are engaging in Indigenous research without having Indigenous research partners or [lead chief investigators], or centring First Nations perspectives, experiences, worldviews, knowledges. It is a big problem in the teaching and research space, that needs to be seriously and sensitively addressed.*

*They need to really reflect honestly and act on the structural, professional and casual racism. It's embedded epistemically and allowed to fly. Eg; Indigenous studies was taught by and owned by white people. The content was colonialism, predicated on whiteness. Rather than dismantle and rebuild IS [Indigenous Studies] with Indigenous knowledge systems and staff, the minor was changed and renamed to reflect whiteness. This was done by the HoS [Head of School] with little notification and consultation with Indigenous. One staff member outside of the faculty agreed and this was passed as consensus and support.*

The accounts from students underscore that racism in universities is not limited to isolated incidents, but embedded within everyday interactions, institutional cultures, and the broader epistemic structures that continue to marginalise Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being.

*Subjects about Indigenous people and cultures, including IKC [First Nations Foundations] subjects and Indigenous care subjects in Nursing, require major overhauls. These subjects require Indigenous students to sit through traumatising content against their wishes and despite warnings on said content that it may be distressing, and then to write essays from a white perspective about how colonialism perpetuates harm on Indigenous people. We are made to write essays and sit through classes on the process of being*

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<sup>7</sup> Throughout this report, [university] replaces the redacted university name.

*retraumatised due to institutional 'norms' of being white, while simultaneously facing that retraumatising without any support. When questions are asked during lectures I initially provided my insight as an Indigenous Australian, but was repeatedly made to feel as though I was wrong because I did not have the right kind of standpoint that the course aimed to dismantle. I am constantly made to feel as though I am not meant to be in these classes, and yet am forced to be there. Writing essays about how my people are subjects to harm as if it is a mere hypothetical has me in fight or flight at all times. In an attempt to make the course accessible, the content feels sterile and lacks depth required for, in my opinion, people not of Indigenous background to build actual empathy or skills to care for Indigenous people. Surveys and speaking up is overwhelmingly not an option, as it is never anonymous when you are the only Indigenous student on that campus or in that class. There are no protections if we wish to speak out. Support may as well not exist with how inaccessible it is. I repeatedly reached out for on campus or online support, and was never replied to until my second year, after almost being forced to drop out in the first year after a lack of support.*

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students described their experiences of racism at university as multilayered and cumulative, consisting not only of overt acts of discrimination but also a series of subtle, recurring moments that collectively undermine their sense of belonging. One student reflected that these are often “small, repeated moments”, comments, gestures, or assumptions, that may seem minor in isolation but, over time, accumulate into a pervasive sense of exclusion. These experiences illustrate how interpersonal microaggressions intersect with institutional and cultural forms of racism, producing a continuous undercurrent of marginalisation.

*As an Aboriginal student at [University], my experiences have been mixed. On one hand, I have felt supported by the cultural services and proud to see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives acknowledged in parts of the curriculum. However, I have also experienced moments where racism (sometimes subtle, sometimes more direct) has left me feeling isolated or undervalued. These experiences can include offhand remarks, stereotypes, or a lack of genuine understanding of Aboriginal culture and identity. For me, racism is not always about big events, but about the small, repeated moments that remind you that you are seen as “different.” Over time, these moments don’t just make it harder to feel a true sense of belonging at university, they also fuel self-criticism. Instead of questioning the ignorance or prejudice in others, you start to question yourself: Did I say the wrong thing? Do I deserve to be here? Am I representing my culture the “right” way? This constant self-monitoring can be exhausting. When difference is over-exaggerated, it intensifies that inner voice, making you feel as though you have to carry the weight of proving yourself (both as a student and as an Aboriginal person) in every space you enter.*

Over time, the constant need to navigate prejudice, misrecognition, and tokenism erodes confidence, wellbeing, and academic engagement. This is a common experience expressed across student responses.

## 2.2 Lived experiences of students and staff from African communities

There were 654 qualitative responses to Question F12 from domestic and international students, as well as academic and professional staff, who were categorised into African

communities based on the process outlined in Appendix D in Part A of the *Racism@Uni Survey Report* (Bray et al., 2025). Respondents were born in a wider range of countries, including but not limited to, Australia, Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. Table 2.2 in Appendix 1 provides representative examples of these lived experiences of racism, categorised by types of racism, which are summarised below.<sup>8</sup>

The qualitative responses to Question F12 demonstrate that students and staff from African communities often encounter a spectrum of racist experiences in Australian university environments that range from overt discrimination to subtle forms of exclusion and bias.

*University was the first place I experienced racism. From day one during orientation, when I sat among some students, they stood up and left the seats beside me to sit elsewhere. I had just arrived fresh from my country, and that was my very first experience of racism. It left me feeling unwelcome, and because of that, I don't feel confident that things will change. Still, I hope the university can make an effort to create a more inclusive and respectful environment for all students.*

Overt racism includes blatant and intentional expressions of prejudice, such as the use of racial slurs, including the “N-word” (sic), or inappropriate racist jokes as well as derogatory jokes that reinforce harmful stereotypes.

*On the Black side of things people often say the n-word around me and always make jokes like I am the one to blame if something gets stolen, despite my lack of history of stealing things. Additionally, when I publicly expressed discomfort with hearing the n-word used by non-Black people, I was met with faux sympathy that lasted a day or two, and then it was business as usual :/.*

Racial stereotyping and derogatory assumptions continue to shape interactions and perceptions.

Other respondents report being perceived as dangerous, untrustworthy, or intellectually inferior. Examples are as follows (see also Table 2.2 in Appendix 1).

*I have been deemed to be dangerous by other staff, simply for being a Black male on campus. As a member of staff, I have experienced feedback from students that align with racialised expectations of what my demeanour as a teacher should be.*

*I've had white men walk up to me and scream slurs in my face in public calling me a black dog for instance (this was yesterday). I've had people not want to sit next to me and just me in class (same flesh my other black friends) or feeling like people feel unsafe around me based on nothing besides the fact that I'm black.*

*I have had multiple people make comments regarding my intelligence. If I have received a high mark, I am met with surprise or genuine confusion. comments include: "How did YOU get that grade?", "How is that possible?", "Oh, I didn't know you were smart.". I am smart and capable of my degree, hence why I am studying it so I am unsure why only I receive these responses from other students. I have often been told I am intimidating/ scary upon first introducing despite me doing nothing to warrant such an impression. (I'm literally just sitting there...). I have had a lecturer/teacher/*

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<sup>8</sup> Comments from students and staff from African communities that specifically referred to experiences of racism related to their religion have been included in the Section 2.5 titled Lived experiences of students and staff from Muslim communities rather than here.

*exam invigilator speak to me with hostility and then proceed to be kind and respectful, to only the white students (Again, I was just sitting there...).*

*In my class I am the only black student and initially I did feel judged until I opened my mouth and spoke and suddenly people didn't have issue with me. Made me feel like they had preconceptions about my intelligence.*

Such stereotypes operate not only on an interpersonal level but also through broader institutional cultures.

Students and staff from African communities often reported experiencing heightened visibility in predominantly white environments, being stared at, exoticised, or treated as novelties. Unwelcome attention to hair, mispronunciation or deliberate refusal to pronounce names correctly, and being mistaken for another Black person are common microaggressions that convey a lack of recognition of individual identity. Peers' awkwardness or discomfort in their presence, or excessive scrutiny by campus security, reinforce the perception of being an outsider. Such subtle acts of exclusion accumulate over time, creating emotional exhaustion and alienation as illustrated in the following quotes.

*I have experienced repeated instances of racial bias and discrimination on campus that have significantly affected my experience at [University]. One recurring issue is that teachers and administrative staff frequently mistake me for other Black students and vice versa, even though we do not look alike. This lack of recognition makes me feel invisible and undervalued as an individual. In addition to misidentification, I have had negative interactions with teaching staff that I believe were racially motivated. For example, one teacher gave me poor marks because I was late on campus, despite the fact that I had already received special consideration and explained my circumstances to her in person. Another Enterprise teacher questioned why I spoke "good English" and asked where I was from, which forced me to justify my language skills. During class, this same teacher often ignored my questions, even when I raised my hand, and made comments about people applying for extensions while looking directly at me, despite my request being legitimate and submitted through the appropriate process. My answers were consistently met with unnecessary rebuttals, while other students often with less relevant contributions were praised and encouraged. My Black friend and I have been singled out and harassed by campus security on multiple occasions. One incident involved being told to move from a study desk on [location redacted] while working on pattern labelling, even though there was no other available space and other students behind me were not asked to move. On several occasions, security approached me in front of groups of students to ask if I studied at [University], while ignoring those around me. The same security officer repeatedly approached me over several days, questioning my activities and implying I was doing something wrong, to the point where I had to assert that I was not breaking any rules and ask him to stop harassing me. Hostility from other students has also contributed to an unwelcoming environment. In the fashion design studios, a third-year student removed my belongings from a shared table, placed them on the floor where they were stepped on and told me that her things were "more important" because she was in third year. When I confronted her calmly, she told me I was "not welcome" at the table and added, "You girls always cause issues," which felt racially charged. In another incident during class a friendly discussion about Eurovision among students, a white female student was upset because another student was questioning Israel being a part of it. She kept harassing and interjecting into the conversation, I made a factual comment about the inclusion of Israel in the competition was the only thing our class mate was worried about and it's not about the conflict in the middle east as to not turn it political. The student who was not part of the conversation inserted herself and accused me of being antisemitic. This was deeply offensive and ironic given my Ethiopian heritage and connection to the Beta Israel Jewish community. Her reaction completely shut down the normal friendly discussion and turned what should have been a light hearted exchange into a hostile environment because she chose to turn it into politics. These experiences reflect a*

broader lack of racial and social awareness on campus, both among students and certain staff members. While there are visible efforts such as acknowledgements of Country and programs like [redacted], these often feel performative because there is no real follow-through in addressing systemic and interpersonal racism. The result is an environment where racial issues are minimised or ignored, leaving students like me to navigate discrimination alone without meaningful institutional support.

My experience studying in Australia has involved far fewer instances of racism or racial discrimination than I anticipated. The people I have encountered here generally mean well, and I have not experienced racism fuelled by hate, anger, or overt hostility. However, subconscious biases still surface occasionally, often resulting in subtle microaggressions that come more from a lack of awareness than malicious intent. While these instances are rare and I can count my personal experiences on one hand, intercultural education or awareness training could help mitigate them further. What I encounter more frequently, on an almost daily basis, is a fascination with my appearance (particularly my distinctly coloured hair in long box braids). While I often smile through compliments and awed reactions, I am aware that my appearance is uncommon here and that many peers and staff may not have encountered someone of my ethnicity (or my hairstyles) before. Nonetheless, these well-intentioned reactions and frequent stares do not foster a sense of belonging. They often make me feel reduced to an ornament... something to be admired at a distance, rather than engaged with meaningfully as a person. Admiration does not equate to belonging, and in less tactful moments it can slip into objectification.

Respondents from African communities also often reported being subject to accent-based racism, even when English is their first language.

Examples I have experienced at this university: - 'Your English is very good' (Assumption that because you have a foreign accent, English is not your first language and so this statement is often offered as a 'compliment'.) - 'You look like Rihanna' or other mixed race celebrity (This is a common statement directed at mixed race individuals and seems to be rooted in the notion that all X people look the same) - 'Is your hair real?' (Question often directed to individuals with curly and coily hair textures) - Touching of hair without permission (Often done to individuals with curly and oily hair textures) - Dismissing or avoiding conversations with individuals who have accents that are perceived as difficult to understand.

I have experienced casual racism, and I think sometimes people don't realise or are not aware that they are being racist. It is usually microaggressions that people have no idea they practice. Like saying that my English is "actually good", people saying that I am exotic, or people being surprised I have a PhD. I think it affects our self-esteem and makes our impostor syndrome bigger than it is for a white person. Also, some people dismiss my feelings and my experiences when I say things like how racism is structural and affects all black people, or how someone was racist when they called me exotic. From my experience, people at [University] are not straightforwardly racist. They don't call me racist names or make lots of jokes. It is usually subtle racism, microaggressions that are as harmful and painful as any other kind of racism. But people are not aware of it at all, which makes it difficult to call it.

Within classrooms, students from African communities describe receiving less attention or engagement from educators, or the minimisation of their input, contributing to feelings of marginalisation and inequity.

I felt not supported or included in class when one lecturer taught half of the class totally ignoring us the international students from Africa, not asking any questions to us or involving us in any way, the lecturer later said "nobody should tell me they don't know English"

Racism at [University] is understated. Often it's not in what is done, but what is not done. As an African (already an underrepresented community) I feel it most in the lack

*of awareness and advertising of this community. I feel it most when people distinctly avoid sitting near me during lectures, tutorials, or on the tram. I feel it in the minimisation of my inputs during group discussions. It's ultimately racism that makes you feel small, in a way that is difficult to describe.*

Students from African communities also pointed to the frequency of racism and discrimination in teaching and learning settings, and its effect on their studies and wellbeing as illustrated in the following example:

*I have often faced racism and discrimination throughout my studies at [University]. At times it is direct, but more often it is indirect and subtle, making it difficult to call out. Because racism is so frequent, I have found myself deeply affected, to the point where I had to pause my studies for a year. When choosing my law units, I feel compelled to check both the student list and the staff list in advance, so that I can make a decision about whether I am likely to face racism or discrimination in that unit. On multiple occasions I have had to withdraw or drop units because of this. Both students and teaching staff have engaged in behaviour that feels discriminatory and racist, but done in a cunning and indirect way, making it appear as though no action can be taken against it. These experiences have left me feeling isolated and disadvantaged. My contributions in discussions are often not seen as trusted or valued, even when I put in effort and preparation. I also believe that racism and discrimination have impacted my grades and academic outcomes, which makes it difficult to feel that I am being treated fairly. I am often made to feel "different" because of my long name and my accent, which seems to draw negative attention.*

Exclusionary practices, such as students refusing to work with negatively racialised peers in group projects or failing to include them in social or academic networks, are compounded by institutional mechanisms that perpetuate inequality.

The intersection between interpersonal and structural racism is also evident in academic and professional settings. Racist student evaluations, the devaluing of education or qualifications obtained overseas, and the marginalisation of non-European knowledge systems in the curriculum all reflect structural biases experienced by academic staff. The lack of representation among academic staff, particularly in senior leadership roles, further entrenches these inequalities. Curricula that overlook African scholarship, research and knowledges or perpetuate negative stereotypes of African nations reinforce colonial narratives and deny students opportunities to engage with diverse perspectives.

Many academic and professional staff reported receiving poorer treatment than their white peers in various domains of university life, including being overlooked for promotions, facing discrimination in hiring and career progression, or receiving lower marks for work of comparable quality.

*In academic settings I always feel scared to submit my assignment with my African name displayed as I fear my work will be marked with racial discrimination. This is because I have in the past experienced racial discrimination in academic and work settings. Unfortunately, many people have an unconscious bias towards people that look like them. With most lecturers being people that do not look like me, it leaves me feeling vulnerable of being discriminated against and not being given equal opportunities.*

The qualitative accounts revealed that institutions themselves often play a complicit role in maintaining systemic racism. Universities that fail to protect staff and students from racial backlash or provide safe, confidential channels for raising concerns are contributing to a culture of silence and fear. When dominant institutional norms discourage open discussion of race, privilege, and injustice, especially when voiced by those most affected, those who speak out risk professional isolation, reputational damage, or retaliation.

*Every time I speak up on any topic, whether it be unprofessionalism, disrespect, favouritism or racism. It seems to create more conflict, in the sense that my university life, tasks and results become harder or more unfair. Advocating for myself at this institution is reciprocated with negative reinforcement.*

Diversity and inclusion policies may appear progressive on the surface but frequently overlook the specific forms of racism experienced by students and staff from African communities. This creates an environment where self-censorship becomes a survival strategy, and where the lived realities of racism are dismissed or invalidated by institutional denial or tokenistic gestures of inclusion.

The intersectional nature of racism is further underscored when universities adopt selective political stances; for example, paying more attention to certain geopolitical conflicts, such as the heightened Israeli–Palestinian conflict, while remaining silent on anti-Black racism or issues affecting African communities. There is a perception that universities have not done enough in such instances.

*I find being at [University] empowering because of the visibility and size of the student body's diversity spaces. Something I haven't seen to such an extent at my other unis. However the wave of neo-nazism and racialised violence currently happening in Australia, as well as the tensions from the ongoing genocide in Gaza undermine this safety I feel from these groups. The uni has not done enough quickly enough to address things since the National Socialist Network (Neo-Nazi) vandalised the BIPOC space signage and started putting up stickers around campus. Inaction and band aid measures allow groups like these to gather steam and get more outspoken. They need to be addressed as soon as they become apparent*

Others consider university responses to be one-sided. Such one-sided institutional responses expose underlying hierarchies of empathy and belonging. The failure to acknowledge or address these disparities perpetuates both interpersonal harm and structural injustice, leaving students and staff from African communities to navigate institutions that appear outwardly diverse but remain unequal.

### 2.3 Lived experiences of students and staff from Jewish communities

There were 672 qualitative responses to Question F12 provided by students and staff respondents who were categorised into Jewish communities based on the process outlined in Appendix D in Part A of the *Racism@Uni Survey Report* (Bray et al., 2025).<sup>9</sup> Table 2.3 in Appendix 1 presents representative examples of Jewish student and staff lived experiences of racism, coded as types of racism.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Part A sets out that the Jewish population has been divided into two groups. The first is anyone who stated that their religion was Judaism<sup>9</sup>. The second are ‘secular Jews’, those who identified at least one of their ethnicities as Jewish (including terms such as Ashkenazi, Sephardi, Litvak and Mizrahi) but did not list Judaism as their religion. In a number of cases, while people identified as Jewish in response to the question on religion, they used free text fields to specifically indicate that this was however not their religion. These were allocated to the non-religious group.

<sup>10</sup> The sub-set of Jewish student and staff responses to Question F12 was the most complex data sub-set of all those collected across the community groups. There were 128 Jewish staff and students who each mention antisemitism in their response to Question F12. The remaining 544 Jewish staff and students do not. Many of those staff and students do note that the situation for Jewish people in Australia has been challenging over the last two years, with some mentioning that the situation has been challenging on campus, others mentioning that they have felt unsafe on campus, and some commending universities for creating a “safe haven for its community in this increasingly hostile environment.”

There was a great deal of diversity among the responses from students and staff from Jewish communities, with many respondents stressing the heterogeneity of Jewish identity and that differing political, cultural and religious views exist within the community.<sup>11</sup> Acknowledging this diversity is essential, to avoid reducing Jewish experience to a single narrative.

Overt racism was evident in incidents of hate speech, antisemitic slurs, and even death threats directed toward Jewish individuals. Respondents from Jewish communities reported that hateful words and imagery displayed around campus on posters, stickers and graffiti made them feel unsafe. Many respondents from Jewish communities experienced heightened scrutiny and hostility within classroom discussions, online forums, and campus activism spaces.

Alongside these overt incidents, respondents also identified everyday forms of racism expressed through microaggressions. These included comments reflecting long-standing stereotypes depicting Jewish people as powerful, wealthy, or politically influential.

*Many university staff are promulgating anti-Semitic attitudes, and ideas in the classroom, and spreading it through society, often without even realising they are being anti-Semitic. I constantly hear tropes to do with money, power, control, blood thirstiness and other anti-Semitic ideas in classrooms, and staff meetings.*

Respondents also faced insinuations that they were personally responsible for the actions of the Israeli government. These remarks reflect a racist conflation of religious or cultural identity with political allegiance, misrepresenting Jews as a single, homogenous group and erasing the diversity of Jewish communities across history and geography.

There was significant intra-group diversity in how respondents interpreted the campus climate since 7 October 2023.

*I'm all for balanced criticism of Israel and do not automatically equate this with anti-Semitism. However some of the unbalanced criticisms of Israel and "Zionists" is nothing but a smokescreen for anti-Semitism. Such as on 8 October 2023, before Israel commenced military action, criticising Israel of 'Genocide'. Such as constantly and vindictively criticising Israel while ignoring (or giving shallow lip service) to atrocities committed against Muslims, such as ones in Sudan, Syria, Yemen.*

*During the many pro Palestine protests I feel unsafe, not necessarily because I agree or disagree with what they are saying but because they are protesting about the lives of my friends and family. I lived in Israel last year during the war and it was really challenging and seeing people protest saying they hate Israel is really hard to hear, as a Jew I believe in something called hugging and wrestling with Israel where you hug and love it because its "the home land" but also wrestle with it because of the shitty government.*

*Casual antisemitism is something I have been surprised to see a lot more than I expected in both staff and students. The dehumanisation of Jewish people has been aided by the responses or lack of response from staff and faculty... As a left-wing Jew I am well informed about the difference between anti-Israel and anti-Semitic rhetoric, and what I have experienced at [University name] has crossed the line into anti-Semitism. I have been told antisemitic tropes by other students such as Jews run the world, they are controlling the government, they control America and so on.*

*I am writing from the perspective of a Jewish PhD student who has been studying/working at [University] for over 10 years. There has been a lot of discussion*

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<sup>11</sup> Further quotes supporting our findings from the analysis of Jewish student and staff responses can be found in Chapter Six in Part A of the Report.

*on campus regarding the supposed increase in antisemitism at this institution. I want to state very clearly that I have never seen or experienced any antisemitism. This is also true for all of my Jewish colleagues, and all of the Jewish students I know. But, unfortunately there has been a concerted effort by pro-Israel advocates to conflate anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism in order to stifle criticism of Israel on campus.*

Some reported experiencing or witnessing antisemitism from individuals involved in Palestinian solidarity activism at their universities, while others reported that the Palestinian solidarity activism at their university was anti-Zionist but not antisemitic.

*Most of the times it is chalk and posters around campus. Protesting against things that the protesters often don't know much about or use harmful stereotypes (about Jews or Israelis) to promote it. I don't advertise the fact that I am Jewish unless I've known the people for a while, and even then I am extremely cautious in how I reveal or bring up that information. Most of the time nothing bad has happened but I've had some very inappropriate comments made about me and assuming my belief system. Although most comments are not aimed at me directly, sometimes I'm unsure if I am reading into a comment or symbol too much or I am actually talking myself out of thinking that something is a microaggression/hurtful comment etc. Frankly its exhausting. And out of my Jewish friends on campus, I probably have it the easiest because I'm not doing a course that focuses on people & cultures.*

*I think it is important to note, that as a Jewish person, I do not believe there is an increase of antisemitism due to the pro-Palestine movement. There is of course antisemitism prevalent in the wider society but anti-Zionism does not denote discrimination against Jews. We mustn't conflate the two, as this results in an increase in discrimination.*

*During my time at the [University], my experience as an Israeli and Jewish student has been significantly affected by the rise in antisemitism on campus, particularly since October 7th. Before that date, I had not personally experienced antisemitism on campus. However, in the months following, the environment has become increasingly hostile. Posters and protests calling for the boycott of Israel and Israelis, along with chants such as "Intifada," have created a climate of fear and alienation. Many of these materials and demonstrations spread misinformation and contribute to a sense that Jewish and Israeli students are unwelcome or unsafe. What has been especially painful is the complete lack of empathy shown toward Israelis and Jews. There is no acknowledgement of the grief or trauma experienced by our community, and no separation made between the actions of the Israeli government and individual Jewish or Israeli people. Every Israeli, regardless of personal beliefs or political stance, is automatically perceived as either a supporter of genocide or as a terrorist. This sweeping generalisation erases our individuality, silences our voices, and fuels hostility on campus. These experiences have not been limited to public spaces. Protestors have entered classrooms to distribute flyers, sometimes with the support or passive acceptance of lecturers. This has made academic settings feel unsafe and intimidating. Although I value freedom of speech and the right to protest, I feel that this goes beyond legitimate expression and has created an atmosphere of hostility toward Jewish students. As a result, my student experience has been deeply affected. I often feel that I must hide my identity, as openly sharing that I am Israeli places me at risk of hostility. Friends of mine, also Jewish or Israeli, have discontinued their studies in [redact location] because of similar treatment by peers and even academics. It is painful for me to witness this as the grandchild of a Holocaust survivor, knowing that nearly a century later, I still feel unsafe expressing my Jewish identity at a university that should be a place of learning and inclusion. This ongoing atmosphere of antisemitism has made it difficult for me to fully participate in academic and social life on campus, and it has left me feeling isolated, anxious, and disheartened about my university experience.*

*The antisemitism on campus is rife. The fact that I am nervous to wear a Star of David on my neck because of the insane amount of free Palestine posters, and propaganda*

*just shows that this university is not listening to their students of Jewish heritage. I avoid coming to class purely to avoid all of the Palestine posters & the fact that if I were to say my religion, I would be looked at differently.*

*I have felt attacked, scared and made responsible for a conflict thousands km away. [University] management has not protected staff and students from vile words, threats both physically and visually. Having to march through screaming and chanting crowds to get to the office is scary. Having to hide personal ethnic background feels like 1930's Europe. Lack of respectful debate is not academic integrity. And Universities allowing mis-information to thrive is exhausting and depressing. [University] has not shown any bravery in calling out antisemitism on campus, open debate or critical integrity in truth telling. I feel so depressed, scared and unfairly vilified.*

*As someone with Jewish family/background, I have never felt unsafe or discriminated against because of the Pro-Palestine protestors, words, or action. The people I see speaking out about it as "antisemitism" seem more akin to someone calling the BLM protests in the US a form of "reverse racism" for speaking out against the oppression/discrimination of Black citizens. Unless there is actual antisemitism rhetoric or discrimination that has been experienced in those situations, it is mostly being used as a cop-out and makes me incredibly upset for myself and my family to be used by these individuals as a tool to silence the conversation. I believe the University has allowed this to influence them against the students speaking out against Israel's actions since 2024, when they shut down the student encampment made in protest just a day or two after saying how they are in support of their rights to protest. They have been silent or brushing aside the issue ever since, including trying to shut down/defund the established Student Union (anti-discrimination, pro-Palestine group that has members of many cultural backgrounds and is an incredibly helpful support for all [University] students) in favour of a newly established Student Council. It makes me feel used and likely has made Muslim and/or Middle Eastern students feel unsafe as a result as well. Administration and leadership need to do better.*

*Despite being a Jewish academic, I have not been affected directly by the tumult around the conflict in Israel/Palestine. I have not been targetted by students or staff for my cultural background in this period. Protests are confronting but not in themselves offensive to me. However, I am aware that other Jewish academics and students have had worse experiences, including conflation of Israel and Jewish people (e.g. a Jewish student all but evicted by her housemates). I may simply have been lucky to avoid something similar. But in general, any racism/antisemitism I experience is outside of the University context. (Outright antisemitism is of course common online and is one reason I do not use social media.) Having said all this, I did have one concerning exchange with a colleague. It is common for people to assume the ethnic identity of others -- e.g. to attribute Whiteness to another without taking steps to determine how they self-identify. Honest mistakes are harmless, but there is a tendency to aggressively downplay the otherness of Jewish people or to insist that we are White, without accepting our own views of the matter. Australia's recent history complicates the assumption even that Jews of European background are White (Jews received discriminatory treatment under the White Australia policy). Yet even Jews wholly or partly from non-European backgrounds, like myself, can be aggressively identified as White -- possibly due to perceptions that we are powerful, wealthy, socially (and globally) dominant, etc, which is far from always accurate.*

Several students and staff respondents from Jewish communities reported that their experiences were minimised or dismissed, and that university reporting processes lacked clarity or follow-through. There was a great deal of contestation over both how universities should respond to the recent rise in anti-Semitism and how universities should respond to protests on campus. The struggle over the definition of anti-Semitism divided Jewish respondents. While some welcomed the adoption of the Universities Australia definition of anti-Semitism, others saw this as a counterproductive move that stifled academic freedom and

conflated Judaism with Zionism. Views also diverged on whether university policies and communications appropriately define and address antisemitism.

*I am disappointed by the Universities' lack of awareness and understanding of anti-semitism. The University has been silent on the growing incidents of anti-semitism on campuses across Australia.*

*The University has been completely pathetic in its response to Antisemitism, to the extent that I believe it has an endemic Jew hating populace whose prejudices are never challenged. This occurs throughout the strata of University life - professional staff, academic staff and students. There is no hope for this University.*

*I was deeply disappointed by the University's lack of a clear stance during the Free Palestine encampment on campus last year. The silence was troubling, especially when imagining how the response might have differed if the group involved held less "progressive" views. The ongoing Free Palestine kiosks around campus are particularly concerning. These are not neutral "end the war" initiatives but appear, in some cases, to promote rhetoric that denies Israel's right to exist, despite its long-established presence under international recognition. Such messaging crosses the line into what many would consider racial or ethnic hostility and genocide. If the University allows this without scrutiny, it risks being seen as complicit in promoting one-sided, potentially hateful narratives. I urge the institution to uphold its commitment to inclusivity and anti-racism by ensuring that all student activism is held to the same standards, regardless of political leaning.*

*The University leadership have responded to accusations of racism effectively and should be congratulated for the way they handled the recent political protests on campus. They allowed legitimate protest against military conflict in the Middle East to continue, whilst taking a strong stance against antisemitism. However, I believe that the root causes of Jewish anxiety were not addressed, nor were the concerns raised by protestors sympathetic towards Palestine, who in many cases were wrongly accused of antisemitic conduct. The immediate response from the University was to develop a 'definition of antisemitism', which both groups immediately rejected following its publication. I believe that an open and respectful dialogue between the two groups, where each were able to discuss why they had concerns would have cleared up much confusion that exists today.*

*The last two years have been challenging for Jewish people in Australia, and I feel this is getting worse. I commend [University] on its relentless efforts to stay neutral and supportive of its staff and students and offer a safe haven for its community in this increasingly hostile environment. I wish other institutions were as diligent in their effort to safeguard equality for everyone as [University] is.*

The data highlight the diversity of perspectives on campus.

A recurring theme in the data is the concealment of Jewish identity as a coping mechanism. Many respondents reported avoiding visible religious symbols, such as kippah and jewellery, refraining from disclosing their background, distancing themselves from Jewish organisations, and avoiding mentioning any links they may have to Israel to protect their safety. For some, this concealment produced internal conflict and loss of identity, reinforcing the emotional burden of antisemitism. Even individuals who were openly Jewish reported responding to the current environment by avoiding or remaining silent in discussions related to Israel or antisemitism. While some Jewish respondents took part in activism against Israel's war on Gaza, others deliberately avoided places on campus where Palestinian solidarity activists gathered.

Overall, respondents from Jewish communities explain that antisemitism in universities is multi-layered and shaped by the intersection of global politics and local campus culture. The combination of overt hostility, subtle stereotyping, and institutional inaction has left many

Jewish staff and students feeling vulnerable, alienated, and pressured to hide their identities. These experiences parallel those reported by other racialised groups but are compounded by the politicisation of Jewish identity and antisemitism within university environments.

## 2.4 Lived experiences of students and staff from Middle Eastern communities

As noted in Racism@Uni Report Part A, individuals who were categorised into Middle Eastern communities, based on the process described in Appendix D in Part A of the Racism@Uni Survey Report (Bray et al., 2025), form a diverse and heterogeneous group, comprising predominantly Lebanese, Syrian, Iranian, Iraqi, Afghan, Palestinian, Egyptian, and Turkish communities.<sup>12 13</sup> The 883 staff and student respondents from Middle Eastern communities who provided responses to the Question F12 identified across various racial, cultural, linguistic, and religious dimensions, with 290, identifying as Muslim. This rich diversity underscores the complexity of their experiences and the risks associated with overgeneralisation.

Their experiences are shaped by intersecting factors, including religion, gender, migration history, and visible markers of difference, such as dress or accent. For example, the racial discrimination faced by students and staff from Middle Eastern communities often targets the combination of perceived ethnicity and faith. Table 2.4 in Appendix 1 presents representative examples of student and staff lived experiences.

Students from Middle Eastern communities reported a wide range of racist experiences within teaching and learning environments, including overt expressions of prejudice, stereotyping, and being subjected to assumptions based on visual identifiers such as clothing, appearance, or cultural markers. These experiences were attributed to both staff and fellow students.

*I received racist questions about my country from a student at my first day in [University]. The tutors, sometimes think their curiosity about my background is something that I am happy about, but I am not happy, because it makes me feel excluded. I don't want to be seen as something odd.*

*I experienced racism from a course convenor, who made assumptions about me that reflected prejudice and stereotyping. The interaction left me shocked, as I did not expect this from someone I should be able to trust in a learning environment. It deeply affected me and felt very unfair. I believe no one should be generalised or judged based on the actions of a few people from their ethnic background. The experience was distressing and has had a lasting impact on my sense of safety and belonging at university.*

*While studying at [University], I experienced a moment in class that felt overtly racist and left a lasting emotional impact on me. During a lecture, I shared my ideas. The lecturer looked at me and said, "You are a person with a foreign name in Australia. You think you will be successful?" This comment was made in front of the entire class. I was shocked, humiliated, and deeply hurt. As an international student already trying to navigate a different system and culture, hearing that from an educator made me question not just my place in the university, but my future in this country. It reinforced the very*

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<sup>12</sup> Some of the respondents in this subset identified their religion as Islam. Respondents who referred to their experiences of racism as Islamophobia are discussed in Section 2.5 titled Lived experiences of students and staff from Muslim communities rather than here.

<sup>13</sup> Categorisation was based on the process outlined in Appendix D in Part A of the *Racism@Uni Survey Report (Bray et al., 2025)*

*barriers I had come here to overcome. I didn't feel safe or supported enough at the time to report it. But these kinds of experiences stay with you. They can seriously damage a student's confidence, self-worth and engagement with their studies. To improve equity and address racism, I believe [University] should: Provide compulsory cultural awareness and anti-racism training for all staff, including academic and professional staff. Create safe and confidential reporting pathways where students can share incidents without fear of academic repercussions. Appoint trained diversity officers within each faculty to handle complaints with care and understanding. Increase the visibility and voice of students from diverse backgrounds in decision-making roles and public campaigns. Actively challenge deficit-based thinking that assumes international or culturally diverse students are less capable. Racism does not always show up in extreme or violent ways. Sometimes it's a single sentence that tells a student they don't belong. I hope [University] continues to listen and create safer, more inclusive spaces where all students are treated with respect and dignity.*

*Some of the fellow students like to mock my accent and hide it under "joking". Some groups avoid talking to me or keep the conversation "short". In group assignments my opinion is not important, I was laughed at in a meeting once for suggesting something. I suggest that the university observe the ethnicity present in each class or field and address whether an ethnicity has an issue with another or not, because I never thought Indian people have a problem with Islam and Arabs until I came here to Australia.*

*I always get the look from people around me. It make me uncomfortable like have they never seen a Middle Eastern guy before. Specially when it comes to facial hair or skin/hair colour. This is how I was born, I can't change my genes and I don't want to. I'm proud to be Arab Middle Eastern however I respect every race and ethnicity, why people can't respect back?*

Students also described experiencing racism from their peers in residential settings, highlighting that discriminatory behaviours extended beyond classrooms and into campus living environments.

*The dormitory situation is pretty messed up. I lived there the first 6 months of my uni life with another friend from the same country and 2 Aussies and 1 lady from Mongolia. There was often casual racism, for example comments like "Your English is really good for your people", "Your food smells too much", "Your cooking fogs up the house etc", There were times when, they would write comments in the fridge saying we had too much waste in the bin or that we can't keep our food in the fridge etc. other times, they would come yell at me for something they were upset about with my friend saying, "You can talk to her, you're from the same place" etc. At one point we even sent an elaborate complaint to the Dorm authorities only for them to ask us to go down to discuss everything rather than asking for the people causing the issues to have a chat. That also felt like subtle racism because it felt like they wanted to interrogate us instead of the people causing the issues. Either way, after some point, we left early because things stated to get really exhausting with the constant back snarky comments. The authorities are absolutely horrible at tackling issues and holding people accountable. So yeah.*

Students further described incidents of racism occurring within their clinical placement settings.

*All racism I have experienced has been subtle and insidious. The worst incidents of racism and discrimination, often driven by stereotypes, happened during my hospital placements. It was so understated that, had I raised it, I doubt I would have been believed. Yet to me, it was crystal clear when I was treated with no respect, no support, and no willingness to help. In contrast, Caucasian Australian students faced no such issues, they received more support, and nurses behaved well towards them, while speaking to me in a condescending manner when explaining things. Even writing about these experiences is deeply distressing and retraumatising. I know I will never*

*return to the places where I had those placements, even if it meant giving up nursing should those be the only workplaces available to me.*

Students also reported feeling unsafe, noting that the period since the Israel/Palestine conflict intensified has been a particularly difficult time. Their response is to revert to hiding their background, if possible.

*I am always afraid of presenting myself in terms of where I come from because of potential prejudice and racism. I present myself as mildly European, though I am not. It is a very tricky time for people of Arab background, and I find that as soon as I present myself in those terms, there is an immediate worry that I might be anti-semitic (which I am not) and I have to go out of my way to show that I am not. I find this extremely disconcerting. I also find it in general unsafe to present myself as being of Arab background at this moment, and I find that the University is not doing enough to protect people like me.*

For staff from Middle Eastern communities, experiences of racism in both workplace and teaching-and-learning settings ranged from subtle, exclusionary behaviours to overtly racist comments in formal student feedback, as illustrated in the following examples.

*The racism I have experienced was not overt or expressed in obvious slurs or exclusionary statements, but rather took the form of subtle, underhanded behaviours by senior leadership that has accumulated over time. It has showed up in ways such as being left out of key conversations, having my expertise downplayed in meeting of projects I am managing and being overlooked while others' contributions are elevated. I have experienced overt double standards applied by my director in how my input has been addressed compared to that of colleagues. These actions were often framed as minor oversights or misunderstandings, but the pattern has been long standing, consistent and damaging. The lack of acknowledgement or validation whenever I have raised concerns further reinforced the sense of being marginalised, making the discrimination/racism harder to challenge because it was not explicit, yet I have deeply felt, and it has had a real impact on my psychological safety, confidence and professional standing.*

*I have had multiple cases of racist behaviour and SFS [student feedback] evaluations by UG students.*

Students and staff from Middle Eastern communities described their experiences of racism at university as multilayered and cumulative. The following quotes have been selected to illustrate the complexity of the lived experiences not only within teaching and research contexts but also across the broader university environment.

*Visibly different academic students and staff from regions of African, Asian, Middle-Eastern, and Pasifika tend to be negatively racialised in the Australian university culture along with staff who are identifiably Muslim. There is little recognition of these particular challenges which are also gendered experiences of exclusion, discrimination, and being patronised. Like Indigenous colleagues, we are expected to always be available to educate White/Anglo/European staff about our cultures and histories with smiles on our faces. My highly educated colleagues continue to refer to these parts of the world as underdeveloped, developing and backward and enable students to do the same. Promotion criteria and processes do not recognise that our experiences and pathways are very different from colleagues from the majority culture. As a consequence, people of colour, particularly women, in non-Stem fields take much much longer to go up for promotion. University managers (Heads of School upwards) only seem to be able to recognise a 'good idea' if it comes from a White colleague. Many colleagues also seem to struggle to hear and understand people of colour. International students from these regions continue to be stereotyped as lacking in academic ability and people looking to 'scam the system'. For example, I*

have sat in countless supervision meetings where colleagues have criticised the language abilities of international [research higher degree] students - yet no support is provided. The support provided to these international students is less than adequate but the university charges them enormous fees. Some of the Learning Advisors are very committed to supporting these students, but more than a few also lack cultural understanding and awareness. There is tokenistic recognition and celebration of multiculturalism as long as you don't raise issues like cultural and systemic racism. Professional staff are rude and unsupportive and do not offer the same professional courtesy and support they do to White academics and professional staff. None of this is surprising given the tokenistic efforts to create a culturally safe, respectful and responsive environment for our Indigenous students and staff.

Although my time at [University] has been very rewarding, there have been many instances of racism and racial discrimination that I have experienced throughout my time here. In my first term of university while attempting to visit the main library between classes security asked for my ID card (they had asked others for their ID so this didn't seem too bad). Shortly after presenting my ID card [University] security searched my bag and asked awkward questions to determine if I was in fact a student at [University]. They only did this to me, the only Arab guy queuing to get into the library. In a recent commerce course I completed, shortly after submitting an assignment my tutor asked me if I actually wrote it because the writing quality was of a high standard. They accused me of using an AI chatbot so I gladly offered to show them my Google Doc edit history and they immediately dismissed the matter. A few weeks after this, following the submission of my final assignment for the course, which was worth 30% from memory, my tutors feedback comment outright said that they had reduced my mark because they suspected I used assistance. I requested a formal review of the results since my tutor had decided to penalise me with no due process and argued that it was inappropriate for them to not go through the proper channels of an academic misconduct investigation where I would have had the chance to defend myself with my Google Docs edit history. The course convener reviewed the review of results request and chose to keep the mark as is despite the tutors comments and breach of university policy. I had to settle with a mark of 70/100 whilst upon comparing my assignment with my peers, who were white/Asian, received marks in excess of 85/100. Additionally, I must comment on the Israel Palestine conflict in the Middle East and the effect it has had with my sense of belonging. Shortly after the conflict erupted I felt extremely out of place and isolated during my classes. I am usually the only middle eastern person in my tuts/lectures/societies so it is often difficult to have a sense of belonging anyway and this conflict exacerbated my sense of isolation. I am also generally fearful to speak about the conflict in any capacity due to the fear of being perceived as antisemitic, especially with my peers in class and in my clubs. I'll say outright that I am not antisemitic, I am just vehemently against the conduct of the current Israeli government and their starvation and ethnic cleansing of the people of Gaza. I recently attended my first protest at the Harbour Bridge March for Humanity and posted a picture of the march to my personal Instagram account. A member from my student society screenshotted my post and sent it to my club's messenger group chat labelling me a 'dirty op' - slang for opposition/opponent. My peers, of all races and religions, have said that they are fearful to speak about the conflict or make any comments whatsoever, both online and in person, because they fear they may be punished by the university or it may affect their employment in the future. I feel that I have been subjected to increased racial discrimination when applying for employment or for extracurricular roles at [University redacted]. It's already hard enough trying to apply for jobs as a middle eastern person from Western Sydney but I had a handful of intern ship offers in 2022/2023. Immediately following the start of the conflict all of my applications were ghosted and only up until the end of last year have I started to receive interview offers here and there. When working in a group task or during a tutorial class I always feel like I have to prove I'm not stupid or uneducated despite my qualifications because people always seem to underestimate me because I feel like they think I'm less sophisticated or unintelligent.

I have experienced multiple instances of racism and racial discrimination at [University], involving supervisors, lab technicians, administrative staff, and

sometimes students. These incidents have left a significant impact on my wellbeing and on my sense of belonging as both a student and a staff member. From supervisors, I have been subjected to comments questioning my education in Iran, such as “What did they even teach you there?”, “You should request for refund from your university.” or “You’re wasting the university’s money.”, “How did you even get a scholarship?”, “You don’t deserve to be here.” I have also been mocked with statements like “you’re like idiot monkeys,” “Stop nodding like an idiot.”, “What’s wrong with you, why are you moving your head like that?”, “Talk like a normal person.”, “What’s wrong with your arm? So, stop saying ‘um, um, um’ all the time, you sound stupid.” or comments suggesting that because I come from Iran, I would not understand or have access to basic things such as automatic cars, alcohol, or developed technology. These words were humiliating and offensive. “You can’t dress like that where you come from, can you?” “You’re from the desert, aren’t you? how can you be hot here?” “This is a developed country, not like the place you came from.”, “Bet you’d be in jail if you said this back home.”, “You can’t even open your mouth in your country, can you?”, “Bet you’ve never seen real pubs back home.”, “Wow, drinking? Doesn’t your country lock people up for that?”, “Do you even drive automatic transmission cars where you come from?”, “Bet you’ve never even driven a real car like this before.”, “This is Australia, we have things here you’d never see in your country.”, “I get it, you’re amazed, but this is normal here.”, “Calm down, it’s just technology, you act like you’ve never seen it before.” From EAIT finance staff and other administrative staff, I have often been told that I do not speak English properly, with remarks such as “learn how to talk before you come here,” “are you really a PhD scholar?” and “who gave you this scholarship?” My accent was frequently mocked and exaggerated back at me, sometimes in front of others, and I was repeatedly asked inappropriate personal questions about my parents, my country, or my future plans. At times, staff implied I might be dishonest or untrustworthy simply because of my background. This treatment made me feel alienated and unwelcome. “Learn to speak properly before you come here.”, “Can you even speak English?”, “Are you really a PhD student? Hard to believe.”, “Speak clearly, I can’t understand your mumbling.”, “If you learnt these procedures, maybe they’d actually help you when you go back home.”, “Why are your parents visiting here? Why don’t you just go back to them instead?”, “Are you even planning to return to your country after your PhD?”, “Do your parents speak any English at all?”, “Stop bothering us with your weird questions.”, “Why should I trust you? For all I know, you could be a thief.”, “How does your supervisor even trust you?”, “Speak proper English, please.”, “Think through what you want to say before you come in here.”, “Oh no, I knew it was you as soon as I heard that heelllllooo.”, “What’s with all the ‘the, the, the’? Do you even understand me?”, “Do you need me to translate it for you?”, “How many times do I have to repeat myself? Don’t you understand English?”, “I don’t speak know, maybe in your culture it doesn’t matter, but here in Australia it does.”, “Back off, keep at least two metres away from me. Maybe you don’t get personal space in your country, but here it’s important.”, “You’re making us uncomfortable; you don’t even realise it.”, “Where are you from, anyway?”, and sometimes repeating words exactly with my accent but more exaggerating and laughing!!! Even when words were not used directly, the attitudes, body language, and reluctance to assist me compared to local students created an environment of exclusion. These experiences made me feel as if I was constantly being judged on my accent, and appearances, skin colour, rather than on my academic or professional contributions. I want to acknowledge that I have also received numerous kindnesses and much support from many people (both from European or other native Australian with different ethnic backgrounds) at [University], and those positive interactions have been very important and meaningful for me. I genuinely love Australia and greatly value the fairness, openness, and generosity I have so often experienced here. I believe that many of the negative experiences I described may not even have been intentional, and I am working on myself each day to not dwell on them, however difficult that can be. Instead, I try to focus on the many fair and good actions I continue to receive, which help me feel encouraged and supported in my journey.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> International PhD student.

There are differences in the experiences of racism of students and staff from Middle Eastern communities compared to other identified communities. Three key points come through in the data. First, respondents drew attention to how curriculum and teaching practices tend to emphasise Western perspectives, framing Middle Eastern societies through deficit-based viewpoints that marginalise Middle Eastern scholarship, knowledges and lived experiences.

Second, a number of staff from Middle Eastern communities expressed frustration over the dismissal of their experiences as “too political,” along with restrictions on academic freedom that discourage discussions on Anti-Arab racism, Islamophobia, colonialism, or Middle Eastern politics under the guise of maintaining “neutrality.” This environment led to widespread self-censorship, as not only staff but also students fear that engaging in such topics jeopardised their academic or professional standing as they felt their universities failed to protect them or their academic freedom when they came under attack from external lobby groups.

Third, structural and institutional racism emerges as a significant issue for academic and professional staff, presenting challenges in securing employment and promotions. Some Middle Eastern staff pointed to their colleagues’ resistance to someone of their ethnicity being in authority:

*It is not always possible for people who are "minoritised" to know that they are experiencing racism. Some behaviours and decisions happen behind closed doors. It is telling though to note that our white Australian colleagues don't experience microaggressions the same way as us or as frequently as us, they are not "told" how to do their job (this has been happening a lot more frequently ever since I was appointed to a leadership role) and they don't have to do additional emotional labour and go out of their way to "smile" so as not to risk upsetting fragile feelings of those who cannot stand to see the sight of a person like us in a position of leadership. I am repeatedly asked to answer admin questions even though the professional staff on my team are responsible for it. I don't think my colleagues want to accept my academic leadership position. I have asked two of my predecessors (both white men) if they had to deal with the same types of requests, and they said no.*

Overall, the responses illustrate a discouragement of open discussion about critical topics, and sense of institutional failure to protect staff, leading to a pervasive culture of self-censorship produced by concern over the potential professional risks associated with addressing sensitive issues like Palestine, refugees, or Western foreign policy.

#### 2.4.1 Lived experience of students and staff from Palestinian communities

There were 64 qualitative responses to Questions F12 provided by students and staff respondents who were categorised into Palestinian communities based on the process outlined in Appendix D in Part A of the *Racism@Uni Survey Report* (Bray et al., 2025). These responses illustrate that students and staff from Palestinian communities often confront experiences of racism at Australian universities that are intimately linked to ongoing geopolitical conflicts and the Palestine issue, resulting in distinct forms of racism.<sup>15</sup> Students and staff from Palestinian communities are often subjected to Anti-Palestine racism, Islamophobic and racialised harassment, including derogatory remarks, name-calling, or

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<sup>15</sup> The quotes used here are limited to a few examples to avoid identifying the respondents. Further quotes supporting our findings from the analysis of Palestinian student and staff responses can be found in Chapter Six in Part A of the Report.

stereotyping as politically radical or hostile. Such incidents contribute to feelings of alienation and emotional distress, particularly when university policies and institutional responses fall short of adequately addressing these issues.

Respondents from Palestinian communities reported facing overt institutional racism, political profiling and suspicion, and institutional silencing, which is often associated with the heightened Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 7 October 2023.

*I would like to lean into both my academic expertise and my lived experience as a Palestinian academic, born, raised and educated in Gaza and whose family is still enduring the ongoing genocide in Gaza... In a time where my people's mere existence is framed as being in "the wrong place, at the wrong time" amidst the real material threat of ethnic cleansing, I am also facing the plight of being silenced on campus. "This is the place to be. I feel safe around stories." ...How is it then that the stories I carry, the stories that matter most to me, the stories accumulating day after day screaming to be told, actually terrify me. ...Palestinians are the best at self-censoring. You'll hear us complain very little of the vast human rights abuse on our very existence because we are aware of how risky reporting these stories is for ourselves and for our loved ones. Something I learned from working with the Palestinian community here is that the stories we tell are too few in comparison to those we choose to self-censor. The real material fear means that many stories never get told. I speak of fear because so much of this conversation has been instigated by reports that some staff and students feel unsafe on campus. As a Palestinian academic, I feel this fear. And This fear is not ungrounded. I know for sure that the very first academics attacked are those who share similar identity strands: Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim... What's terrifying about [redact name] recent case is not only the personal vilifying attacks, it is also the attacks on the research, on the knowledge produced by [redact] research. After years of working incredibly hard to decolonise the humanities and academia in general, how much of this liberatory academic research is now devalued and under threat? I walked on campus on the first day of teaching this semester after hearing the news of the new antisemitism definition being adopted by Universities Australia in despair. After a night of stories of horror and devastation at home, unfolding on my screen; after lying to my mother-in-law, reassuring her that they will all be fine; after I gathered my lecture notes and headed to campus; I was met with this further effort of silencing us. I shamefully removed a... [redact]... from a lecture slide where I talked about the impact of stories. I wondered: would this be seen as instigating "fear"? Would my traditional tatreez, embroidered shirt that I've carefully chosen to wear to class? Or my mother in law's gift for my new office [redact], a labour of love, of time spent wishing she was back home. Would that also instigate fear? Would my existence as a Palestinian academic on campus instigate fear? Am I here in the wrong place at the wrong time? These are the questions I keep asking myself as I face more and more attempts at silencing my voice, especially as more universities and academic institutions are uncritically adopting statements (very close to the proposed Universities Australia anti-semitism statement) or definitions that would further jeopardise the possibility of doing postcolonial research and life writing.<sup>16</sup>*

These experiences led to self-censorship, fear, marginalisation or exclusion in both academic and social contexts. Other respondents described how these experiences frequently manifest as questioning of their political views or pressure to justify their positions on the conflict, which can overshadow their academic contributions with political assumptions.

In response to this challenging environment, numerous respondents described a tendency to conceal certain aspects of their identity. There is a pervasive fear associated with displaying cultural symbols, such as traditional national dress or keffiyeh. This suppression is linked to the compulsion many staff and students feel to self-censor discussions of Palestinian human rights, memory, or culture, to mitigate potential negative consequences such as being labelled

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<sup>16</sup> Parts of this quote have been redacted to avoid revealing the identity of the respondent.

“controversial”, persecuted or losing one’s job or place at the University. Additionally, university policies can be perceived as restrictive, limiting Palestinian researchers’ ability to engage critically with their own history and culture, which compromises academic freedom and reinforces institutional barriers (see above).

Many individuals experienced epistemic exclusion, where their narratives, perspectives and knowledges are diminished or overlooked in curricula and discussions that favour Western or dominant geopolitical viewpoints. Experiences of tokenism were also reported, with Palestinian staff and students sometimes expected to represent the entirety of the Palestinian experience or broader Middle Eastern perspectives, without proper recognition or support.

Collectively, these experiences underscore how racism directed at students and staff from Palestinian communities at Australian universities is deeply institutional, multifaceted, shaped not only by racialisation but also by the heightened Israeli-Palestinian conflict since 7 October 2023. This results in complex forms of discrimination, exclusion, and constraints on academic freedom.

Examples are as follows:

*Over the last 2 years I have witnessed my friends being stared at, intimidated and verbally harassed by other students at the university and in public. When we address our concerns to higher ups, we are often not heard and met with disappointment.*

*My Dad’s family is Palestinian and live in Palestine and it’s so disheartening constantly hearing tone deaf racist comments like “Palestine isn’t on google maps” “Palestine is a terror group”.*

*Three students once had a competition near me, over who could say the word 'terrorism' the loudest. Another time, while I was studying in the library, two girls looked at me and laughed saying Palestine didn't exist, after they noticed a heart sticker with the Palestinian flag on my laptop.*

*I have been targeted in classes my staff and students for wearing a Palestinian keffiyeh. Staff members have marked me poorly for using Israel's current genocide in Gaza as a case study for assignments where it was completely applicable. University administrators and security guards have made me feel incredibly unsafe and discriminated against and I am consistently watching this University downplay and fail to address Islamophobia and anti-Palestinian racism. I have been physically threatened by staff members on campus during the encampment for wearing a keffiyeh. I have been treated like a criminal by security staff for wearing a keffiyeh.*

*I have been asked to remove my Keffiyeh by a staff member and a PhD student at the university (I am Palestinian, and this is a part of my cultural attire). This got to the point where I undertook mediation with the PhD student, and one of the agreements we emerged with was that I send a message to him if I was planning on being in his presence while wearing a Keffiyeh, which ultimately led to me minimising my wearing of it.*

*As a Palestinian staff member I have been called on over the last two years ... to not only carry on in a "business as usual" way despite the ongoing genocide in Gaza and attacks on Palestinian people in the West Bank and Jerusalem where I have family, friends & colleagues affected, but to contend with initiatives in Australia that harm my ability to do my work and engage in my research. Specifically, the ongoing question of repressive antisemitism definitions including the IHRA and the University Australia definition, that effectively curtail my capacity as a Palestinian researcher to work in a critically engaged way with Palestinian history, memory and culture. In contrast, there has been little concern for the way in which these*

*definitions would effectively make anti-Palestinian racism a protected category as is underlined by the many disturbing implications of the Segal report.*

*There is so much more attention given to antisemitism than anti-Palestinian racism or anti-Islam racism (I refuse to use the term Islamophobia because the term itself is racist!!). As a Palestinian I am too scared to wear anything that represents my culture (embroidery, kufiyah patterns, etc) because I am scared of being attacked or being called an anti-Semite! Zionism and Judaism are completely different ideologies and yet we live in an environment that conflates the two! People are too scared to speak up against the atrocities in Gaza because they are scared of being called antisemitic. We, Palestinians, feel like Jews' wellbeing is more important than our wellbeing or safety and it is very unfair.*

*People don't see Palestinians as deserving of rights. It's very difficult to assess who supports and who doesn't support you when you first meet someone. I am afraid to tell people where I'm from because you never know who will discriminate against you, especially since history has proved it correctly.*

*The university needs to be more inclusive and open about what's happening in the world like in Palestine and Sudan and Congo. They don't understand how much of this stuff actually impacts and hurts students like me who are actually impacted by this stuff. They need to make it clear that they actually care ... An example of this is the email sent out to all students regarding the definition of antisemitism, which is worded in a way that makes criticism of the government of Israel seem like a punishable action, making students like myself afraid to speak up about issues close to my heart and ancestry. This makes it seem like they're focus is on benefitting white people and ignoring other issues.*

*Overall, my experience with students and staff has been positive, with only a few incidents. However, I find the university's shifting policies—particularly around free speech, Palestine, student activism, and the right to protest—deeply concerning. The fact that speaking out about the mass killing and genocide of Palestinians can be silenced or taken down immediately makes me question the university's commitment to the values it promotes. While it advertises itself as a place that embraces diversity, free speech, and self-expression, in reality these principles are not consistently upheld.*

*As a Palestinian, I feel scared every day of my safety and for my job in case I say the wrong thing in a political world where I am not allowed to talk about the genocide of my people.*

## 2.5 Lived experiences of students and staff from Muslim communities

Student and staff respondents identifying Islam as their religion were categorised into Muslim communities, based on the process described in Appendix D in Part A of the Racism@Uni Survey Report (Bray et al., 2025).<sup>17</sup> There were 1016 students and staff from Muslim communities who provided responses to Question F12. Table 2.5 in Appendix 1 presents representative examples of student and staff from Muslim communities lived experiences based on their responses to Question F12.<sup>18</sup>

Students and staff from Muslim communities reported a variety of interpersonal, institutional, and structural forms of racism, with Islamophobia emerging as a common theme.

*Forget broad stroke 'racism'. There is rising Islamophobia that goes completely unaddressed. The genocide in Gaza is seen as a contentious political issue that is somehow racism free, when it is nothing but. It is all about racism; the genocide itself as well as the enforced silence within universities. How can a university be considered as trying to tackle racism when it is pointedly silent about a genocide and indeed oppressing any significant speech or action against it. You cannot be trying to take action against 'racism' when you can't even take action against the violation of fundamental human rights rooted in racial inequalities.*

*We've reported many times Islamophobia to the university and they refuse and neglect to address any of it. The university is currently working on addressing antisemitism after one year. The university has demonstrated capacity to address racism, but has avoided addressing Islamophobia for years...<sup>19</sup>*

Respondents from Muslim communities also described experiences of institutional racism and neglect and overt racism, included verbal abuse, racial slurs, and derogatory jokes directed at individuals.

*Had someone randomly airdrop me a photo of 9/11 attack to my computer while my name is Muslim/nonwhite on the eve of 9/11 last year in the library.*

*While working there was once a student who made a comment about 9/11. It was very minor, and he never came back again...*

*With the recent protest about immigrants being kicked up, this is disgustingly racism. There are many people from [University] who have attended this protest. They make racism comments at uni, ruining [University]. Many from [University] are from overseas studying and born overseas who live here. It is hurtful and makes many feel unsafe around that person and lowers self-esteem. More attention should be given to racist remarks especially on sensitive topics like immigrants.*

These encounters often occurred in teaching and learning environments, workplaces, and public spaces on university campuses. For Muslim women, particularly those who wear hijabs, gender and Islamophobia intersect to shape racial discrimination.

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<sup>17</sup> Some of the people in this subset identified their religion as Islam. Respondents who referred to their experiences of racism as Islamophobia are discussed in the section on Muslim communities rather than here.

<sup>18</sup> The responses to Question F12 of students and staff from Middle Eastern, South Asian, South-East Asian and other communities who identified their religion as Islam were put into a separate excel sheet for analysis. The analysis of the data for all respondents in the South East Asian, South Asian and Middle Eastern communities were checked for religion to ensure that experiences were not being double counted.

<sup>19</sup> The remainder of this quote has been removed as it contained identifying information that could not be redacted or the point being made would be completely lost.

In addition to overt racism, many respondents described everyday covert racism, which manifested through subtle acts of exclusion and marginalisation. Students, particularly those who were visibly identifiable, recounted being excluded from group work, ignored in class discussions, or socially isolated in student accommodations. These experiences of exclusion were often accompanied by feelings of discomfort and hypervisibility, where individuals reported being subjected to scrutinising or judgemental gazes. Respondents explain how such microaggressions contribute to a persistent sense of alienation and reinforce perceptions that students from Muslim communities do not fully belong in the university community.

Some respondents reported concealing aspects of their identity, such as names, religious symbols, or political views, to avoid bias or discrimination. One respondent described being asked to remove cultural items of clothing.

*It made me not want to go to uni. It made me feel unsafe and felt like I couldn't confide in anyone as my struggles may come off as being too "political". The university allegedly tried to silence the support of my community and staff who have a similar cultural background to me. In addition to this I felt as though me expressing myself culturally made me a target. I was also told to remove cultural items of clothing by security because apparently my culture has been deemed offensive and too political.*

Some respondents also mentioned racism from non-Muslim peers who are also negatively racialised, reflecting complex dynamics within diverse institutional spaces.

Students also reported experiencing racism from teaching staff.

*My most recent experience with racism at [University] came directly from my tutor. I was retaking the unit which was already a confronting and upsetting situation for me. She had seen my sticker on my laptop during my previous attempt and made a crude comment towards it and had an opinion of me ever since. During the first interaction in a year of not seeing her, she addressed me in a fake exaggeratedly "caring" tone, saying "you didn't pass?" Not as a genuine question or offering support. Rather she said it with a smug smile and in a mocking way. It was belittling and she was deliberately provoking me. This was particularly distressing given our past history. Even so in my last semester in a different unit where I had been doing particularly well in, she had the opportunity to second view my work and had given me a much lower mark than the first marker, she had awarded me with a poorer grade and provided feedback that didn't make sense at all. Her behaviour in both instances carried a passive-aggressive, racially charged undertone that made me feel targeted, disrespected and unwelcome in the learning environment.*

Other students reported that racist practices within teaching and learning environments frequently take the form of social exclusion.

*I have experienced instances where I felt excluded because of my cultural background. These situations made me feel uncomfortable and less confident in class. I believe more awareness and open conversations about diversity and inclusion would help create a more supportive environment for all students.*

At the institutional level, staff from Muslim communities described experiencing racial discrimination in employment, including biased recruitment practices, limited promotion opportunities, and dismissive attitudes from colleagues or supervisors.

*I have found the situation in my workplace very upsetting and distressing. I often feel overlooked and as though I must work harder than others just to be considered. This has left me with an ongoing sense of unease, where I try to focus on my responsibilities but feel weighed down by the environment. I reported the bullying and racism I experienced to HR, and while I received personal support, there has been no visible*

*accountability or action taken regarding the leader involved. This lack of resolution has been discouraging. While the general work culture is supportive, the conduct of a particular discipline leader (Indian) has created a harmful atmosphere. Concerns include conflicts of interest—such as appointing a spouse to the same workplace—and a pattern of hiring within a narrow circle of his former Indian students, which raises issues of fairness, inclusivity, and balance. These practices make the environment less conducive for collaboration and equity. Academic leadership should not be appointed solely on the basis of how many publications and grant success. True leadership also requires integrity, fairness, inclusivity, and the ability to foster a respectful and diverse environment where all staff feel valued.*

In university services, there were reports of racial targeting, including by university security. These issues point to the existence of institutional and structural racism, where institutional policies and practices fail to adequately protect or support students and staff from Muslim communities (see Table 2.5). Respondents frequently cited poor anti-racism policies, the absence of clear complaint pathways, and inconsistent responses from senior management as factors that perpetuate harm (see Table 2.5).

The handling of geopolitical conflicts, particularly those involving Muslim-majority countries, was also raised as a significant concern. Students and staff from Muslim communities reported feeling silenced or unable to express their views, due to fears of being labelled extremist or politically biased. For some international student respondents, the intensity of these encounters has increased during times of heightened geopolitical conflict including the period since 7 October 2023.

*I believe the racism I experienced at university can be contributed to a global issue and I did not take it personally because I know it's a worldwide issue. I sent students an email inviting them to an Iftar dinner which is an Islamic dinner in Ramdan (an important month for Muslims) and received many Islamophobic responses from students. When discussing these racist/Islamophobic replies from students I did not feel supported I felt I was being blamed for sending out the invitation (except for a couple of staff including my manager). I work with student clubs and the process to approve student events is almost always harder when it's for Muslim students. Once, even after approving an event, the venue/security teams wanted to investigate the panel speaker which was a Muslim community member that was invited by the students. This would never happen if it was for any other club.*

*We've reported many times Islamophobia to the university and they refuse and neglect to address any of it. The university is currently working on addressing antisemitism after one year. The university has demonstrated capacity to address racism, but has avoided addressing islamophobia for years. The university has also refused to address the racism report produced by two African students, one a refugee, but quoted it as their own work during a presentation despite ignoring the students who produced and partook in the studies requests to respond to the racism on campus. Furthermore, the university is taking away the mussallah space regularly used by Muslims, and moving us to a space that risks the privacy of Muslim sisters. The sisters mussallah has been a sanctuary for them for the longest time and now they are losing this safe space.*

The emphasis on freedom of speech in some universities was perceived as being unevenly applied, with Muslim perspectives often constrained or dismissed. Some respondents linked this to broader institutional cultures that prioritise “neutrality”, which creates bias and inadvertently fails to protect against Islamophobia in university settings.

Finally, the data revealed the intersections between interpersonal and structural racism, where individual acts of discrimination are reinforced by institutional systems that fail to recognise or address them (see Table 2.5).

Collectively, these experiences illustrate a climate of racialised suspicion and epistemic exclusion, where staff and students may be tolerated but not fully valued.

*Was told by a unit coordinate that “religion is not an excuse” and constantly being told to take off a piece of clothing even though there was a policy in place that allowed me and accommodated to my religious clothing. I witnessed other students not being told off, but me only. I complained but felt like it did not get anywhere. All I was told was that she was spoken to. No apology nothing. No cultural sensitivity or etc. training being done.*

Together, these accounts illustrate that students and staff from Muslim communities’ experience racism in layered and intersecting forms in Australian universities, ranging from overt Islamophobia to subtle exclusion, institutional neglect, and geopolitical silencing.

## 2.6 Lived experiences of students and staff from Pasifika and Māori communities

There were 238 qualitative responses to Question F12 provided by domestic and international students and academic and professional staff categorised into Pasifika and Māori communities, based on the process described in Appendix D in Part A of the *Racism@Uni Survey Report* (Bray et al., 2025). Those who responded to the Question F12 were born in countries including but not limited to Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Nauru, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. A small number identified as South Sea Islanders, descendants of people brought from the Pacific Islands to Australia in the nineteenth century, exploited for their labour and subjected to harsh treatment. Table 2.6 in Appendix 1 presents representative examples of these lived experiences of racism, categorised by types of racism, which are summarised below.<sup>20</sup>

The experience of student and staff from Pasifika and Māori communities at Australian universities are shaped by interpersonal, institutional and structural racism (see Table 2.6 in Appendix 1). Interpersonal racism reported includes direct racist remarks, the mocking of their accents, and the use of racial slurs or derogatory language, such as the use of the ‘N-word’.<sup>21</sup> One student from Pasifika communities described an occurrence of racist harassment in a university library:

*Long story short we were sitting in booths in the library. The order was a group of boys, a girl by herself and then my friends and I. This girl who is PNG comes up to us and tells us that a paper was thrown at her with the Nword (sic) written on it. We believed it was the boys behind her. It was unlikely it was from across the room. However, there was no way to verify this because there were no cameras. Which means there wasn’t solid evidence that they did it, considering when the paper was thrown to her table she didn’t see where it came from she had her head down and then looked at the paper 10 mins after it dropped. I was shocked to find out that the levels on the library have no cameras, actually insane, because if anything happens it becomes your word against mine. I understand thinking the place is safe but late at night or on a weekend how are you supposed to know what happened. A suggestion I have is putting cameras into the levels of the library.*

Everyday racism takes subtler forms, including mispronouncing or refusing to pronounce names correctly. Other respondents point to accent-based racism.

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<sup>20</sup> Comments from students and staff from African communities, who religion was indicated as Islam and who specifically referred to experiences of racism related to their religion have been included in the analysis of lived experiences of students and staff from Muslim communities.

<sup>21</sup> Examples are presented in Chapter 6 of Part A of the report and Table 2.6 in Appendix 1.

*I wouldn't say that I have personally experienced racism at [University]. However, there are times I have had peers or tutors pretend to do "island/Māori" accents when talking about Polynesians or myself. It's a little uncomfortable for me when it happens, but I think I am cringing at them do it, rather than the intent behind it (which is usually non-malicious).*

Some respondents encountered racist assumptions that they are aggressive or less intelligent. Being stared at in predominantly white spaces contributes to heightened visibility and discomfort. For some individuals, being perceived as white by others provides temporary relief from overt racism, but this also produces internal conflict and a sense of erasure.

*I am biracial but am white passing. People often feel comfortable expressing views about non-white people to me because of this, including towards me group because they assume I am fully white. Furthermore, people often discount my biracial identity because of the colour of my skin, despite being raised immersed in both cultures and having a strong relationship to my ethnic and cultural identity. I do not feel as though I fully fit in to either the White or Pacific Islander communities because of this.*

Some fair-skinned individuals in this group had their identity questioned by others, or had their experiences of racism dismissed, which was hurtful and made them reluctant to disclose their ethnicity.

Racism was evident in teaching and learning settings where students from Pasifika and Māori communities experience social exclusion. Students recounted white students being reluctant to work with them in groups or not valuing their contributions to discussions. This exclusion reinforces feelings of marginalisation and reduces opportunities for academic success and belonging.

*The real 'killer' of happiness is the silent, cold shoulder treatment - have faced this when I was a student and now when I am a staff member. The feeling of not belonging, not being needed, not being appreciated, not being heard or seen. Having to work 2-3x as hard, just to get similar marks to domestic students (and no, I was not a struggling student and have finished my doctorate).*

Some students from Pasifika and Māori communities reported receiving disproportionately harsh feedback or lower grades, which they attributed to racist biases among teaching staff.

These biases often go unacknowledged but have tangible effects on academic progression, confidence and well-being. Meanwhile, staff from Pasifika and Māori communities reported that their work receives less recognition than that of white colleagues, and they do not receive the same support to progress in their careers.

The intersection between interpersonal and structural racism becomes visible in classroom and institutional settings, including clinical placement settings, where racist behaviour by students or staff is ignored or minimised.

*Very disappointed with how teaching staff can get away with being racist towards students and not stopping conversations where making racist remarks and topics aren't being shut down but entertained. I've had racial experiences with two teaching staff in particular, seen and heard other students having bad experiences with the same teaching staff as myself.*

*Discrimination intensified during clinical placements. Debrief Hours: During placement debrief sessions, I was subjected to mocking of my accent. Other students openly laughed at the way I spoke, yet no intervention was made by the placement director, who allowed the harassment to continue unchecked. This silence from a person in authority compounded the humiliation, signalling tolerance of racially*

*motivated bullying. [redacted] Hospital: While on placement at [redacted hospital], I was directly targeted and told I looked "scary." This demeaning comment reduced me to a racialised stereotype, with no acknowledgement from supervisors or staff to correct or address the discriminatory behaviour. [redacted] Hospital: At [redacted hospital], staff members singled me out inappropriately, rolling their eyes at me when I spoke or participated. These gestures were not isolated but repeated, signalling a pattern of exclusion and disrespect rooted in bias against my cultural background and presence.*

Students from Māori and Pasifika communities recounted instances where university teaching staff fail to challenge racist comments made by students in teaching and learning settings, reinforcing a culture of silence and complicity.

Staff from Pasifika and Māori communities reported additional layers of complexity when racism is perpetrated by members of other racialised groups, a phenomenon sometimes referred to as 'between-group' racism. These dynamics underscore how whiteness operates as a dominant framework within the university, shaping hierarchies not only between white and non-white individuals but also among racialised communities themselves.

At the structural level, racism is embedded in the ways universities privilege European knowledge systems, while undervaluing Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Māori, and Pasifika epistemologies. Some respondents reported that they felt that they could not be their authentic selves at university, due to the pressure to conform to white Australian norms.

*The racism here is subtle and presented as me being un-Australian. For e.g. in my culture, speaking in turns is formally required, and means people can get their grievances off their chest or have their opinion heard - regardless of who agrees or not. Despite explaining this to my manager, supervisor and the constant rotation of staff where I work - I still get talked over in meetings. Worse, I get sighed at or get an eye-roll because I'm extending their meeting length when I finally get to address their behaviour or the concerns and opinions they voiced. This usually results in 'we need to finish this meeting because we have other appointments, We'll continue this offline' or 'can you put it on the next meeting'. I've stopped participating in meetings, I've stopped asking clarifying questions while at work, and generally treat meetings as presenteeism - paid time wasting. My colleagues see it as an Australian way of having meetings - but they don't see that as racism.*

Curriculum design was frequently reported as omitting non-European perspectives or treating them as supplementary, reinforcing colonial hierarchies of knowledge.

*There is also the systemic racism. European centric research, methodology and precedents are held up without question. It's very much the Anglo worldview with mention of the "others".*

Research by others on Pasifika communities was reported as exploitative of Pasifika academics and sometimes adopted deficit-based frameworks, depicting these communities as problems to be solved rather than sources of knowledge and innovation.

The lack of representation of staff from Māori and Pasifika communities, particularly in senior leadership positions, compounds these issues. The absence of visible role models limits mentorship opportunities and perpetuates the perception that academic success is primarily a white domain. Institutional tokenism, where individuals are included for symbolic diversity rather than substantive change, further undermines trust in equity initiatives. The lack of effective responses to racism in universities results in staff from Māori and Pasifika communities doing the unpaid, unrecognised work of supporting staff and students subjected to racism while skilfully addressing racist ignorance.

The intersection between institutional and structural racism becomes most apparent in the failure of universities to protect staff and students who speak out about racism. Those who raise concerns often face backlash, professional isolation, or are subtly discouraged from discussing issues of race and privilege. Students fear that challenging the racism of their teachers will impact their grades.

Overall, the experiences of students and staff from Pasifika and Māori communities in Australian universities reveal the persistence of both interpersonal and structural racism, operating through everyday interactions, institutional practices, and epistemological hierarchies. Overt and covert forms of racism intersect to marginalise these communities, shaping their academic experiences, sense of belonging, and professional trajectories.

## 2.7 Lived experiences of students and staff from South Asian, South East Asian, and North East Asian communities<sup>22</sup>

When examining experiences of racism within Asian communities in university settings, it is crucial to approach the topic with nuance and recognise that “Asian” is not a homogeneous identity. This term encompasses a diverse range of ethnicities, cultures, religions (e.g. Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Buddhist), languages (e.g. Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean, Japanese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Thai, Burmese, Malay, Khmer, Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Punjabi, Malayalam, Sinhala, Nepali), and histories. Experiences of racism can differ significantly not only among different groups but also between staff and students, influenced by factors such as institutional positioning, visibility, and expectations.

In Part A, the groupings chosen were South Asian, South East Asian, North East Asian, and Chinese. The process of categorisation is outlined in Appendix D in Part A of the *Racism@Uni Survey Report* (Bray et al., 2025).<sup>23</sup> While there were some similarities, the qualitative data reveals that experiences of racism are not uniform across the identified communities of South Asia, South East Asia, North East Asia and Chinese.

### 2.7.1 Lived experiences of students and staff from South Asian communities

There were 2,100 qualitative responses to Question F12 from respondents who were categorised into South Asian communities based on the process outlined in Appendix D in Part A of the *Racism@Uni Survey Report* (Bray et al., 2025). South Asian communities, including students and staff from Australia, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and India, there were significant reports of racism experienced in Australian universities.<sup>24 25</sup> Racism was reported by both academic and professional staff, as well as by domestic and international students. The lived experiences of students and staff from South Asian communities are detailed in Table 2.7 of Appendix 1, along with illustrative quotes.

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<sup>22</sup> Consistent with Part A, the terms used are South Asian, North East Asian and South East Asian as these are the categories applied to the supplied qualitative data by the quantitative team.

<sup>23</sup> Consistent with Part A, Chinese communities are included within the North East Asian communities.

<sup>24</sup> Comments from students and staff from South Asians communities who identified Islam as their religion and who specifically referred to experiences of racism related to their religion have been included in the analysis of lived experiences of students and staff from Muslim communities.

<sup>25</sup> Categorisation was based on the process outlined in Appendix D in Part A of the *Racism@Uni Survey Report* (Bray et al., 2025).

Across all South Asian communities, there are accounts of interpersonal, institutional and structural racism across academic and professional contexts (see Table 2.7.1). The qualitative responses demonstrate that students and staff from South Asian communities encounter blatant and intentional expressions of prejudice, such as the use of racial slurs, including inappropriate racist jokes that reinforce harmful stereotypes. Indian staff and students particularly described exposure to racial slurs, such as “curry muncher”, racist jokes, and discriminatory humour, alongside more subtle but pervasive forms of exclusion and bias.

*The amount of hate towards Indians online is bleeding into the real world. I have received so many comments about being dirty, smelly, worthless and poor. I was born in this country and I'm only half Indian. People often time don't consider the comments they are making racist, only part of a big collective joke. I don't believe people change.*

*I have experienced being told 'to go back to my country' even though I was born here. I have been told 'but you don't look Indian'. Other comments 'all taxi drivers are Indian', 'but where are you really from?' People avoid using my name in meetings because it's hard to pronounce for them and they don't bother asking. This often makes me feel like I don't get taken seriously, I'm not cared about or important enough.*

Common experiences across all South Asian communities include accent-based discrimination, being ridiculed or dismissed in group work and classroom discussions, and receiving differential treatment from lecturers and supervisors.

*Some teachers are exhibiting racist behaviour toward Indian students during practical sessions. This might include unfair treatment, biased grading, exclusion from group activities, or making stereotypical remarks. Although not all teachers act this way, the behaviour creates a hostile and uncomfortable learning environment for affected students.*

In addition to these explicit experiences, many respondents recounted everyday forms of racism that manifest through social exclusion. Student from South Asian communities reported being left out of group work or informal peer networks in teaching and learning environments, while staff describe similar exclusion in academic research settings. Respondents described how these experiences of racialised marginalisation, though less visible than overt racism, erode their sense of belonging and reinforce racial hierarchies in everyday university life.

*I've sat for many tutorials where my peers have opted out from doing a group assignment with me saying my “English isn't good enough” and that they wouldn't want a “bad grade.” Mind you, my English is pretty good for an international student from Nepal and people are often taken aback when I tell them I'm Nepalese. I am often mistaken to be Filipino but that does not bother me. If I have made a few friends on campus, it has mostly been because they initially believed I was a local. When they find out I'm not a local they sometimes start avoiding me. However, there are a few who have remained being friends with me which makes me believe my ethnicity is not a problem, it's just how they view my ethnic group. Peers often enjoy my company when I'm labelled nothing more than my name, when there are no ethnicities or nationalities attached to me. I have made friends, but I can count them all on my fingers and yes, they're all international students. Sometimes, other international students can be racist towards other international students too and that can be really disheartening. I've sat with groups of local students who have very openly passed racist comments about other peers in our class and most times I have refrained from admitting I am an international student myself. Over the time, I'm in my third year of studies now, but I feel I have gradually lost interest in attending any of my classes. There's always a fear of being left out and it's hard to even try and mingle when I feel so. Tutors can be tough too sometimes. They often overlook international students and focus mainly on the locals. You would be surprised to see how international students are completely avoided in group discussions like in one of my classes last sem. And guess what? It was an Aboriginal Studies class. lol.*

*A few months ago, on a number of occasions, I felt excluded while discussing a new project. This took place in the office space or after the conclusion of a meeting when 4 of us involved in the project were standing and discussing the project. One staff member turned her back towards me in a way that excluded me from the discussion. On one occasion, when 3 of us were standing and discussing something, she came and stood right in front of me with her back towards me and started talking to the other two. What hurt me the most was the other two people in that scenario didn't even notice or made no comment when this was happening or later. It made me feel invisible.*

“Casual racism” frequently emerges in comments about English language proficiency. Students describe how they are often subjected to assumptions that their English skills are inadequate, irrespective of their actual fluency or academic performance (see Table 2.7.1).

Students point to a range of racist encounters in teaching and learning settings, which include being humiliated while giving in-class presentations, racial bias in the marking of assessments, and racist bias in clinical placement contexts.

*Back in my first semester, I had a really unpleasant experience that stuck with me. It was my very first uni presentation, and I was prepared and confident. My group members were supportive, but while I was presenting, I noticed a bunch of Aussie students laughing at the way we spoke and our accents. Even though I'd read about this sort of thing happening, experiencing it firsthand was honestly traumatising. I spoke to my tutor about it afterwards, but since it was the last class of the semester, nothing much could be done. I let it go, but it stayed with me. Since then, I've always preferred classes with a mix of students from different backgrounds, because that made me feel safer. Whenever I've ended up in groups with only Aussies, especially the girls. It's been the same story. They'd happily talk to everyone else but ignore me, and it wasn't just once. Over time, it started to feel like groupism. On top of that, they'd make me feel dumb, never really valuing my input, and would always take over the leadership roles in group assignments. I was left on the sidelines, even when I wanted to contribute. Because of all this, I've never really had the “uni life” people talk about. When I applied, I looked at rankings and all the good things written about the uni, but the reality didn't match. Most of the time I've just panicked before tutorials, dreaded coming to class, and honestly felt sick to my stomach. I wanted to share this because it's my last semester, and maybe this feedback could help improve things for future international students. I've been lucky to have supportive parents and friends who helped me get through it, but not everyone has that.*

International students, in particular, recounted distressing incidents during clinical placements, where their competence was questioned and they faced racially charged comments or dismissive treatment from facilitators and nursing staff.

*The marking of assignments should be done without the assessors having access to the student names. Clinical facilitators [CFs] at the placements also treat people of colour differently, basically interrogating us and making us feel bad about our accents (multiple students have shared these experiences with that same CF). Feedback to international students is given without respect and confidentiality that is given to our Caucasian colleagues. Some CFs do not try at all to understand our accents and making us feel bad, while others have no problem at all even if they're all Caucasian. Our buddy nurses at placement ask racist questions and judge us based on our accents and impose their political opinion about immigrants on us. And the fact that we can't say much to them because we have to spend next 2-3 weeks at that ward working with those same [registered nurses]. If we report that and we are taken off that ward, uni does not provide us with placements till it's too late, potentially delaying our graduation and costing us more visa fees.*

*I was on a phone call with my tertiary supervisor [name redacted] about 3 weeks ago, as a part of my professional placement as we were organising for her to visit me at the school where I am placed which is [redacted]. She demanded to book a parking for her. She commented on how the non-native teachers are unclear when they speak in class. Then she asked me what my first language is and when I told her that English is the official language in India she said "but you would have been taught by teachers with an accent. Now that is a "problem" because you carry that accent with you." She didn't get the subtle hints I dropped trying to communicate that she was being discriminatory and shaming my heritage and accent. I emailed my lecturer in charge and they organised another supervisor for me who was lovely. I just hope that [redacted] is trained in cultural sensitivity and given an explicit list of things that count as racism. she seems to be very old school and quite closed off to the idea of multiculturalism.*

Racist bias and racial discrimination shape the professional trajectories of South Asian staff. For academic and professional staff from South Asian communities, racism often manifests through biased student evaluations, questioning of English proficiency, and barriers to career progression and promotion.

*I have been on fixed-term contracts (sometimes lasting 3-6 months at a time) at this university for the last 7-8 years. My promotion was denied with the explanation that I needed to prove myself further, despite having an internationally recognised profile. In contrast, a White Australian staff member was promoted and given an ongoing role, even though their contributions to the university's work and research culture were minimal and their profile was mediocre. It seems that culturally and linguistically diverse individuals are expected to work almost twice as hard as White Australians at this university. We are required to secure more research funding to cover our own salaries, supervise more students, teach more courses, publish more, and take on voluntary "leadership" responsibilities to justify our employment. Meanwhile, some white Australian staff members can get away with anything, including bad behaviour/lack of commitment toward students, not showing up to work and being "casually racist" and homophobic to their fellow culturally-diverse staff members.*

Staff members further report being judged on their accent or communication style, which can affect perceptions of their professionalism or teaching quality.

*I had a student evaluation that once stated that they could not understand my English accent, which, considering how proficient in English I know myself to be, could only be a racially motivated and ignorant comment.*

*My teaching skills were questioned when I first commenced work as a sessional academic, the comment being made by senior faculty was: can she speak English to teach a class? As someone whose first language is English and had to take a proficiency test to enter this country for my education, I found it quite demeaning. This was followed by the academic staff not including me in emails regarding de-casualisation opportunities despite meeting eligibility requirements and being one of the most qualified applicants.*

These patterns contribute to a widespread perception that, while staff from South Asian communities are valued for their labour and academic contributions, they are not genuinely included or respected within the institutional culture. Respondents also noted that assumptions around their abilities often impact their career advancement opportunities. Collectively, the experiences of respondents from South Asian communities revealed the interplay of interpersonal prejudice, racist bias, and structural exclusion within Australian universities.

Overall, students and staff from South Asian communities reported experiencing multiple, interrelated forms of racism that range from overt hostility to more subtle, systemic exclusion.

Overt racism remains a visible concern, with some students describing racial slurs, jokes, or derogatory remarks directed at them based on their South Asian background. These experiences often become more pronounced during times of geopolitical tension or when compounded with anti-immigration sentiments, where public discourse fuels hostility towards visibly racialised groups. For example, some Indian students have noted an increase in racial hate following anti-immigration protests.

### 2.7.2 Lived experiences of students and staff from South East Asian communities

There were 3,171 responses to Question F12 from students and staff who were categorised into South East Asian communities based on the process outlined in Appendix D in Part A of the *Racism@Uni Survey Report* (Bray et al., 2025).<sup>26</sup> These students and staff were from a range of countries including Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.<sup>27</sup>

Among students and staff from South East Asian communities, notable rates of experiencing racism were observed specifically for domestic students and professional staff, with varying reports from international students and academic staff (see p.43, Part A). Table 2.7.2 in Appendix 1 presents representative examples of the lived experiences of student and staff from South East Asian communities. In their responses to Questions F12, students and staff from South East Asian communities reported experiencing various forms of racism, from interpersonal to structural.<sup>28</sup> They often endured jokes or comments about their culture, appearance, or accent and overt racial slurs.

*During my study at the [University], I have experienced and witnessed some incidents that made me feel shocked and helpless. First, one day after studying in [redact name] Library, my classmate was suddenly slapped by a local middle-aged woman, and she shouted at us to “go back to our country.” This was the first time I directly experienced such aggressive racism, and it made me feel unsafe even around the campus. Second, one of my close friends faced humiliation when she tried to change classes. A teacher called [redact name] checked her personal information in front of the whole class and finally told her to “get out.”*

*It was extremely disappointing to see someone in the leadership calling Asian colleagues as "banana skins" and everyone else with European origin laughed about it. The culture of racism at [University] are so deep-rooted in the system. Furthermore, the mainstream discussion of racism only takes into account those of European origin and the Aboriginal and Torres Islanders; people from other ethnical groups were alienated and forced to keep silent in the discussion.*

What respondents called “casual racism” was also commonly reported, including prejudice based on accent, misrecognition of identity, unwanted gazes, patronising communication styles, and racist stereotypes about a person’s identity. This was commonly reported in workplace settings.

*I have often witnessed casual racism from people in senior roles at the University and found it hard to challenge but have tried to do so.*

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<sup>26</sup> Categorisation into South East Asian communities was based on the process outlined in Appendix D in Part A of the *Racism@Uni Survey Report* (Bray et al., 2025).

<sup>27</sup> Categorisation was based on the process outlined in Appendix D in Part A of the *Racism@Uni Survey Report* (Bray et al., 2025).

<sup>28</sup> Comments from respondents from South East Asian communities, who also reported Islam as their religion and who specifically referred to experiences of racism related to their religion have been included in the analysis of the lived experiences of Muslim communities.

*It can be hard to deal with incidents of casual racism or verbal abuse, especially when you are a staff & student simultaneously and your manager & supervisor is the same person. You're stuck in between both roles and there are many grey lines on things you can/cannot do. And as an international student as well there is the fear of my academic supervisor not letting me graduate if I cross him the wrong way. The university should have some support for such cases.*

*My experience has mostly been receiving and witnessing casual racism in the workspace. My role is a service/support role that does not have senior management opportunities so any barrier for career progression is minimally applicable to me. I have witnessed people describe my Executive who is (to retain confidentiality) "racially diverse" as "passive" or "hard to understand" or "not passionate enough" and I believe those comparisons are based on Anglo Saxon standards (like research into ivy league entrance processes) as well as some gender bias. Unconscious bias is difficult to tackle, casual racism is similarly difficult to tackle. Last weekend's anti immigration protests were less reported on prior to and apparently less controversial to the masses on than the Gaza protests. University Leadership in Australia is predominantly "White" just as is the case for Australian C Suite Executives in corporate, Celebrity gossip columns, and our own government so there is a national / "Global West" issue of racism and lack of representation here. Most senior leaders and general staff in our sector know enough to publicly support anti racism and social justice rhetoric and practices i.e. to restrain themselves in public forums but it's the casual racism that comes out in "private" workplace discussions that shows how insipid racism is in the workplace and broader Australian society...and it's toxic in complex ways that white feminism, saviour complexes, "do as I say not as I do" parenting...not sure what solution you are after but sharing findings is helpful for real issues to be seen so thank you. Final comment...There is a difference in genuinely respecting women and wanting to surround yourself in them to pretend like you treat men and women equally when the opposite is (and most likely subconsciously) true. Promote good and smart women and "others", not "Women"/"Others" for the sake of pretending to be "for" equality.*

A recurring theme among respondents from South East Asian was a feeling of social exclusion, tied to physical appearance and cultural identity.

*I experienced in classes where nobody doesn't want to be peer or group with me because he/she/they prefer to be with English speakers rather than the foreigner who's speak English and happened many times, hard to sit in class sometimes because u feel left behind. I came for study and I have my goals to achieve so I tried to just focus on it even I come home and cry everyday but being here have to be strong and stronger.*

*No idea but the engineering degree is rife with racist individuals. I wish the ethics modules included forcibly making them learn some form of empathy because I am constantly in despair whenever I hear something new coming out of their mouths. Sometimes I wonder why they pick a degree that is meant to be about working in teams of people that just happens to have math in it. It is also incredibly hard to prove that someone is discriminating against you in a group project based on your background. This semester alone I have been kicked off a group without warning despite having started on part of the group report. I had already begun to feel that they had not wanted me there but that was what really drove the nail in the coffin. They didn't even reply to my messages when I asked for confirmation.*

This theme is further illustrated by a professional staff member who described experiencing subtle forms of exclusion and marginalisation in the workplace.

*When management makes racial or stereotypical comments in public (lunch rooms, meetings, etc) and it is not challenged or corrected by other present staff members, it feels like this sets a precedent of allowable behaviour. When staff members/peers makes comments in public and it is also not correct or challenged (even in the presence of management), it feels that the management, through inaction, indicates that this is an allowable and reasonable behaviour. When middle managers agree that the head of service is making inappropriate comments, and explains that it is "just the way he*

*is" and preach tolerance and understanding, it feels that my discomfort, distress and feelings matter less than "keeping the peace". Overall, the experience has made me feel unsafe, unsupported. It has damaged my views on [University] in general and I no longer promote [University] as a place to work or study to my friends, family or acquaintances.*

*I have experienced both subtle and overt forms of racial discrimination during my time at the University. Some of these behaviours were exclusionary, such as being left out of social or professional opportunities, and others were more direct, including racially motivated comments and unfair expectations about workload based on stereotypes about my ethnicity. These experiences have been isolating and have affected my sense of belonging and wellbeing at work. I believe that racism and racial discrimination at the University are not always acknowledged because they can present in indirect ways, such as microaggressions or "justified" decisions that disproportionately impact people from non-Caucasian backgrounds. It is important that these behaviours are taken seriously, because even when subtle, they accumulate over time and cause harm. I hope the University will continue to build stronger accountability measures, more transparent reporting processes, and active education for staff at all levels about racial bias, discrimination, and inclusion.*

Respondents from South East Asian communities often described feeling peripheral within the university community, due to prevalent exclusion and marginalisation, exhibited through informal segregation, as well as exclusion from social or professional groups and subtle power dynamics. Respondents from South East Asian communities also talked about "code-switching" to fit in.<sup>29</sup>

Students reported that their experiences of teaching and learning were impacted by racism. Some international students noted being treated differently compared to White students, emphasising a racialised hierarchy of belonging that privileges whiteness in academic and social settings.

*I experienced in classes where nobody wants to be peer or group with me because he/she/they prefer to be with English speakers rather than the foreigner who speaks English and happened many times, hard to sit in class sometimes because u feel left behind. I came for study and I have my goals to achieve so I tried to just focus on it even I come home and cry everyday but being here have to be strong and stronger.*

Students also identified instances of racial bias in assessments and the curriculum.

*I find the racism at [University] to be predominantly one of unconscious biases that go unchallenged by the white dominant culture, and perhaps to some extent, embedded in the curriculum. I understand that, particularly in my field, critical analysis of politics in both historical and contemporary contexts will involve broaching controversial subjects; however, the framing of the West as having some inherent moral superiority is a problem. Rarely does a week go past without hearing of the terrible acts of the "authoritarian regimes" of the likes of China, DPRK, Iran, Russia, etc, while the West, while analysed critically, is still promoted as the upholder of Human Rights. Further, the positives of Global South "regimes" are never mentioned; the framework is one of orientalism. I pose the simple question of how many invasions of sovereign states the listed Global South state has engaged in vs the West? It is one between them vs easily double digits. I simply wish for the outlook to be balanced.*

A sub-theme that emerged from the data was the questioning of academic ability, particularly in writing skills. International students reported having their academic competence doubted based on racialised assumptions about language proficiency. They encountered speculation from teachers that the quality of their work resulted from the use of artificial intelligence (AI).

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<sup>29</sup> Code switching is where a person adjusts their language, behaviour, and appearance to fit different social contexts, which is often a response to racism.

*I personally experienced a situation where my academic writing was questioned under suspicion of AI use. I had a meeting with Academic Integrity Officer to prove my innocence, and shortly after, I received an outcome email. The reasoning section started with the statement "During the meeting it became quite clear that your command of spoken English is very good and aligns with the written expression in the assignments." This implies that non-native speakers may be unfairly suspected if their academic writing exceeds expectations which creates a perception of bias. Being international student from a non-English country or having exotic name and surname does not mean they have bad academic writing skills. Even if it occurs subconsciously, racism is racism.*

Students further reported that racism occurs not only in on-campus teaching and learning settings but also during their clinical placements and residential settings.

*During my clinical placement, there was a consistent shortage of opportunities. A peer from the year above told me, "You'll be placed last and won't get any opportunities," citing the example of an Indian student in their cohort who had still not been allocated a placement. At the time, I didn't believe it. However, in my own year, I've observed that five Asian students including me have yet to receive placements and are still waiting. This pattern has raised concerns for me about fairness and equity in the allocation process.*

*Some of the clinical tutors are racist & shown discrimination towards students from different cultural background. We know we can report them but we are in fear of retaliation & we do not believe we will be protected by university and our names might be disclosed to the tutors we reported. We do not think that university will do something about it rather than protect their staff.*

*Racism is deeply rooted in Australian society, including here at the [University]. Subtle racism is everywhere, in conversations, how student halls are segregated (indirectly), etc. Reforms must start inductively. Racism interventions should not be "tick the box," it should be mandatory! Cultural training and induction are essential for all students and staff.*

Experiences of racial discrimination were evident across various institutional settings. Respondents reported discrimination based on names in teaching and learning settings and in employment settings, barriers to fair access to university services

Staff also drew attention to racist behaviours within workplace settings. The following example illustrates this.

*When management makes racial or stereotypical comments in public (lunch rooms, meetings, etc) and it is not challenged or corrected by other present staff members, it feels like this sets a precedent of allowable behaviour. When staff members/peers makes comments in public and it is also not correct or challenged (even in the presence of management), it feels that the management, through inaction, indicates that this is an allowable and reasonable behaviour. When middle managers agree that the head of service is making inappropriate comments, and explains that it is "just the way he is" and preach tolerance and understanding, it feels that my discomfort, distress and feelings matter less than "keeping the peace". Overall, the experience has made me feel unsafe, unsupported. It has damaged my views on [University] in general and I no longer promote [University] as a place to work or study to my friends, family or acquaintances.*

Professional and academic staff indicated that racial discrimination persists within employment processes and workplace structures, despite the presence of laws and policies intended to counter such practices.

*I have experienced both subtle and overt forms of racial discrimination during my time at the University. Some of these behaviours were exclusionary, such as being left out of social or professional opportunities, and others were more direct, including racially motivated comments and unfair expectations about workload based on stereotypes about my ethnicity. These experiences have been isolating and have affected my sense of belonging and wellbeing at work. I believe that racism and racial discrimination at the University are not always acknowledged because they can present in indirect ways, such as microaggressions or “justified” decisions that disproportionately impact people from non-Caucasian backgrounds. It is important that these behaviours are taken seriously, because even when subtle, they accumulate over time and cause harm. I hope the University will continue to build stronger accountability measures, more transparent reporting processes, and active education for staff at all levels about racial bias, discrimination, and inclusion.*

*I have not been given the opportunity to be promoted into a role that, according to my colleagues, I was already effectively performing. Despite taking on a significant portion of the responsibilities, the role was initially given to two white male staff members, both of whom were eventually removed from the position due to underperformance. When I approached management to express my interest in stepping into the role, I was denied the opportunity. To this day, I continue to carry out much of the work associated with the role, yet management has consistently refused to formally acknowledge my contribution or support my professional progression. Additionally, I have observed a concerning pattern of workplace bullying in my area, with what appears to be a disproportionate focus on performance managing female staff. This has created a sense of distress among many of my female colleagues. Promotions also appear to be more readily given to white male employees. It was only after issues of racial bias were raised in a recent staff survey that an Asian staff member was promoted within that team. This sequence of events has further raised concerns about fairness and equity in the promotion and performance management processes. This is the first time in my long tenure at the [University] that I have witnessed such concerning treatment of staff by members of the highest levels of senior management.*

*The racism is ingrained in our institutions. Being doubted about my ability to work or teach simply because I'm not white has severely impacted my confidence. It is also incredibly frustrating to be offered classes and then told it was given to a white male candidate that you know isn't as qualified or doesn't have the experience you do. It's disheartening to overhear students say they expected to be taught by a white person and leave negative evaluations that have nothing to do with how you teach and everything to do with their own racial biases, or to have complaints made against you that are patently untrue and are proven to be so. I also don't think it is appropriate for the vice chancellor (not the current one) to make racially charged statements and to get away with it. Or to see how white staff can behave badly towards those who are of a different ethnic background and bully them, but it is the victim who is blamed and subjected to pressure by executive staff. Everything is rancid.*

While overt racism is less frequently reported in their responses to Question F12, respondents from South East Asian communities state that “casual racism” and covert and structural forms of exclusion remain ingrained within institutional culture.

### 2.7.3 Lived experiences of students and staff from North East Asian communities

There were 313 qualitative responses to the questions at F12 of the survey who were categorised into North East Asian communities based on the process outlined in Appendix D in Part A of

the *Racism@Uni Survey Report* (Bray et al., 2025).<sup>30</sup> These respondents were from Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese communities. Responses to Question F12 from respondents who were categorised into Chinese communities are discussed in section 2.7.4.

Only 10 respondents from North East Asian communities gave accounts of lived experiences of racism in their response to Question F12 in the survey, with many more suggesting ways to address racism. The accounts about experiences of racism mostly concerned what the respondents categorised as “casual racism,” such as racial stereotyping and accent-based racism, as well as “ostracisation” and social exclusion, but they clearly situate those experiences in institutional contexts. Most examples of the lived experiences of racism provided are presented below.

One respondent commented directly on their experience as a domestic student and how that experience intersects with living with a disability.

*It's disheartening when people assume I am an international student. I was born and primarily raised in Australia, so I don't have a foreign accent. The assumption is purely off my Asian appearance. I don't understand why so many Australians haven't realised that a lot of "foreign" looking people are born in Australia everyday and have been for years now. Also, in my experience ableism is a larger issue at [University] than racism. However, the two often came together for me. I believe people are often surprised that I have a learning disability because they associate being Asian with being smart and good at learning. People often assume I'm good at maths and are disappointed to learn I'm not. I'm average at maths. But people treat me like I'm stupid because I'm not excellent at the things they expect me to be good at. It makes me feel like a disappointment. I'm either an expert at maths or I'm incapable of it. I'm either tech savvy or have never touched a laptop before. There is no middle ground in many people's minds.*

One professional staff member made an observation about the culture of residential colleges.

*[name] residential colleges have a toxic culture preferring white rural Australian culture and ostracising anything outside of that.*

One international HDR student described accent-based and other forms of microaggressions.

*I have heard racist comments made by students about minority colleagues (from Asian backgrounds) because they have accents and are questioned about how they got here and whether they should be allowed to teach.*

Another international Higher Degree Research student described several experiences of racism, including what they labelled as “microaggressions” in the form of being told that their “English is so good,” and the devaluing of their cultural knowledge and ways of doing research.

*A microaggression is Senior faculty members saying to me "your English is so good" the first time we met when I arrived here. They were supposed to be in my supervisory panel. It is already 2025. I didn't expect to experience that still in an academic setting. Also being made to feel like my culture is invisible even to a point of disagreeing with my decolonial methods for my stud and also my film. "But we the Australian audience would be bored. You won't hook us." Even when I said that I'm following the aesthetic and visual storytelling tradition of my culture. That made me cry. These things are hard to be explained in a quantitative survey and hard to report because you're told you're just overreacting. Or worse, I'd get a low mark. But this is just one symptom of a racist hegemonic thought. It has no place in higher education especially faculty*

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<sup>30</sup> Categorisation into East Asian communities was based on the process outlined in Appendix D in Part A of the *Racism@Uni Survey Report* (Bray et al., 2025).

*members who already hold "doctorate degrees." I can list so many things on a regular basis that makes me feel small and constantly in a defensive in the academic setting. But I'm exhausted.*

One international South Korean student referred to how she is mis-identified as Chinese and explained this as a form of racism, along with the disregarding and doubting of the academic qualifications she achieved in South Korea.

*People often assume my national[ity] as China and refer me as "Chinese" or "Chinese chick". I know there exists no ill-intention behind, however I believe this is a common form of racism. Furthermore, people often disregard my degree which I completed back in South Korea and "doubt" my qualification.*

An international undergraduate student noted how their academic integrity was questioned based on assumptions about their command of English:

*I personally experienced a situation where my academic writing was questioned under suspicion of AI use. I had a meeting with Academic Integrity Officer to prove my innocence, and shortly after, I received an outcome email. The reasoning section started with the statement "During the meeting it became quite clear that your command of spoken English is very good and aligns with the written expression in the assignments." This implies that non-native speakers may be unfairly suspected if there academic writing exceeds expectations which creates a perception of bias. Being international student from a non-English country or having exotic name and surname does not mean they have bad academic writing skills. Even if it occurs subconsciously, racism is racism.*

Another international undergraduate student commented on how racism at university is “often expressed as avoidance and exclusion.”

*Modern racism in western countries is often expressed through avoidance and exclusion rather than hostility and verbal aggression. This aversive racism prevents students from a different race to form meaningful connections in social events.*

An academic staff member noted that they have mostly experienced “casual racism”, but also felt that racial discrimination heightened at particular moments, such as during the COVID19 pandemic and this was associated with an “extreme right-wing man visiting campus” which they did not think the university managed well.

*Most of the racism I've personally experienced has been casual and well-intentioned. However, the height of Covid meant that our students have been subject to discrimination, usually by people visiting the campus (extreme right-wing man visiting the campus and provoking vulnerable targets with a phone camera recording). This needs to be managed better, it should not be possible for somebody to do this and the university should do a better job than silencing and treating its students for understandably strong reactions. Too often people from racial minorities are expected to either shut up and take it or to be able to manage their reactions when someone is being racist to them. The reality is that we are people, just like any other, and when someone does something racist, we all react differently, and sometimes not in line with normative standards - how many of us are trained on how to respond in a way that is safe and measured, yet assertive, yet doesn't hurt the feelings of others around, yet...?*

An academic staff member explained how they experienced racism in relation to their accent:

*Some students have giggled whenever I spoke in class, apparently finding my accent amusing. Others have aggressively or rudely refused my requests to engage in class activities. I have never sought assistance, as the university seems indifferent to the*

*stress experienced by teaching associates and casual lecturers. I have never felt protected. The prevailing culture here demands endurance and performing tasks without noises.*

Another member of the academic staff explained that their experience of racism took the form of what they described as “microaggressions”:

*Racism that many people experience is not obvious one but subtle one like microaggressions. People (mostly White Caucasian from my experiences) are not aware that their behaviours are microaggressions towards different ethnicity groups. Australian university and the culture are based on rules, regulations and beliefs in White-dominant world. They are superficially nice to different ethnic groups without understanding their languages and cultures enough. For example, English is my second language and I still feel disadvantaged about it. I do not complain about it but we are disadvantaged about issues that are taken for granted by White majority.*

#### 2.7.4 Lived experiences of students and staff from Chinese communities

There were 1,788 responses to Question F12 in the survey from students and staff who were categorised into Chinese communities based on the process outlined in Appendix D in Part A of the *Racism@Uni Survey Report* (Bray et al., 2025).<sup>31</sup> In their responses, this cohort reported experiencing interpersonal, institutional and structural racism.

The qualitative responses demonstrate that students and staff from Chinese communities encounter blatant and direct racist remarks, such as the use of racial slurs and derogatory language, including inappropriate racist jokes that reinforce harmful stereotypes.

*While walking on the campus path, I was suddenly and without any provocation verbally abused by an unknown man who shouted racial slurs at me, including phrases like "F\*\*\* chink" and other discriminatory terms targeting my Chinese identity.*

*I would like to share an incident that I came across from another student at [University]. She was studying late at the library when a male student walked in and made a racist remark, saying things like "f\*\*\*ing Chinese" in a very offensive and discriminatory way. She reported the case to the university and followed it up for several months. However, despite her efforts, the student who made the racist comment did not face any visible consequences or disciplinary action. This incident left me feeling very disappointed with how the university handled the matter. [University] promotes diversity and inclusion in its public image, but when a real case of racism happened, the response seemed indifferent and ineffective. It makes me question how seriously the university treats such issues and whether students can really feel protected and supported when they experience racism on campus. I truly hope [University] can strengthen its response mechanisms, take racist incidents more seriously, and ensure accountability so that students from all backgrounds feel safe and respected.*

Respondents also highlighted the multiple layers of racism they experience, ranging from what they described as ‘casual racism’ to Sinophobia and, in some cases, hate crimes.

*Casual racism to China and Chinese-appearing people is deeply engrained in Australian culture and the West in general. I have been surprised by the Sinophobic comments I hear quite often from otherwise reasonable colleagues at [University] denigrating China, Chinese-made things and people. There was very little support shown to Asian-appearing people for hate-crimes in the COVID era - quite eye-opening and disappointing that there*

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<sup>31</sup> Categorisation into Chinese communities was based on the process outlined in Appendix D in Part A of the *Racism@Uni Survey Report* (Bray et al., 2025).

*was no large social outcry or a commissioner appointed. I see very skilled and hard-working colleagues of Asian descent who are continually passed over for promotion at [University] because they are not part of an invisible club.*

*It is the casual racism hidden behind a joke or to help the person they are attacking or that they do not understand someone's accent etc.*

*I was once called a dog eater. I don't like this name, and I don't think it's fair to call me that. I was so angry, but I have no idea how to protect myself and the image of my country. I still feel awful when I think about that experience.*

*Sinophobia is relatively present in university contexts. The behaviour towards Chinese nationals and/or those who have a limited grasp on English is quite appalling and frequently isolates Chinese people.*

*The Uni seemingly ignores the ever present, and historical, Sinophobia and broader anti-Asian discrimination. The absence of comment by the UE, despite the presence Sinophobic graffiti, community sentiment, harassment on public transport, blaming ethnic Chinese without any connection to the PRC for their politics, etc. Yet the Uni seems to be very selective in how they choose to address racism. It was quick to create focused policies and public statements to support Jewish students due to the current issues in Israel and Palestine. They provide cultural competency programs, establishment of a business unit, and equity programs to support indigenous students. Yet there is a deafening silence when it comes to Australia's consistently other historically maligned group: Chinese Australians, and other migrants of ethnically Chinese backgrounds.*

Several respondents from Chinese communities pointed to experiences of racism being exacerbated due to geopolitical tensions, where they identify being targets of Sinophobia. Less prevalent but still significant themes included limited cultural inclusion despite high enrolment numbers.

Students and staff from Chinese communities further emphasised that “casual racism” remains among the most widespread forms of racist behaviour in university settings.

*I believe that casual racism is one of the most prolific forms of racism. Targeted and direct attacks on one's identity is frowned upon and is obvious to an onlooker, but subtle and casual forms of racism are way more prevalent and are more difficult to address. How does one report an incident if it was a very casual comment made in the workplace? Or a very subtle slip of the tongue? Or a vague implication based on stereotypes? These comments cause distress, but not severely. When these situations occur I am reminded that I am a person of colour and that there is a divide between “them” and “us”, which is startling to me as a biracial person (I occupy both the majority and minority). The questions in this survey mainly seek to understand “unpleasant racism” as opposed to the increasing rise of racist fertilisation & objectification (which one could swiftly dismiss as compliments or “positive” attributes). The reality is that any “special” treatment that is based on one's race, positive or negative, is a form of racism. E.g. “Japanese people work harder than xyz people”, and even “Biracial people/Halfies” are prettier than non-biracial people” (I have heard this comment hundreds of times throughout my ENTIRE life). Being reminded that I am “them” and not “us” is unpleasant, but it does not affect my self esteem as I am very proud of my background, heritage, composition, whatever you want to call it.*

Students and staff from Chinese communities also drew attention to derogatory comments about their language proficiency, experiences of accent-based racism, and the assumptions made about their identities based on their physical appearance.

*In my day to day experience, I am always made to feel that I'm not good enough, especially in the English language, both by supervisors and other staff. I do speak and write well but the constant assumption made me feel that ill never be good enough.*

*I was once publicly mocked by a subject coordinator in class because of my accent, even though we were speaking the same language. At the time, I felt very uncomfortable, but I chose not to respond directly because my grades were controlled by them. Although this happened a few years ago, I still feel affected by it. I sincerely hope that such incidents will not happen again, and I want to call on all subject coordinators to respect different accents and cultures.*

*I was born in Australia and sound Australian but my ethnicity is Chinese. If I am attending classes where I do not know anyone (like university electives), quite often people assume I am an international student because I look Asian. Similarly, I have been in situations where I notice all the white people sit on one table and the Asian people sit on another table. I think there is a strong cultural segregation between the two groups at [University].*

*In my tutorials, which are all white groups, students mocked a Chinese child for “only speaking Chinese” and laughed about his hobbies in front of me. It made me feel unsafe, excluded, and unwelcome. Experiences like this have made me feel unsafe and excluded at university. Instead of being able to focus fully on my learning, I find myself dreading classes and worrying about whether I will be respected. As an international student already far away from home, the lack of cultural respect has amplified my sense of loneliness and made me feel like I do not belong. I thought university should be a place where diversity is valued and respected. Instead, this experience has affected my confidence, my sense of belonging, and my ability to participate fully in class.*

*Some girls chatted about how they hate the way some Chinese people talk because they pause a lot while speaking English and mocked the uh— sound, while me the Chinese, sitting very next to them, they did not care about my existence. I know it's not serious, but it makes me uncomfortable.*

Students perceived potential bias and discrimination in the assessment of their assignments.

*Some students suspect that tutors might discriminate against non-native English speakers when grading assignments. They worry that their English writing skills, rather than the actual quality of their ideas or work, are unfairly judged. This can lead to feelings that: Scores are lower than deserved. Feedback focuses more on language mistakes than on content. The grading is not fair or equal compared to native speakers. This creates a concern that academic performance is negatively affected by language background, not just academic ability.*

They also described being socially excluded in group activities, which affected their sense of participation and belonging.

*As an international student, I haven't personally experienced overt acts of racism at the [University], but I've occasionally felt a subtle sense of exclusion in group activities or classroom discussions, especially when language barriers or cultural references make participation harder.*

*In my first and second year of my degree, I have been excluded from group discussions, especially when most of my classmates were Australian. Additionally, I've been living on campus and I've found it really hard to make friends with the locals living here. It was easier to make friends with international students like myself. I find that every time I interact with locals, I put my guard up, to protect myself in case they are racist to me or judgemental because of my ethnicity. Lastly, I have been yelled and screamed at while walking on the sidewalk back home by people in their cars multiple times over the years. I don't think that this should be the experience of international students here. A few friends over the years have also related to my experience and shared that they have experienced similar things. I think it's hard to change mindsets especially when majority of the population does not like foreigners entering the country,*

*"stealing their jobs", "stealing opportunities" and "stealing housing". This issue is far bigger than what the university can do as the government themselves have biased opinions about people of different ethnicities. I suppose the university could make better efforts in educating local students about the culture of international students and challenges that we face when coming to a different country. I just hope that students in [University] can have more compassion, understanding and empathy, challenging their beliefs of people from different ethnicities. Similar to what's being done for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. I have held back my thoughts about this situation ever since I've step foot into Australia as I am afraid of my visa being revoked, being judged for saying something and felt that even if I did speak out, it would not change anything. I trust that this is a safe space to speak about my experiences and I hope that maybe something will change even if it's after I've left Australia, for the future international students who would like to study in Australia. I love Australia, I enjoy living here while completing my studies but I believe that these issues should not be swept under the rug and ignored. Thank you.*

*My friend and I once experienced discrimination, mockery, and insulting gestures from a few male students on campus. They thought we did not understand the meaning of those gestures. I tried to report it to the school, and I was asked to come in for a face-to-face talk. However, I have no evidence. I also do not need psychological counselling, as I do not feel inferior – I only feel angry. I hold a negative attitude toward how the school punishes racist students, because in fact I have no evidence. The reason I wrote email was to let the school know that this kind of incident still exists on our campus.*

Students reported other forms of racism in teaching and learning settings, such as differential treatment in classroom interactions; for example, instances where instructors pronounced or acknowledged the names of white students aloud but did not do the same for Chinese students.

*The tutors tend to read "white-presenting" names outloud i.e. "George made a good point when they said...", while any non-white sounding names they'll say "as someone said... the point someone said earlier" which leads to people with white sounding names to participate more than others. I think they should either read everyone's name (and maybe say "did I pronounce that correctly?" Etc) Or not read anyone's name at all.*

Students from Chinese communities also highlighted instances of racial discrimination experienced during clinical placements.

*The most significant incidents of racial discrimination I experienced and witnessed occurred during one of my clinical placements and were perpetrated by a staff member at that healthcare facility. I did not feel safe reporting the incidents to the facility due to the power imbalance and fear that it might negatively affect my clinical appraisal. I was also hesitant to report to the university because I was unaware of the appropriate person or office to report to safely and uncertain about what actions the university would take upon receiving a report, including whether it could impact my placement arrangements. I think it would be beneficial if the university could provide clear instructions for reporting discrimination during placements and explicitly communicate the procedures and actions that follow a report. Ideally, students should also have the option to report anonymously if they wish.*

*During my mentor placement I observed several inappropriate behaviours from my mentor. He made racist remarks, such as asking me to cover my screen so that "people from Beijing" would not see what he was doing, and stereotyping my hometown by saying it is known for severe smog. He frequently mocked different accents (American, Australian, etc.) while claiming his own accent was superior. He also made sexist comments, for example, saying about a pregnant classmate who could not join a competition, "Unless you can get pregnant, you still have to go." In addition, he often boasted about having girlfriends around the world and spoke about going to clubs in a sexually suggestive way.*

The ingrained nature of racism in university workplace settings was highlighted, with staff respondents pointing to its impact on employment opportunities, experiences of being dismissed, and having their work outcomes questioned or undervalued. Examples are as follows.

*The racism is ingrained in our institutions. Being doubted about my ability to work or teach simply because I'm not white has severely impacted my confidence. It is also incredibly frustrating to be offered classes and then told it was given to a white male candidate that you know isn't as qualified or doesn't have the experience you do. It's disheartening to overhear students say they expected to be taught by a white person and leave negative evaluations that have nothing to do with how you teach and everything to do with their own racial biases, or to have complaints made against you that are patently untrue and are proven to be so. I also don't think it is appropriate for the vice chancellor (not the current one) make racially charged statements and to get away with it. Or to see how white staff can behave badly towards those who are of a different ethnic background and bully them, but it is the victim who is blamed and subjected to pressure by executive staff. Everything is rancid.*

*I have experienced situations where my colleagues and group leaders have dismissed or questioned my work outcomes because I am not white. My contributions have not been acknowledged, and I have felt that my career development has not been supported as equally as others. In the workplace environment, I have also been subjected to exclusionary behaviours, such as being ignored or treated with coldness, as well as being asked inappropriate questions about my personal life. These experiences have made me feel undervalued and isolated.*

Structural racism was also identified, reflected in inadequate anti-racism policies, a lack of institutional accountability, and limited representation of academics in leadership roles.

*The University frequently highlights its commitment to addressing psychosocial hazards, including racism in the workplace, yet in practice these principles are inconsistently applied and, at times, weaponised. Allegations are amplified selectively, while staff who share factual information or perspectives outside the dominant narrative are silenced or terminated. This unequal application of standards undermines the University's stated values and creates an environment of mistrust. The irony is not lost on staff and students who have witnessed executives backpedal on policies once challenged. The number of individuals unfairly treated or removed for exercising their right to advocate for justice has only deepened distrust toward leadership. In a climate of financial strain and job insecurity, many now feel compelled to suppress their views to avoid repercussions - proof that the psychosocial hazards the University claims to guard against are being imposed by executive decisions themselves. For many, the University no longer feels like a safe or open space. Staff and students alike describe environments that are volatile, unsafe, and silencing. International students in particular face entrenched biases: they are too often marginalised for their presence on campus or their efforts to communicate in English, with little empathy or institutional support. Compounding this, elements of tall poppy syndrome among some domestic students and staff exacerbate a culture of exclusion. While the University outwardly promotes values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, these efforts often appear performative. Anti-racism messages are preached but not consistently upheld, with few educators from those cultures leading conversations or shaping policies. Instead, box-ticking exercises dominate, reducing inclusion to optics rather than meaningful practice. Executives proclaim "zero tolerance" for racism, yet their selective application of principles and outcomes reveals thinly veiled racism in decision-making processes. Leadership has further undermined its credibility by outsourcing policy design to external third parties, rather than engaging transparently with the diverse staff and student body. This practice allows executives or their stakeholders to impose views indirectly while avoiding accountability - a tactic that is both spineless and deeply corrosive to trust. The University is not inherently a hateful institution - in fact, I have thoroughly*

*observed high levels of dignity, respect and compassion across the student and staff bodies. However, its structures, practices, and leadership decisions enable forms of direct and indirect racism, particularly against marginalised groups. For an institution that prides itself on benchmarking and sector leadership, these realities reveal a decline in moral and academic integrity. To move forward, the University must replace performative gestures and selective enforcement with genuine dialogue, accountability, and policies developed alongside the very communities they affect. My psychosocial health and safety have been significantly impacted by the very microaggressions embedded subtly within the University's policies on addressing psychosocial hazards. The irony is that a framework intended to ensure safety and respect has instead contributed to harm. While it is expected that not all decisions will satisfy everyone, executive leadership must apply their principles consistently, and not selectively, to avoid crossing into discriminatory or racist practices.*

Together, respondents categorised into South Asian, South East Asian, North East Asian and Chinese communities reported a wide range of racially discriminatory experiences within university environments, encompassing interpersonal, institutional, and structural dimensions. Their accounts point to a broader trend of racial homogenisation, where diverse Asian identities are often conflated, disregarding unique cultural and historical backgrounds and experiences. Respondents expressed feelings of invisibility in university discussions, with the term “Asian” functioning as a catch-all label.

On a structural level, respondents criticised Eurocentric curricula that prioritise Western content, while neglecting Asian knowledge systems and excluding diverse Asian voices from teaching, research, and broader institutional conversations. Overall, these experiences reveal a climate of systemic and everyday racism within university settings, where staff and students are often categorised in ways that perpetuate stereotypes, while simultaneously being marginalised, in terms of institutional recognition and leadership opportunities.

### 3. Collective Lived Experiences and Patterns of Racism in Australian University Settings

While there are many who have not experienced racism, the data from both students and staff revealed a consistent pattern of exclusion, devaluation, and marginalisation within university environments. Table 3.1 in the Appendix provides illustrative quotes taken from across the F12 qualitative dataset for all identified communities and other negatively racialised respondents. Racism permeates the full spectrum of university environments, from teaching and learning contexts to clinical placements, workplaces, and communal areas such as libraries. Racism within Australian universities manifests in interpersonal, institutional and structural forms, as well as through microaggressions. Overt racism includes racial slurs, exclusion, and harassment, reported particularly by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, African, Asian, and Muslim respondents. Covert racism operates through policies, hiring practices, and curricula that privilege white students and staff, often disadvantaging students and staff from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, Pasifika, Māori, Middle Eastern, and Muslim communities. Staff report both overt and covert forms of racism; from racial slurs, jokes, and offensive language to more subtle manifestations, such as accent discrimination, social exclusion, and assumptions of incompetence based on racial or cultural identity. These patterns are mirrored in the student experience, with many suggesting that racism manifests through dismissive attitudes toward contributions, biased feedback, and discriminatory assessment marking or placement opportunities. Importantly, these experiences are often compounded by institutional silence, where incidents are minimised, ignored, or dismissed. Importantly, these experiences are often compounded by institutional silence, where incidents are minimised, ignored, or dismissed.

While the stereotypes held about particular groups vary, the mechanisms of racism remain consistent across contexts. Racialised individuals encounter stereotyping, microaggressions, everyday denigration, and “casual” racism that normalise exclusion and reinforce existing hierarchies. These shared mechanisms create an environment in which racism operates not only as an interpersonal problem but as a systemic feature of university culture.

For students, racism in teaching and learning contexts appears across interpersonal, institutional, and structural levels. At the interpersonal level, students describe overt racial slurs, microaggressions, exclusion from group work, and differential treatment in classrooms. Many recounted having their intelligence questioned or being subject to assumptions about language ability and cultural background. Experiences of racialised social exclusion, such as other students not wanting to sit with them or work with them on group projects, were common across all communities. These everyday experiences of racial bias erode belonging and contribute to social isolation.

At the institutional level, respondents reported that curriculum design and pedagogical practices remain predominantly Eurocentric, with limited recognition of Indigenous, non-Western, or culturally diverse scholarship. Respondents described this curricular bias as reproducing systemic inequalities in knowledge production and validation, reinforcing the marginalisation of alternative perspectives and knowledge systems within university teaching and learning environments.

For staff, racism similarly spans interpersonal, institutional, and structural domains. Interpersonally, microaggressions, stereotyping, and exclusion are common. Institutionally, inequitable recruitment and promotion practices are explained as persisting, with racialised staff often underrepresented in leadership and overburdened with cultural loads and labour relating to diversity, inclusion and equity. Structurally, long-standing organisational hierarchies and cultures sustain these inequalities. Many staff report a lack of institutional support when confronting racism, particularly when incidents are subtle or embedded in systemic processes rather than overt hostility.

Both students and staff consistently reported that formal reporting mechanisms are ineffective or unsafe. Fear of reprisal, limited confidentiality, and a lack of accountability discourage reporting. When complaints are made, the burden of proof typically rests on the individual, producing emotional exhaustion, diminished confidence, and professional disillusionment. Over time, these experiences contribute to disengagement, career stagnation, and attrition, and they erode trust in the university's commitment to racial equity.

A further layer involves the co-occurrence of multiple racialised, and religious prejudices reported across identified communities. Islamophobia, antisemitism, Sinophobia, and xenophobia appear simultaneously in the accounts of the lived experiences of racism at Australian universities, reflecting the targeting of individuals based on perceived group identity rather than personal actions or beliefs. Across these forms, a shared mechanism emerges: ethnic, religious, or cultural identity is treated as inherently political, collective, and fixed, holding individuals responsible for the actions of nations or groups with which they may have no connection.

The qualitative data reveal distinct expressions of intersecting biases experienced by different groups. Muslim respondents reported encountering racist associations with terrorism and the events of 9/11; Chinese students described encountering Sinophobic suspicion; Jewish students face the conflation of their identity with the Israeli state; and African, Middle Eastern, South Asian and South East Asian students are often subjected to xenophobia and racialisation, based on accent, appearance, or presumed cultural differences. These dynamics not only perpetuate social exclusion but also serve to reinforce racial hierarchies, under the guise of political or cultural critique.

Analysing the qualitative responses reveals two predominant themes regarding the experiences of racism reported by survey respondents within Australian university settings. The first theme highlights how periods of transnational political conflict or intensified national debate frequently exacerbate racism. Geopolitical events and domestic policy debates, such as the recent housing policy debates that focused on the contested relationship between housing shortages, immigration and international students are reported to have led to the exacerbation of racially discriminatory attitudes and behaviours among individuals on campus.

Secondly, beyond these politically charged moments, respondents' narratives underscore the pervasive influence of entrenched racial stereotypes and attitudes that shape daily interactions within university environments. These deeply rooted beliefs contribute to unequal treatment, exclusion, and the reinforcement of racial hierarchies, fundamentally affecting institutional culture and academic expectations.

Relatedly, the continued prevalence of subtle, indirect, and less overt forms of racism, including microaggressions and everyday exclusions that tend to be dismissed or considered normal. These insidious instances of racial discrimination reveal the complex, multifaceted nature of racism in higher education, highlighting how both overt and covert forms are intricately woven into interpersonal relationships, institutional frameworks, and wider socio-political contexts.

Additional patterns include epistemic silencing, where racialised voices and knowledge are marginalised within academic discourse, and identity misrecognition, where individuals experience being misidentified or having their identities questioned. Both phenomena contribute to cognitive and emotional strain, further marginalising racialised individuals.

Finally, the data highlight intersections between interpersonal and institutional racism. Discriminatory behaviours are reinforced by systemic processes, from biased recruitment and

promotion practices to unequal academic feedback and racialised scrutiny by security staff. Social exclusion from informal networks further compounds these inequities.

Overall, the findings depict racism in universities as multifaceted, layered, and embedded within everyday interactions, institutional cultures, and structural arrangements. The data reveal a significant gap between those who experience racism and those who fail to recognise it, underscoring the need for sustained anti-racism education, leadership accountability, and open dialogue. Narrative evidence from staff and students exposes the extent to which racism is integrated into university life, demonstrating that racism in higher education is not episodic, but systemic, intersecting across identity, policy, and power.

### 3.1 Racism During Periods of Transnational or National Tension

A recurring pattern evident in the qualitative data concerns the intensification of racism during periods of transnational political conflict, societal tension or heightened national debate, as the following quote illustrates:

*The voice referendum was an atrocious time to be on campus. The racist rhetoric and inability for the university to protect Aboriginal people was abhorrent. The staff and leadership did not take steps to help keep Aboriginal and [Torres Strait Islander] people safe in class and on campus - despite a bunch of random emails being sent out to students it did not change anything in practice. I stopped coming to campus and as such failed all my courses that semester - that's how bad it was for me as a student on campus.*

*I think the worst racism I witnessed at [University] was during the Voice Referendum debate in late 2023. For instance, I remember a lab during which conversation (I was not a participant) turned to the debate and some unambiguously racist views were expressed about Indigenous Australians. I felt uncomfortable to disclose the extent of my views/support for the proposed amendment. Compared to non-university encounters I saw and had at the time, this instance was fairly tame.*

*We were scared by the recent anti-immigration protest and the lead up to that protest. Obvious racial slurs and messages, and intents were displayed during the protest as well. However, it was surprising that no information of caution and support were made available to students and staff, before or after the protests.*

Universities have largely failed to create culturally safe environments or provide adequate mental health support for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff and students grappling with the emotional fallout from the Voice referendum outcome, particularly following the “No” vote. In summary, the Voice referendum highlighted significant manifestations of structural racism, including harassment of Indigenous advocates, misuse of academic freedom to perpetuate racial harm, and a lack of institutional support for Indigenous perspectives and mental health needs.

As universities often reflect broader social and political dynamics, these tensions can manifest within campus environments, influencing interpersonal relations and perceptions of belonging. The qualitative data indicate that global conflicts and domestic policy debates, particularly those related to immigration, cultural identity, or international crises, can increase racism and shape the experiences of students and staff, with some reporting heightened hostility, stereotyping, or social exclusion linked to perceived national, ethnic, or religious identity.

The qualitative data show that racism manifests in various ways across communities within Australian universities, especially during times of heightened geopolitical tension and national

policy debates. While there are shared experiences such as microaggressions, structural exclusion, and feelings of non-belonging, the nature, visibility, and triggers of racism differ significantly among communities. These variations are influenced by factors including religion, migration background, national origin, and international relations, which shape how certain groups are racialised and treated within campus environments.

For Muslim, Arab, Middle Eastern, and Palestinian communities, racism has intensified during moments of heightened geopolitical conflict. Students and staff from these communities' report experiences of hostility, surveillance, and restrictions on expressing their academic freedom, and right to express their religious and cultural identity. During periods of political tension, there is often an expectation for these individuals to remain "neutral." That is, to refrain from protesting against violation of human rights and international law. As a result, racism directed at these communities is often perceived as institutional bias, lack of duty of care and bias messaging and narratives that does not value students and staff from all backgrounds, making universities sites of both Islamophobia, anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian racism.

There are Jewish students and staff who report a rise in antisemitism on Australian campuses since 7 October 2023. Jewish students experience harassment, social exclusion, and intimidation during protests or classroom discussions. Reports of these experiences of racism are associated with campus activism, online rhetoric, or misinformed assumptions about Jewish identity and privilege. Jewish staff and students frequently find themselves at the centre of geopolitical debates, navigating the complexities of personal identity against a backdrop of broader political contestation.

For South, South East, North East Asian and Chinese communities, racism typically manifests as linguicism (discrimination based on language, including an individual's accent or dialect), stereotyping, and exploitation within the international education sector. For Chinese students and staff, increased geopolitical tensions between Australia and China have led to racialised suspicions towards some students and staff, who are often perceived as potential "foreign agents" or threats to national security. Racism directed at these groups often focuses on nationality and linguistic differences, leading to feelings of exclusion, alienation, self-censorship, and restricted engagement in classroom and research environments. Indian and South Asian communities experience racism intensified by anti-immigration sentiments and public debates about immigration and the economy, which frame them as outsiders who "take places" or burden resources.

Students and staff from African communities frequently encounter more overt racism in Australian university environments, including stereotyping based on physical appearance, exclusion from peer and professional networks, and assumptions about their communication styles or academic abilities. Students and staff from African communities' experiences of racism are also compounded by discrimination based on refugee and migrant background and socio-economic status. National discussions surrounding migration and multiculturalism often reinforce these dynamics, portraying African communities through deficit narratives.

Across all these communities, racism within Australian universities is shaped by overlapping factors such as religion, race, nationality, geopolitics, and policy discourse. Periods of international tension, such as conflicts in the Middle East or diplomatic strains with China, directly impact campus culture, intensifying hostility and anxiety. While universities often frame racism as an individual or behavioural issue, these experiences illustrate that it is deeply structural and culturally embedded.

Respondents emphasised the importance of universities "resisting the current trend of polarising public campaigns that position support for one ethnic, religious, or cultural group at the expense of another".

*I think the University should not separate different groups for focus on reducing racism or racial discrimination - that is, we don't need a separate definition of antisemitism or Islamophobia or separate ways of dealing with these issues which privileges the rights of one group to safety over another, or somehow tries to rank disadvantage/trauma. But we also need an approach that cannot be used by majority groups to silence other groups.*

Respondents believed that, in moments of heightened social or political tension, such as global conflicts, domestic policy debates, or media-driven controversies, universities risk reproducing such divisions, when institutional statements or initiatives appear selective, inconsistent, or reactive and “get side-tracked by singular attempts to focus on one cultural or religious group.”

Some expected university leaders to provide guidelines for respectful and safe conversations. Others believed that their university had taken a position that was not neutral, respectful or safe.

### 3.2 Casual racism

Accounts of what students and staff categorise as “casual racism” is one of the most prominent themes in the data, with respondents indicating that “casual racism is everywhere,” “subtle racism and microaggressions is a significant issue on campus”, and “the bulk of the racism is experienced through microaggressions and subtle behaviours rooted in underlying racism”. The term “casual racism” is consistently used and this form of racism is reported across all communities. Respondents who described experiencing “casual racism” in university environments also reported not “fitting in”, being “pigeonholed” and “put in a box”, and “feeling inferior”. Others explained that, while “casual racism” can be “subtle”, it is “insidious”.

Although not exhaustive, respondents characterised “casual racism” as encompassing a range of behaviours, including humour at the expense of racial or cultural identity, accent-based remarks, directives to “go back to your country,” deliberate mispronunciation or mockery of names, references to food preferences, critiques of an individual’s skills or behaviours, and the implicit positioning of white culture as the normative standard while non-white cultures are “othered.” Representative examples of these experiences are presented below.<sup>32</sup>

*I'm not entirely sure but something should be done about the casual racism disguised as humour.*

*It is the casual racism hidden behind a joke or to help the person they are attacking or that they do not understand someone's accent etc.*

*It's easy to encounter casual racism on the streets or on campus, such as being told to 'go back to your country,' even though I am an Australian citizen myself.*

*A basic step but often overlooked one is to learn how to pronounce people's names correctly. Supporting the #mynameis campaign can help reduce casual racism: <https://raceequalitymatters.com/my-name-is/>*

*Lots of casual racism towards international students. Things like making fun of peoples' names or laughing at them for making understandable mistakes...*

*More education on casual racism - although this is rare at [University]. Examples I have personally experienced: 1) oh I can imagine you would enjoy eating that (assumption that the food was from my cultural heritage) 2) where are you from?*

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<sup>32</sup> Further examples can be found in respondent references to casual racism throughout the report and in the quotes in Appendix 1.

*Example witnessed: a white person imitating a subordinate's accent and knowing they would not have done it in front of the person (therefore confirming they knew it was inappropriate).*

*Mainly witnessed casual racism where someone will criticise a person's behaviour or skills and behave differently towards them based on their cultural background. I haven't witnessed racism spoken directly at anyone, rather that it is obvious that people from certain backgrounds are treated differently compared to Australian-born students. I have only seen it towards students.*

Some respondents attributed the prevalence of more covert, subtle forms of racism alongside the reduced incidence of overt insults or face-to-face abuse to the introduction of institutional diversity and anti-racism measures. This perspective suggests that, while formal policies and awareness initiatives may have curbed explicit acts of discrimination, racism has not disappeared but has instead changed form. As a result, respondents argue that racism has become less visible but more insidious, operating through micro-level interactions.

For example, many respondents reported “being stared at,” which made them feel singled out because of their appearance, contributing to feelings of not belonging. Even more common was hearing unintentionally hurtful comments that betrayed assumptions made about individuals, based on their ethnic, national and/or religious backgrounds. For example, the assumption that a person is not fluent in English solely due to their accent fits this category as does the assumption that a student is an international student if they are not white. Respondents often attributed these assumptions to ignorance. Subtle slights and unsolicited questions regarding dress, jewellery, hair, capabilities, ancestry or country of origin were also mentioned. Respondents used the terms “casual racism” and “microaggressions” interchangeably to describe these uncomfortable interpersonal interactions. Often this type of racism involves an attempt at humour that is perceived as belittling. Complaining about it can open individuals to accusations of being too sensitive or lacking a sense of humour.

Respondents noted that this transformation of racism complicates both recognition and redress, as subtle forms of exclusion can be difficult to prove and are often dismissed as miscommunication or personality conflict, rather than acknowledged as stemming from systemic inequality.

*It's distressing that my accent is frequently remarked upon in subtle ways, such as through repeated requests for clarification like 'What?' or 'What do you mean?', which can feel dismissive or undermining.*

*What troubles me most, however, is the institution's lack of understanding of how racism manifests in its many subtle, systemic, and structural forms. Unless this is addressed, recognised, and acknowledged, the university risks alienating the very communities that will define its future. People of colour and those from CALD backgrounds already represent a significant part of the student body. They are the future of this university, and continuing to ignore that reality is to do so at [University's] own peril. I would not have had the courage or will to write this if I still hoped to continue within the system. But I feel compelled to name these truths in the hope that they may be heard. ...*

Despite its subtlety, “casual racism” is described by respondents as having cumulative psychological and academic impacts.

*I have spent almost my entire adult life connected to [University]..., and working professionally at [University] for more than seven years. Throughout this time, there has never been a period when I did not encounter the quiet violence of racism. While I grew up experiencing overt racism in [University], what I have found most insidious*

*in Australia are the subtle, persistent microaggressions. They chip away at confidence, cause you to second-guess yourself, and leave you feeling that your contributions are never fully valid. There have been many occasions where I suggested an idea, only to see it dismissed—then later accepted when voiced by colleagues who are more “European-passing.” This repeated pattern forced me into survival strategies that, while effective in navigating the system, have ultimately proven unsustainable. I have reached the point where these coping mechanisms have taken too great a toll on my mental health, and I have decided to resign from my current role.*

Casual racism may unfold without malicious intent yet still reveal underlying prejudices that can undermine a person’s confidence, sense of safety or belonging. Survey respondents indicated a significant level of frustration regarding the lack of action from universities in addressing “casual racism”. These behaviours are often deemed too minor, subjective, or ambiguous to elicit a formal response. Yet poor responses by universities compounds their effects.

### 3.3 When Voices Are Silenced and Identities Overlooked

Many students and staff described feeling that their voices, experiences, and identities were ignored or dismissed within the university. They spoke about being made to feel invisible, pressured to stay quiet, or unable to express their cultural or personal perspectives without fear of judgement or exclusion. Several respondents described this phenomenon, using the terms “epistemic injustice” or “epistemic silencing” (Bodkin-Andrews & Carlson, 2013, 2016; Bodkin-Andrews et al., 2021). These concepts refer to the undervaluing, dismissing or ignoring of individuals’ knowledge, experiences, or perspectives because of prejudice against aspects of their social identity, such as their racial, ethnic or cultural background. The form epistemic silencing takes varies across racial and cultural groups, reflecting distinct historical and geopolitical contexts.

For example, students and staff from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities, as well as students and staff from Middle Eastern and Palestinian communities reported being discouraged from addressing topics intimately tied to their lived experiences, such as colonisation.

*Eurocentrism of curricula needs addressing across the University, for this left unattended means many, not all, white male colleagues are still reinforcing epistemic injustice and the violences which emerge from this. This is addressed better in the Arts, but there are enormous gaps despite faculty Indigenous Curricula programs being available.*

*As an international student, I used to speak up at class time to express the discomfort that I felt from the class material, but I was told I am the one who is too “sensitive”, those materials are only for educational purposes. As an Asian, now I stop counting how many times I have been ignored during class time because it is likely to happen every day, not just to me, but from what I know, almost every Asian. I would like to say it is a serious wildlly social question that needs to be solved. Compared [with the racism experienced by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people] it is so minimum to see discussions on invisible racism against Asians. International students and immigrants are very crucial to Australia no matter on financial aspect or the labour aspect. It is heartbreaking that in 2025, my identities are still suffering that much from racism. EVERYONE IN THIS SOCIETY needs to be responsible for this problem.*

*The main reason I am dropping out is because we are still teaching in our mainstream courses, foundational level education and techniques that have caused harm and had ineffective for culturally diverse and Indigenous people and do not spend very much time on learning tools and foundational knowledge of what works for them and how to best support them. We are still teaching students from a very Eurocentric view of*

*our profession and not acknowledging or highlighting knowledges from other cultures...I really would love to hear indigenous social and emotional wellbeing models and frameworks being taught, our current education itself is quite racist and teaches subtle racist assumptions and tools to the practitioners. It's embarrassing and I feel truly sad for the people graduating with this training and unsurprised that I am not able to find a culturally competent psychologist for myself....*

This creates an environment, where sharing perspectives that challenge dominant narratives feels unsafe or unwelcome. Some Aboriginal academics specifically describe the Eurocentric focus of curricula as a form of embedded epistemic injustice, systemically marginalising Indigenous knowledge and voices. This phenomenon can also be described as “systemic sidelining” or the “erasure of alternative epistemologies” (Omodan, 2024, p.1230). By centring Western or Eurocentric traditions, the system continues to marginalise or overlook Indigenous knowledge systems, along with those of Palestinian, Middle Eastern, African, Pasifika and Māori, and Asian communities. For respondents from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities, this silencing resonates with the historical displacement of First Nations voices and ways of knowing within Australian institutions and on Indigenous land. Some respondents also framed this exclusion in relation to their perceptions that other voices are privileged within current social and academic discourse.

*The heavy handed and careless prioritisation of one group while silencing and ignoring another (at the minimum) sends a strong message about who deserves to be seen as important and which groups need to be silent. E.g. the new proposed definition of antisemitism being a priority for the University while decolonising the curriculum and empowering our Indigenous colleagues after the referendum was NOT a priority, among many other non-priorities. The silencing of academic voices is the antithesis of our profession. The issue is the leadership at the higher levels, NOT in individual units and faculties.*

Respondents noted that curricula and research frameworks frequently exclude Indigenous, Palestinian, Middle Eastern, African, Pasifika and Māori, and Asian perspectives, and institutional diversity initiatives often appear symbolic rather than transformative. This lack of recognition reinforces the perception that some cultures and histories are less valued.

For Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and staff, silencing is tied to the ongoing colonisation. Knowledge grounded in Country, kinship, and relational worldviews is often marginalised or treated as supplementary to Western frameworks. Many reported needing to “justify” Indigenous knowledges in terms acceptable to dominant academic norms or finding their work valued only when aligned with institutional narratives of reconciliation or cultural awareness, reinforcing structural hierarchies of knowledge.

For students and staff from Palestinian communities, silencing often assumes a political dimension. Respondents describe being discouraged from teaching or researching Palestinian rights, history, culture, or dispossession under the guise of maintaining “neutrality” or avoiding “controversial” topics. This institutional regulation constrains academic freedom and limits their ability to represent lived experiences and histories, and further alienating and marginalising students and staff from Palestinian communities.

Students and staff from Middle Eastern communities frequently experience silencing through cultural stereotyping and the racialisation of religion, particularly Islam. Their perspectives on colonialism, Islamophobia, or migration are often dismissed as biased or treated as representative of an entire culture or faith. Eurocentric academic traditions reinforce this, by privileging Western political and social theories.

Students and staff from Jewish communities encounter misrecognition and stereotyping, with their perspectives often misunderstood or treated as politically sensitive. Universities may lack

understanding of antisemitism or Jewish diversity, prompting pressures to self-censor or avoid certain discussions. These experiences reflect broader patterns of epistemic silencing across racialised groups, shaped by cultural and structural biases.

Across all groups, epistemic silencing operates on multiple levels: interpersonal (through everyday dismissals), cultural (via Eurocentric norms of academic legitimacy), institutional (through policies and curricula that exclude certain voices), and structural (through legacies of colonialism and global racial hierarchies). These dynamics highlight that racism in universities extends beyond access or representation, shaping whose knowledge is recognised, respected, and allowed to exist on its own terms.

Common strategies for self-protection and survival emerge across communities. Individuals often feel compelled to hide visible markers of identity, self-censor, or conform to dominant cultural norms to maintain safety, respect, and career progression.

Structural practices, from curriculum design and hiring processes to policies enforcing “neutrality”, can reproduce these dynamics. Many students and staff reported modifying their appearance, accent, language, or communication style to align with dominant expectations, while avoiding discussions of racism to prevent being perceived as confrontational. Others reported being compelled to conform. An example is as follows:

*I was told I should “reconsider becoming an Occupational therapist” and that “this university does not bend the rules for anyone” due to my religious wear.*

### 3.4 Self-censorship

For those who report experiencing racism at universities, another consistent theme across the data is self-censorship. Many racialised students and staff report concealing certain aspects of themselves, such as their thoughts, opinions, appearance, personality, or identities, primarily as a means of self-protection. For example, as noted above, some refer to engaging in a practice referred to as “code switching”. Others refer to not feeling “comfortable or safe” wearing items of jewellery or clothing:

*I do not feel comfortable or safe wearing items of jewellery or clothing that reflects my cultural heritage or sharing ideas or expressing my thoughts about issues of racism, and I am forced to self-censure. If everyone behaves this way then the Uni becomes a neutral ground and that is fine, but there are others who use racism as bullying and they are not held to account when a neutral position is held by the Executive.*

*It is very hard being on campus with students and staff wearing Keffiyehs and posters around campus. I am conscious of who I disclose my religion to and whether I hide my Star of David. I walk onto campus and the first thing I see are posters. It is all very triggering.*

Collectively, these practices reveal how racism in universities is embedded in systems of epistemic authority, cultural assumptions, and institutional power, shaping who can contribute, be heard, and fully belong in higher education.

### 3.5 Misunderstood and Ambiguous Identities

While not prominent, an important theme emerging from the qualitative data concerns how individuals whose racial or cultural identity is misunderstood or questioned often face unique and added forms of racism within Australian universities.

*My experiences are based on being a white passing Indigenous person, I have never experienced discrimination based on the way I look. The only time I have experienced any form of negativity towards my Indigenous heritage was after someone found out that I am Indigenous, and it was the usual comments about "you aren't Indigenous" and other offensive comments. My experiences are in no way reflective of non-white people who experience discrimination based on the way they look.*

Respondents from many different racialised, ethnic, and religious communities explained that they are sometimes perceived as part of the dominant group, which is commonly referred to by respondents as “passing.” For example, someone who is Indigenous, Muslim, or Jewish may be mistaken for or perceived to be white in certain social contexts, allowing them to navigate spaces without being immediately identified.

Some referred to this as conditional whiteness, that is, the privileges, protections, or acceptance associated with whiteness are extended only under certain conditions (e.g., assimilation, alignment with dominant norms) and can be withdrawn when those conditions are not met. At the same time, they are vicariously exposed to the unguarded or openly expressed racism of some staff and students. They hear remarks that are only shared because others assume they are white or part of the dominant group.

*A university lecturer came in to introduce herself to a few of us starting our degree a few years ago and we were sitting in a study room. She went around the room asking where we had lived and when another student told her she was from Melbourne the lecturer started asking if she was from a Jewish area? How did she cope with so many Jews walking around on Friday afternoon and how they all had such rich properties. the lecturer didn't know that I was Jewish and sitting there and I have never let her know - but watched as she discussed my identity with these tropes and discussing my culture as 'weird'. I've watched a friend from the Middle East be told that their religion did not have a culture and all of us Middle Easterners then did not participate in the discussion for the rest of the two hour. I felt more understood as a Jew with my Middle Eastern colleagues than by the lecturer doing the tutorial on cultural safety. So many workshops want you to reveal your religious or cultural identity and none of them consider how many of us who don't want to disclose that in our professional environments. It is as recurring topic of discussion after those sessions with Middle Eastern friends. I feel like people can discuss how to be culturally sensitive, but should be open to all cultures and understand their own limitations too.*

*I am biracial but am white passing. People often feel comfortable expressing views about non-white people to me because of this, including towards my group because they assume I am fully white. Furthermore, people often discount my biracial identity because of the colour of my skin, despite being raised immersed in both cultures and having a strong relationship to my ethnic and cultural identity. I do not feel as though I fully fit in to either the White or Pacific Islander communities because of this.*

Some respondents described forms of identity policing. Peers or colleagues had challenged the authenticity of their racial or cultural identity when they revealed it, reinforcing exclusionary boundaries of belonging. At the same time the invisibility of their racial identity complicated representation and recognition within equity discourses.

*Internalised racism (lateral violence) is real and damaging. I have experienced racism but when this is then layered with internalised racism within your own culture, this to me, cuts deeper than that of someone who is racist due to their arrogance and ignorance.*

*I feel invalidated for identifying with my indigenous heritage although I inherit it on both paternal and maternal sides, and my great grandmother was a part of the stolen generation, because of the relations the indigenous and racialised convicts and settlers had I can pass as a darker skinned racialised, and because some of my facial features*

*don't align with peoples' views of what I am "meant to look like", my identity often gets diminished by them and invalidated by white male students.*

Staff and students who “pass” as white reported an increased cognitive and emotional burden created by navigating perceptions of their identities. This cognitive load entails the continuous management of others’ racial assumptions and correcting instances of misidentification. Many of these individuals strategically conceal certain aspects of their identity to mitigate stereotyping, exclusion, or conflict. This is achieved by avoiding cultural or religious symbols, modifying accents, or downplaying political and cultural affiliations. However, this choice comes at an emotional cost, as it can lead to shame and a sense of not belonging.

### 3.6 Intersecting Forms of Interpersonal and Institutional Racism in Universities

As discussed in Chapter 1, one critique of the survey was its focus on direct and interpersonal forms of racism, rather than on institutional racism. However, the qualitative data strongly indicate that institutional racism is a significant and pervasive issue. This issue extends beyond individual acts of prejudice or offensive behaviour; it encompasses the systems, cultures, and everyday practices that sustain inequality. Interpersonal racism, such as stereotyping, exclusion, and microaggressions, often intersects with institutional and structural forms of racism, including biased policies, inequitable recruitment practices, and Eurocentric curricula. These different layers of racism reinforce one another and shape who feels safe, respected, and valued within university communities.

The experiences of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and staff also point to the longstanding and deeply ingrained complexities of racism in university settings, such as “Indigenous courses being taught by white staff”, working or learning in “culturally unsafe environments” and “bearing the cultural load.”

*Senior leadership seem a bit clueless of how to recognise/respect cultural diversity because they are worried of doing or saying the wrong thing which makes some interactions uncomfortable. There is an expectation that indigenous staff will bear the cultural load.*

The findings illustrate that discrimination is perpetuated not only through individual attitudes and actions but also through the underlying norms, structures, and procedures of universities themselves. The prevalence of “casual racism,” microaggressions, and racial stereotyping in teaching, learning, and employment contexts reveals how racism becomes normalised. It becomes woven into the everyday institutional practices and cultures. Reports of institutional inaction, minimisation of incidents, or ineffective complaint processes further highlight systemic barriers that prevent accountability and equitable remedies, thereby reinforcing entrenched hierarchies of power and privilege.

Respondent accounts illustrate how racism can manifest in everyday practices, decisions, and systems that disadvantage certain groups, while privileging others. This includes how policies are enforced, how complaints are addressed, and whose voices are valued or dismissed. When racist incidents are minimised, ignored, or treated as isolated events, it allows unfair treatment to persist and communicates that some forms of discrimination are acceptable. Over time, this normalisation of racism embeds it in the university’s culture.

Racism in universities manifests through a complex interplay of interpersonal, institutional, and structural dynamics that shape the experiences of negatively racialised students and staff. As indicated above, interpersonal racism may appear as everyday microaggressions, exclusion from study groups, biased feedback, or the questioning of academic competence—all of which communicate racialised hierarchies of belonging and intellect. These individual-level

experiences are compounded by institutional racism, embedded in university policies, curricula, and governance structures that normalise whiteness and marginalise non-dominant knowledges and perspectives. For example, hiring and promotion practices may disadvantage staff from identified communities, through informal networks and unexamined bias, while assessment standards and participation norms may privilege culturally dominant forms of expression and communication.

These forms intersect, producing cumulative effects: a student who encounters racial stereotyping in class may also find few mentors who share their background, or a staff member facing everyday exclusion may simultaneously navigate systemic barriers to recognition and advancement. Institutional silence or defensiveness around racism often exacerbates harm, signalling that such experiences are individual rather than systemic problems. The intersection of these layers of racism underscores that universities, while committed to diversity rhetorically, often reproduce racialised power relations through both culture and structure.

When racist incidents go unnoticed or are treated as isolated occurrences, the problem becomes ingrained in the institution itself. Over time, this normalises racism within the university culture, making racialised discrimination increasingly difficult to recognise and challenge. Many students and staff reported that such conditions lead to self-censorship and identity concealment, where individuals hide aspects of their identity, alter their dress or speech (a process known as 'code-switching'), or avoid sharing personal experiences to protect themselves from judgement or exclusion. At the same time, experiences of identity concealment, self-censorship, and professional exclusion illustrate how institutional environments shape who feels visible, safe, and valued within academic spaces. These experiences rarely occur in isolation; they are often compounded by the intersection of race with other dimensions of identity, such as gender, class, migration status, religion, and language background.

*I've supervised two non-white women who have had their expertise called into question, quite obviously on joint racial/sexist grounds. They were exposed directly to the feedback, presumably because no slurs were used. But it was obvious to me and them how to read it.*

*In the beginning I didn't know what I was facing as I didn't understand. I have never faced anything like this before in my life. I learnt later that I was facing discrimination based on my race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religion, age, culture, etc. literally everything and it was in first month of being here. I was very confused and once I knew what it was I saw it everywhere, all the signs. I was depressed and my anxiety right now is really bad. Faced sleepless nights, etc etc. I fell back in my PhD. And worse thing I didn't know where to go for help, no one provides any information. sure it is provided to regular students but as a PhD student I was not aware of a lot of things. I joined late and orientation was done, didn't know where to find a hand book either. It wasn't until I changed my school and my new convenor gave me a handbook. When you say about complaining, I do not know what to complain about. The vocal interactions I have had I have spoken about them to my counsellor and choose not to say anything or do anything cause it is very ugly process that I would rather not be a part of. I do not like to talk or discuss things which make me uncomfortable and trigger my anxiety. But what about the silent ones, of all the interactions I have had, 90% are silent quite ones. People are not usually loud with their racist comments, it is their behaviour, and personality changes, unwillingness, dismissal, etc etc. It is more common than you think. People read my name hear my voice, expect some European looking person and when they see me they are disappointed, it is very clear on the face. Fellow PhDs mainly Persian's and some others (American and Ghanaian) in the beginning kept commenting on my age, called me workaholic and ambitions. Men talk like I am dumb, they expect me to be stupid and give stupid answers and when I say the right thing they are literally flabbergasted. I started keeping my distance. I face discrimination from the people from my country here as they find my name and accent weird. reading my name, many people ask me if I married an European or Hispanic.*

*I have accepted this, and hence I keep my distance, do not engage in anything. once I am done I am out of this place to a different city. I have been to Perth, so I know its not Australia, its probably just GC. And I have lived in UK and travelled to some remote places there and most of my friends there were European, so no I don't think it is one group. Not sure what it is, but it is there. And the silent racism, can't even voice it. How do I even voice it?*

The qualitative data also reveal how these forms of racism intersect with other identity aspects. This intersection means that racism is experienced differently based on an individual's social position. For instance, negatively racialised women face both racism and sexism; international staff and students encounter racial prejudice compounded by visa insecurity and cultural isolation; and identified religious communities can be targeted, due to global political tensions or misunderstandings about their faith. These overlapping experiences create compounded disadvantages and deepen exclusion.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that racism in universities operates through a complex web of interconnected interpersonal, institutional, and structural processes that collectively shape access to safety, belonging, and opportunity. Addressing racism therefore requires tackling not only individual prejudice but also the institutional systems and cultural norms that enable inequality to persist.

### 3.7 Racism in Employment Settings at Universities

Racism in university employment settings manifests through both interpersonal discrimination and subtle, systemic barriers that disadvantage racialised professional and academic staff. Despite commitments to diversity and equity, the qualitative data illustrate how the practices of individuals often reproduce racial hierarchies in hiring, promotion, and workplace cultures. Professional and academic staff from racialised backgrounds frequently experience exclusion from informal networks, unequal access to mentorship and research opportunities, and a disproportionate burden of diversity-related service work that is undervalued in promotion processes.

The following quote points to the perceived double standards in recruitment and promotion processes.

*Firstly, leadership needs to stop with tokenistic approaches and assess everyone based on merits rather than having shared backgrounds. Performance in the specific job should be the main criteria when it comes to professional promotions/filling a role. Throughout my years at the University, I have seen increasing circumstances (similarly faced by colleagues of non-European backgrounds whose career pathways are stagnant in the University) where promotions are given to less competent Caucasian counterparts sharing the same cultural background as management/higher leadership. This has happened across two Faculties I have worked at in the past decade. These individuals many times have less experience and constantly unable to perform in their portfolios. They resort to relying on longer serving professional staff kept at lower paycales to do the work due to their existing expertise whilst taking the credit for managing teams. Mostly all talk and no walk. Secondly, the University should not forcefully place certain minority groups into positions of power just by virtue of their backgrounds. Every case should be assessed for its merit.*

Additionally, bias can influence hiring decisions, with candidates perceived as “fitting” institutional norms, often aligned with whiteness, receiving preferential treatment. This undermines the confidence of staff that career progression is merit-based. Structural inequalities are reinforced when leadership positions remain predominantly white, despite the staff and student bodies' diversity, and when racialised scholars' research or perspectives are

marginalised within academic discourse and the curriculum. That senior staff are predominately “white” at universities was widely noted. Such practices perpetuate underrepresentation, job insecurity, and a lack of institutional belonging for racialised employees, challenging universities stated commitments to equity and inclusion.

### 3.8 Racism in Teaching and Learning Settings at Universities

Racism in university teaching and learning environments often manifests through subtle and systemic forms of exclusion that negatively affect the academic experiences and outcomes of racialised students. In classroom settings, students from negatively racialised backgrounds described experiencing marginalisation in tutorials, where their contributions are overlooked or undervalued by teachers or fellow students, and where they are positioned as outsiders within predominantly “white” learning spaces. This exclusion limits their opportunities for collaboration and academic engagement and how it exacerbates their sense of loneliness.

*Please let students from other countries and cultures participate and speak. We as immigrants feel under-confident sometimes and to make it worse, teachers and other students gives us looks, looks down upon us, does not engage with us, does not let us speak and they don't like to speak to us. At least teachers should help their students build confidence but they undermine views and answers of us and engage more with Australian students only. It's hard... really really hard.*

Racial bias shapes the behaviour of teachers in the classroom; students reported receiving less eye contact, less attention and fewer opportunities to speak to their tutors and lecturers than their white counterparts. For racialised students group assignments were a key source of stress. Many racialised students reported that other students refused to be in their group or treated them disrespectfully when working on group assignments. Students from many different backgrounds expressed an unmet need to interact with and get to know people backgrounds different from their own. Many international students anticipated that this would be part of their university experience but instead experienced what could be described as de facto segregation in teaching and learning environments and social settings on campus.

*... I have been in situations where I notice all the white people sit on one table and the Asian people sit on another table. I think there is a strong cultural segregation between the two groups at [University].*

Additionally, they described how racial bias influences assessment practices, contributing to lower marks and perceptions of reduced academic capability. These patterns appear to reflect the broader racial hierarchies embedded in academic institutions, where assumptions about intelligence, participation, and belonging are also present.

*I've had a few experiences that made me feel like my assessments weren't marked fairly because of my name and ethnic background. When I compared my grades to those of some Australian peers, it was obvious I was graded much lower, even though my work was at the same standard. Some of them even said they were surprised by my grade, which made me wonder why I was marked differently. When I asked for a re-mark, my grade went up, which just made me more sure that the initial grade wasn't fair.*

*Unfortunately, I have had several painful experiences related to racism and discrimination, both regarding my appearance and clothing, as well as political issues and my country of origin. These experiences have been very upsetting. What affected me most and caused significant psychological pressure—seriously impacting my ability to concentrate on my research—was what happened in one of my classes. In that class, part of the grade was based on class participation, with weekly scores given by the tutor depending on our contributions to discussions. On one occasion, I was*

*surprised to see that I received a low participation mark, even though I had actively contributed to the discussion. At the same time, a classmate of mine, who openly admitted to me that they had not spoken at all during the session, received a high mark. When I asked them about it, they responded jokingly, saying, "Maybe the tutor likes me more." This raised serious concerns for me: were grades being awarded based on personal preference or "liking someone," rather than actual participation? Unfortunately, this was not an isolated case, and the repeated experiences in that class left me with very negative feelings and affected my academic progress. After this incident, I continued to receive low class participation marks almost every week, because I no longer felt motivated—I felt that my contributions had no value and would not make any difference.*

Consequently, racism within teaching and learning settings not only affects educational attainment but also undermines students' confidence, sense of belonging, and overall university experience. Students' preference for 'blind marking' was associated with concerns about the fairness and integrity of assessments conducted by individual markers.

Respondents observed that some educators appeared underprepared or lacked sufficient cultural awareness and/or experiences relating to people from other countries or cultures.

*My teachers often use my country as a negative example, which makes me feel somewhat embarrassed. I usually don't want to raise any objections, but this situation makes me feel uncomfortable. I think it's fine to use real-world examples, but some negative examples are stereotypes about my country.*

Students were pressured by teachers to disclose in class aspects of their identity they did not feel comfortable disclosing or were treated by teachers as a spokesperson for their whole country or religion. Racialised students reported that some activities, especially reflective tasks, had clearly been designed with white students in mind.

Academic staff whose teaching and research focus on politically sensitive subjects, including settler colonialism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and Middle East Studies, frequently report feeling vulnerable to external and internal pressure or targeted criticism. There is a perception that the university does not provide adequate protection or support in the face of such challenges.

Racialised academic staff are exposed to their students' racism, which undermines their authority. Classroom teachers reported dealing with racist remarks made directly to them by their students. The following account is that of an international PhD student who experienced racism as an academic tutor:

*During my time as a tutor, I've encountered moments that have left me feeling deeply discouraged. On several occasions, I sensed that some students laughed at my accent, or at minor mistakes I made while speaking. Sometimes, when I struggled to understand their accent and asked them to repeat a question, their reactions made me feel uncomfortable and self-conscious. These experiences have affected my confidence and made it difficult to continue tutoring with the same enthusiasm I once had. As an international student, the challenges are multifaceted, we're not only adapting to a new academic environment but also to an entirely different culture. I migrated to Australia with my husband and son, leaving behind the familiarity of home and the support of extended family. My husband is doing casual work to help support our family while I pursue my PhD, and together we are navigating this journey with resilience, though it is not without hardship. These incidents have been emotionally distressing and have made me hesitant to engage in teaching, despite it being something I am deeply passionate about. Back in [redact country], I was a senior academic at a respected public university, where I was recognised and valued for my contributions. The contrast between that environment and my current experience has*

*been disheartening. I often feel that my identity and expertise are not fully respected here, and I've found it difficult to express these feelings openly. Instead, I've tried to endure them quietly, though it has not been easy.*

The most commonly noted experience among staff in teaching and learning environments is racism manifesting in the anonymous student evaluation of teaching survey.

*I had a student evaluation that once stated that they could not understand my English accent, which, considering how proficient in English I know myself to be, could only be a racially motivated and ignorant comment.*

*Student evaluations ... are fundamentally biased against dark-skinned people as [shown by] numerous studies published in education journals in the US and Canada. Nevertheless, the university and my department tend to equate the higher SELT scores with teaching quality (and in turn affecting your chance of getting promoted).*

*When it comes to students, some Unit reviews are bluntly racist. Some students complain about my accent. What makes them think that their accent is better? Which one is the good/acceptable accent? I often use examples from my home country in comparison with Australia to emphasize contextual uniqueness in applying theory. During a unit review, one or two students had a problem with that.*

Some universities have a policy of removing the racially offensive comments, while others do not. Teaching staff are also exposed to their students' racist views when marking assessment tasks.

### 3.9 Racism in Clinical Practice, University Placement, and Internship Settings

Students provide accounts of experiencing racism in clinical practices, university placements and internship settings, including discriminatory treatment from supervisors, patients, or colleagues. They report being stereotyped as less competent and excluded from key learning opportunities.

*A significant portion of racism that I have experienced comes from patients at placement. I don't think that is something that the university can do anything about really but I would have appreciated an explicit heads-up that I might experience such a thing. It's not something that I didn't expect but I suspect not everyone considers such things. So maybe education for students about potential racism they may experience during placements.*

*I don't know if it counted as racism or was just how it was. One of my colleagues faced constant criticism over a 5 week clinical placement and even had panic attacks and anxiety to such extent that he woke up at around 2/3 midnight on a Saturday thinking he was late for clinics. The similar form of aggressive approach of education was taking place. It's not just this year, this same incident has taken place last year where the student did not want to raise further concerns but this time it has happened on several occasions to a minimum of 4 students, all coming from the same country. I don't know for sure if there was a discrimination here but whatever it was needs to be called out and seen and be made aware of...*

Respondents also described facing microaggressions and social isolation in placement settings, which contributed to feelings of alienation and reduce confidence in their professional abilities. Such experiences reflect broader patterns of institutional racism that shape access, belonging, and achievement in clinical and applied learning contexts.

### 3.10 Racism as Increased Scrutiny from Campus Security

Experiences characterised by increased scrutiny from campus security personnel are acknowledged as manifestations of both institutional and interpersonal racism within university environments. Both students and staff reported experiencing disproportionate monitoring, questioning, and surveillance by security staff. The psychological repercussions of these encounters range from anxiety and hypervigilance to the avoidance of particular spaces.

*Even more recently, a security guard followed me everywhere from the entrance of the library, when I was searching for a quieter level and corner to read and write my research report and began interrogating the reason I was moving around. However, other students were moving around too, but sadly, they were not stopped or interrogated. But I was interrogated because of my appearance as an African.*

*The Security Guards make [University] unsafe, they intimidate students and request Student/Staff cards when it is apparent that people are working at the University... I was asked to prove myself (whilst teaching) by a 'white' guard; my students had to vouch for me being legitimately on campus.*

## 4. Effects of experiences of racism on students and staff

Racism has harmful impacts on individuals' lives, leading to emotional distress, anxiety, reduced self-esteem, and a constant sense of exclusion or hypervisibility. In the quantitative data, the most frequently cited impacts of racism included negative mental health effects, reduced social interaction to people from their own backgrounds, limited participation in university life, and adverse effects on careers. The qualitative data support these findings, providing deeper insights into the emotional, social, academic, and professional repercussions of racism (see Table 4.1, Appendix 1).

Many respondents reported feeling unsafe and unwelcome, explaining that campus environments often prevented them from freely expressing their identities due to fear of hostility, judgement, or misunderstanding. Racism made some individuals hyper-visible and put them at risk of false accusations. For some, insecurities were linked to overt racist incidents, while for others, these stemmed from everyday microaggressions and exclusionary attitudes. The lack of safe and respectful spaces for discussing racism exacerbates these feelings, leaving many staff and students uncertain about when or how to speak up without facing backlash or disbelief.

Racism has clear consequences for mental health and well-being. Respondents frequently reported experiencing stress, anxiety, sadness, and exhaustion, due to ongoing exposure to prejudice and scrutiny. The cumulative impact of their experiences of racism increased their vulnerability to burnout.

Many staff and students reported a loss of confidence after experiencing racism, particularly when their competence, credibility, or sense of belonging was questioned. Some described moments that made them feel "small," "invisible," or "less than" others, especially after being subjected to racist jokes, stereotyping, or public questioning of their identities. Such experiences can have long-lasting emotional consequences, undermining a sense of self-worth and belonging within academic spaces.

The emotional toll of racism can lead to isolation and distrust. Many individuals resigned themselves to the pervasive nature of racism. Respondents frequently described withdrawing from social or academic settings to protect themselves from further harm. Some avoided group work, tutorials, or campus events after experiencing exclusion or racist comments. Some students were motivated to shift to online study instead of studying on campus to avoid racist interactions. Others expressed a loss of trust in their university's commitment to equity, particularly when institutional responses to racism were perceived as slow, dismissive, or performative. This sense of alienation and disconnection contributes to loneliness and broader disengagement from university life.

Racism also affects academic performance and engagement. Students reported a loss of interest in their studies. Some stated they contributed less to class discussions or avoided speaking up altogether. These patterns can result in lower academic outcomes, reduced participation, and limited opportunities for recognition or advancement. For staff and postgraduate students, racism has career implications as well. Several respondents described leaving academia or changing career paths, because of hostile or exclusionary environments. Others reported stalled career progression and being overlooked for promotions. These experiences illustrate how racism can directly impact professional trajectories and contribute to ongoing underrepresentation in various fields.

The evidence from staff and student accounts indicates that the effects of racism are intensified when such behaviour is dismissed, trivialised, or minimised, forcing individuals to navigate hostile or indifferent environments without adequate support. Poor responses from

universities led many individuals who had experienced racism to feel unprotected and undervalued within the university environment.

A recurring theme in the data was the negative effects of racist incidents being compounded by poor university responses to racism. That is, racism at Australian universities is not about a few people being unfair, biased prejudice or overtly racist. The effects of racism show up in the system, across systems, and across institutions.

While the focus of our analysis was the impact of racism on individuals, it is clear that racism comes at great cost to universities, negatively impacting their reputations, rates of student satisfaction, their ability to retain staff and students, and to get the best performance from their staff. The voices of students and staff offer invaluable insights into the way forward.

Despite experiencing racism within university settings, students and staff demonstrated considerable agency and resilience in navigating these challenges. They found ways to assert their identities, build supportive networks, and advocate for change within their institutions. In voicing their experiences of racism, students and staff are resisting and reimagining their place within higher education institutions in Australia. Recognising this agency and acknowledging the lived experiences of racism and the knowledge that has been shared through the sharing of experiences of racism is essential to understanding how both the personal and structural dimensions of racism in higher education can be addressed.

#### 4.1 Trivialising or dismissing racism and racial discrimination

Trivialisation is when the seriousness of racial discrimination is downplayed, ignored, or dismissed. Trivialisation is evident in statements like “Racial discrimination against Jewish people today is often trivialised,” or “the university seems to believe that if you’re not being called a slur, it isn’t racism. I have frequently encountered racially insensitive comments and experienced microaggressions. Yet, the university does not take these issues seriously at all.”

Trivialisation is also evident in statements about how such incidents go “unrecognised” or “unacknowledged”, as illustrated in the following two quotes.

*Most racism I have encountered at [University] has been the display of casual racism and microaggressions, rather than serious harassment. While I will occasionally raise this with senior staff members, the impression I get from them is that even though what was said is not great it’s also not something serious enough to escalate.*

*It can be incredibly challenging to respond to experiences of discrimination, especially when they manifest as subtle or covert forms rather than overt racism. For many individuals, these moments trigger internal doubt—wondering if they’re simply being too sensitive or if such treatment is just part of adjusting to life in a new country. At [University], I wouldn’t say racism is rampant, but microaggressions and covert discriminatory behaviours do occur. What makes this especially complex is that these incidents often go unrecognised or unacknowledged—not only by others, but sometimes even by those directly affected. The ambiguity surrounding these experiences makes it difficult to name them as racism, and that uncertainty is, in my view, the most difficult part to navigate.*

Invalidation can be particularly harmful, as it minimises the experiences of individuals from negatively racialised backgrounds and reinforces systemic inequalities. It is essential to understand these forms of racism and racial discrimination to promote a more inclusive and respectful university environment. For example, what respondents categorise as “casual racism” is also described as having deleterious effects on the social and emotional wellbeing and lead to feelings of social isolation, as illustrated in the following quote:

*I have been subject to racism during my time at [University]. These experiences — whether through direct comments, exclusion, or subtle biases — have affected my sense of safety and belonging on campus. While some incidents may seem ‘minor’ to others, the cumulative impact is deeply isolating and exhausting.*

While there were occasional reports of universities responding well, many individuals reported their lived experiences were “trivialised”, “dismissed”, “swept under the rug”, or invalidated. These responses were also often associated with a perceived absence of clear accountability mechanisms and a lack of representation of racially and culturally diverse staff in senior leadership or decision-making roles.

*When management makes racial or stereotypical comments in public (lunch rooms, meetings, etc) and it is not challenged or corrected by other present staff members, it feels like this sets a precedent of allowable behaviour. When staff members/peers make comments in public and it is also not correct or challenged (even in the presence of management), it feels that the management, through inaction, indicates that this is an allowable and reasonable behaviour. When middle managers agree that the head of service is making inappropriate comments, and explains that it is "just the way he is" and preach tolerance and understanding, it feels that my discomfort, distress and feelings matter less than "keeping the peace". Overall, the experience has made me feel unsafe, unsupported. It has damaged my views on [University] in general and I no longer promote [University] as a place to work or study to my friends, family or acquaintances.*

In their qualitative responses to Question F12, survey respondents indicated a significant level of frustration regarding the lack of action from universities in addressing casual racism and microaggressions. These behaviours are often deemed too minor, subjective, or ambiguous to elicit a formal response.

## 4.2 University efforts to address racism and improve Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Some respondents perceived university efforts to address racism and promote Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) as superficial and largely ineffective, doing little to confront the deeper, systemic inequities embedded within institutional structures. Rather than fostering meaningful change, these initiatives were described as performative, prioritising their university’s reputation over the lived experiences of those most affected by racism. Consequently, respondents reported feelings of frustration, disillusionment, and a lack of trust, believing that their concerns were minimised or ignored, while institutional practices continue to reinforce inequality.

A number of respondents referred to the actions of universities as “lip service”:

*I think [University] pays lip service to equity and diversity (particularly in terms of race) - but actions do not follow. The Vice Chancellors executive group for example is mostly a homogenous white cohort with similar backgrounds and therefore similar viewpoints. Most people in HR are also vary homogenous white cohort and in fact across all the central service teams. The only real diversity we find at [University] is amongst students and teaching staff in some schools whose Deans are truly living in 2025!*

*There is a lot of lip service at the [University] with regards to addressing racism, cultural diversity etc. The senior management protect each other and will not do anything about it and just brush it aside.*

*Mandatory online units are lip service for those who are already publicly or privately racist. They can just skip through and take none of it in, as this delivery mode is not*

going to really challenge anyone with these types of beliefs, or even cause someone who is unsure to react negatively due to the mandatory nature of the module regardless of the factual nature of it. Having said that, "educating" students is a tricky thing to navigate, most just want to keep their heads down and finish their studies, cause no trouble and get out, and anything, even "important" things are seen as obstacles not learning opportunities. Creating a unit that is mandatory that includes a lot of ethics etc could also cause negative reactions. Improving and creating robust reporting, recording, reprimanding and importantly reconciliation systems is one way to deter racism in public, but to truly address it requires actions that may fall outside the University's jurisdiction sadly.

Others described the actions of universities as “tokenistic band-aids:”

*The University's Idea of "Addressing Racism": A Checklist of Useless Gestures Now, onto your "suggestions for improvement", because nothing warms the heart like watching institutions reduce centuries of systemic oppression to a few tokenistic band-aids: · Mandatory "Unconscious Bias" Training: Ah yes, the corporate equivalent of "thoughts and prayers." Because nothing dismantles structural racism like a 45-minute PowerPoint that white staff will sleep through before returning to their usual habits of exclusion. · Diversity Committees: Also known as "The Place Where Marginalised Voices Are Ignored by a Panel of Well-Meaning White Liberals." Bonus points if their only action item is "let's have a morning tea to celebrate Diwali!", because nothing says "we value you" like reducing entire cultures to samosas and saris.*

Others considered that university efforts to change behaviours through mandatory online training were largely performative, as the following example illustrates:

*do NOT respond with a performative 'online mandatory training module' – there are more than enough of these as there is and they do very little to actually change behaviours.*

Others stressed not only the performative nature of university policies but also the inconsistencies between policy and practice. One respondent suggested that, at times, these policies are “weaponised” and can even cause “harm”:

*The University frequently highlights its commitment to addressing psychosocial hazards, including racism in the workplace, yet in practice these principles are inconsistently applied and, at times, weaponised. Allegations are amplified selectively, while staff who share factual information or perspectives outside the dominant narrative are silenced or terminated. This unequal application of standards undermines the University's stated values and creates an environment of mistrust. The irony is not lost on staff and students who have witnessed executives backpedal on policies once challenged. The number of individuals unfairly treated or removed for exercising their right to advocate for justice has only deepened distrust toward leadership. In a climate of financial strain and job insecurity, many now feel compelled to suppress their views to avoid repercussions - proof that the psychosocial hazards the University claims to guard against are being imposed by executive decisions themselves. For many, the University no longer feels like a safe or open space. Staff and students alike describe environments that are volatile, unsafe, and silencing. International students in particular face entrenched biases: they are too often marginalised for their presence on campus or their efforts to communicate in English, with little empathy or institutional support. Compounding this, elements of tall poppy syndrome among some domestic students and staff exacerbate a culture of exclusion. While the University outwardly promotes values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, these efforts often appear performative. Anti-racism messages are preached but not consistently upheld, with few educators from those cultures leading conversations or shaping policies. Instead, box-ticking exercises dominate,*

*reducing inclusion to optics rather than meaningful practice. Executives proclaim “zero tolerance” for racism, yet their selective application of principles and outcomes reveals thinly veiled racism in decision-making processes. Leadership has further undermined its credibility by outsourcing policy design to external third parties, rather than engaging transparently with the diverse staff and student body. This practice allows executives or their stakeholders to impose views indirectly while avoiding accountability - a tactic that is both spineless and deeply corrosive to trust. The University is not inherently a hateful institution - in fact, I have thoroughly observed high levels of dignity, respect and compassion across the student and staff bodies. However, its structures, practices, and leadership decisions enable forms of direct and indirect racism, particularly against marginalised groups. For an institution that prides itself on benchmarking and sector leadership, these realities reveal a decline in moral and academic integrity. To move forward, the University must replace performative gestures and selective enforcement with genuine dialogue, accountability, and policies developed alongside the very communities they affect. My psychosocial health and safety have been significantly impacted by the very microaggressions embedded subtly within the University’s policies on addressing psychosocial hazards. The irony is that a framework intended to ensure safety and respect has instead contributed to harm. While it is expected that not all decisions will satisfy everyone, executive leadership must apply their principles consistently, and not selectively, to avoid crossing into discriminatory or racist practices.*

### 4.3 Perceptions of Limitations in Complaints and Reporting Processes

In their qualitative responses to Question F12, respondents frequently expressed concerns regarding the effectiveness and accessibility of university complaints processes related to racism. A recurring perception was that complaints were either “not taken seriously”, “disbelieved”, “did not receive a fair resolution”, or were managed in ways that prioritised institutional reputation over equitable resolution. Respondents described a lack of transparency, accountability, and consistency in how reports were handled, with some indicating that university leaders appeared to “ignore” or minimise complaints. Respondents reported that complaints are often not made due to a fear of retaliation or negative consequences and that individuals did not feel “safe or supported” to come forward. The system was perceived as “inadequate and inaccessible”, with complex procedures, unclear information about reporting pathways, and insufficient confidentiality safeguards. Others cited the “burden of proof” placed on complainants as a significant barrier, particularly when incidents involved subtle or cumulative forms of racism such as microaggressions. Several participants also highlighted a “lack of consequences” for those found to have engaged in discriminatory behaviour or “leaders ignoring complaints”, contributing to a broader sense that formal reporting was “futile”. Respondents emphasised the need for clearer communication about complaint processes and the establishment of “safe and confidential pathways for reporting”. Examples of the above are as follows.

*We need ways of making complaints where action is taken and not swept under the rug, such as external resources, not supports hired by the university. The university doesn’t take some reports seriously because there is no backlash for ignoring it.*

*I regret now that I made that complaint because on that tutor it didn’t make any difference even she don’t look at me in the class, do not talk to me and I feel it, I have lost my confidence of participating in class discussions. I have to complete my next 2 semesters and that teacher will be teaching me in next semesters, which is more distressing to me. I no longer enjoy studying in that tutor class or that subject which is not good for me. But sometimes I think if I didn’t make that complaint I would regret my whole life that why I didn’t stand for my culture and country. This issue giving me kind of anxiety. And it made hard for me to focus on my study.*

*I feel the person I reported for racism didn't face strong enough consequences as he became a repeat offender, no matter how many times the class told him his behaviour*

*was unacceptable. Many 'jokes' are made which are racially insensitive, and extremely normalised in Australian culture.*

*I made a complaint about extremely inappropriate racist jokes made at university in front of the whole cohort last year, and the only staff member who had my back was [redact name]. They were the only person who openly called it 'racism' and sternly opposed the behaviour.*

*Due to fear of retaliation, I am unable to reveal the name of the academic racially abusing me. However, I have raised this issue with admins and school/faculty leadership, but they are so keen to just support their own academics (since they bring funding to [University]) that they completely disregard my complaints. It is well-known how [University] has suppressed even gross research misconduct issues about their academics who bring high funding.*

*The process of dealing with complaint and issues raised should be dealt with seriously. Having been in an experience where the outcome was predicted (sweep under carpet and pressured to quit) is highly unacceptable for the complainant- especially when evidence was provided and the complainant was forced to continue to work under the abuser for the sake to keep a job. No repercussion of the abuser whatsoever.*

*The HR processes for making complaints are not dealt with appropriately. There is little cultural safety for people making complaints. The process values the perpetrator more than the person making the complaint. Acts of racism happen frequently but there is little calling it out, accountability or repercussions for the perpetrators.*

Collectively, these findings suggest that while reporting systems formally exist, their perceived ineffectiveness and lack of trust undermine their capacity to address racism in a meaningful or restorative manner.

#### 4.4 Racism as Social Exclusion at Universities

For students and staff who report experiencing racism at universities, respondents describe racism as commonly experienced not only through overt discrimination but also through social exclusion, i.e., the subtle and persistent ways that people are made to feel that they do not fully belong. For staff and students from racialised backgrounds, exclusion occurs in teaching and learning environments, workplaces, and social spaces through everyday interactions that signal who belongs and who does not. Examples are presented across each of the identified community tables in Appendix 1. Social exclusion occurs when individuals or groups are marginalised, isolated, or excluded from full participation in academic, social, or professional life because of their race, ethnicity, or cultural background.

*The worst racism I have witnessed in my time here has been from new/junior supervisors towards foreign language students and co-workers. It created a great divide within the team that I work in and those who the racism/exclusion/hurtful mannerisms were directed towards were struggling to come into work. The whole team (including the boss) were eventually placed into a team building exercise that ran for 2 days, but the course did not cover racism. It spoke about workplace respect. There were no repercussions or re-training of the main culprits and their attitude towards some of the foreigners to this day remain less than acceptable, albeit better than before the group training.*

*A lot of the feeling of exclusion and non-belonging comes from the refusal to engage in different cultures' belief systems at a curriculum level - not just in the everyday culture, but in the academic/intellectual work we are doing as well. The staff are predominantly white, Catholic and male and so the academic we engage with and deliver and that we are encouraged to think is the 'gold standard' or important reflects that. It means the work of other types of people can be taken less seriously or seen as*

*less professional or intellectual and it feeds a lot of the other problems of a lack of security, belonging and support.*

*I often experience racism in the form of microaggressions, which can feel like an invisible barrier. These moments make it difficult to build rapport with peers, as I can sense when I've been subconsciously classified as an "other." I have felt this kind of exclusion both in class and in social settings.*

Across identified communities, a consistent theme is that both international and domestic students described being excluded from formal group work or feeling isolated in predominantly white environments. They also reported being ignored in class discussions, having their contributions dismissed, or being spoken over by peers and lecturers. Academic and professional staff members shared experiences of being excluded from professional networks or decision-making spaces, which limited their career progression and visibility. These experiences communicate, often subtly but powerfully, that some people's knowledge, presence, or perspectives are less valued.

Social exclusion also operates structurally, through the exclusion of non-Western histories and knowledges. That is, social exclusion operates through university curricula and institutional cultures, reflecting Eurocentric assumptions about knowledge, history, and authority, leaving limited space for Indigenous, African, Asian, Middle Eastern, or other non-Western perspectives. This reinforces a sense that certain identities or experiences do not belong within academic life.

For many students and staff, these patterns of exclusion result in emotional fatigue, loss of confidence, and self-censorship. Some described withdrawing from social or academic engagement, hiding aspects of their cultural or religious identity, or feeling they must conform to dominant norms to be accepted. Over time, these experiences erode trust and belonging, shaping not only who participates fully in university life but whose voices and knowledge are heard and valued.

## 5. Suggestions for Addressing Racism in Universities

The experiences of racism described above point to many ways universities can do better. In addition, over half of respondents were asked whether they had any suggestions for how their university could address racism or improve inclusivity and equity. Many used this question as an opportunity to describe their own experiences of racism. Those who directly answered the question had a wealth of suggestions for how universities could address racism or improve inclusivity and diversity (see Table 5.1 at Appendix 1).

There were respondents who had multiple suggestions for addressing racism and improving inclusivity and diversity.

*The [University], I believe there is room for improvement in how racism and racial discrimination are addressed. While many efforts are already in place, sometimes subtle forms of exclusion, stereotyping, or unconscious bias can still occur. These can impact students' sense of belonging and wellbeing. Suggestions for improvement:*

- Provide more awareness and anti-racism training for both staff and students, not just focusing on overt racism but also on microaggressions and unconscious bias.
- Ensure there are clear, accessible, and safe reporting pathways where students can raise issues of racial discrimination confidentially and without fear of retaliation.
- Celebrate cultural diversity more visibly through events, curriculum representation, and support for multicultural student groups.
- Increase diversity in leadership, teaching staff, and student services, so students can see themselves reflected in the university community.
- Encourage open dialogue and education around equity and inclusivity to build empathy and understanding.

*Ensure that people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds are represented in senior leadership and at all levels of decision making in the organisation; form an Advisory Group made of people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds to advise on university diversity initiatives and inform planning; leverage expertise of people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds to lead diversification initiatives in teaching and/or research.; develop workforce targets relating to staff contribution to and leadership within School/Faculty and university-level initiatives; diversify cultural awareness training beyond First Nations to cover a broader range of diversity groups and embed this cultural awareness training into supervisor development and onboarding processes; develop specific mentoring tracks to support professional growth and retention of people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds and include staff of different racial/ethnic backgrounds as mentors including within reverse mentoring programs.*

A common observation across the data was that “Executive and Leadership positions at [University] are overwhelmingly people of European/Caucasian descent,” and that universities “need[ed] to do an overhaul of their employment and career progression strategies to even this out.” Along with the desire for universities to ensure “more cultural diversity in senior leadership within the university.”

Another common suggestion was for First Nations content to be taught by First Nations academics, Elders and mentors. The view was also shared by non-Indigenous students and staff. In addition to observing that the exclusion of Indigenous perspectives, content and knowledges from the curriculum was a form of systemic racism, many suggested that universities “integrat[e] diverse perspectives or knowledge systems into the curriculum.”

*Create a Wider Knowledge Base in Teaching and Learning Contexts (Refers to practices, strategies, or initiatives that expand, diversify, or deepen the knowledge available to students and educators within teaching and learning environments. This includes drawing on multiple disciplines, cultural perspectives, and innovative pedagogical approaches.*

Again, a view shared by non-Indigenous students and staff.

## 5.1 Education, training and professional development

Respondents suggested various forms of training and professional development to enhance awareness of both overt and covert forms of discrimination, including casual and indirect racism. Many respondents identified a need for training on microaggressions, racial bias, and systemic racism.

*By taking action to educate about racism and bring awareness to unconscious bias. This could create a more inclusive and equitable work environment, boosting employee morale and engagement.*

*Explicit and mandatory anti-racism training targeted for different roles - More diversity in senior leadership/ executive - More targeted employment and career development opportunities.*

*I think the university should take more initiative in educating about microaggressions. A course at the start of enrolment, similar to the consent modules, would be beneficial. I think an important element of this should also be directed towards students who may come from ethnically homogenous areas, rural students, and international students, for example, who are not as familiar with what comments are culturally acceptable in multicultural contexts. There should also be a significant focus on residential communities on campus, especially catered halls where close-quarter living is inevitable.*

Some suggested that there needs to be more attention to developing the racial literacy of all staff:<sup>33</sup>

*...though intention to be inclusive and respectful of everyone by senior leadership is high, racial literacy appears low.*

*The racial literacy level at [University] (and in Australia) is very low and people who face other forms of discrimination may report having been victims of racism while actually being discriminated against on other grounds.*

Respondents variously identified “senior managers,” staff involved in teaching, and students living in residential halls as the groups most in need of training. For example, many respondents believed that training should be part of onboarding for new staff possibly with regular refresher training in subsequent years.

*Onboarding schedule for all new starters with in-person, meaningful and mandatory training on matters such as unconscious bias, and training such as Beyond Black & White, etc. before the workload starts to take over and these optional courses fall by the wayside.*

There were mixed views on the best way to deliver training:

*We cannot educate about these issues in any meaningful way through online, click-through, training modules. These are cost-effective tickbox exercises which make us feel even more devalued and disregarded.*

Onboarding was also suggested for students.

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<sup>33</sup> The Australian Human Rights Commission defines racial literacy as the ability to name, understand, and confront racism (AHRC, 2024).

*Mandatory trauma-informed education onboarding modules for all students.*

*Include a mandatory learning module for students to complete as part of induction that educates about the history of First Nations communities and multiculturalism in Australia, and the importance of creating an inclusive environment- similar to the current 'Sex and Consent' modules. Currently the way these topics are addressed varies between classes and lecturers. There doesn't currently appear to be anything in place to ensure that this is taught consistently across the student body, and it seems like having an introductory resource might at least establish a foundation.*

Students also mentioned onboarding in relation to student accommodation on campus:

*I think some kind of onboarding experience for students who do live on campus to assist in them understanding that sharing living spaces with a diverse range of cultures and origins needs to be welcomed with an open mind. It may help break the ice between cohorts of students who will only congregate with other students of their origin and perhaps learn to reach out to other students from differing backgrounds.*

Others recommended training for teachers around cultural differences.

*Perhaps the lecturers could be sensitised on different cultures and use this when interacting with students. For instance, students from African or some Asian countries are taught to be quiet and not to challenge the 'teacher'. So although we want to participate in discussions, years of being taught to 'respect your elders' prohibits us from being free to do so. We probably might need a bit more coaxing to be drawn out to participate in tutorials in order to get the full experience.*

Others recommended educating all staff and students on the topic of racism or specific forms of racism, such as “casual racism” or “microaggressions”.

*Regular training for both staff and students to educate on the impacts of casual racism. I noticed a lack of understand of the emotional impact and psychosocial safety issues when making certain comments.*

While many recommended widespread anti-racism training for students and staff, such recommendations were made in conjunction with other suggestions:

*Strengthen existing anti-racism policies, training, complaints processes and implementation. Strengthen recruiting of diverse staff, including cluster hires of senior First Nations scholars. Do not implement a separate anti-semitism policy - this will establish a hierarchy of racism. Instead ensure that existing anti-racism policies and procedures, and implementation, are effective and impactful...*

*Educate the students and staff on the topic of racisms and not just the people it is affecting. Providing support is important but it is not going to do much if the problem keeps happening. Also teach staff and students correct terms for Aboriginal people or other ethnic groups for instance the term "Aborigines" is outdated and inappropriate. I do think a lot of people can come across as racist because of ignorance on certain topics. I know Nursing has an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Health course that invites talk about many themes I believe people aren't aware happened/ still happening or the appropriate language use in a health setting. However I think it would be beneficial if it wasn't only nursing students and a select few courses who cover this topic but the whole student body; if there was a way to incorporate this into some of the CORE courses everyone has to do, it would surely get more people involved.*

*Provide educational modules around race and diversity within first year or within foundation courses. I've found it is not discussed here and people are fearful of having a discussion around race. Starting a conversation will go some way to building*

*awareness and help reduce this fear. Meanwhile there is a lot of ignorance regarding valuing diversity. If you want to address the idea racial superiority, you must work to show the value of cultural differences and the historic contributions different groups have made to Western civilisation. It's important that all disciplines engage in this discussion, not only those seen as sociological or humanities and social sciences sectors. From my home country, I never wanted to come to Australia because of its international reputation of being a society of high racism. Now I have lived here for thirteen years and I agree, in comparison to my own home country - Australia is the country in which I have faced the most blatant and open racism. Many verbal attacks have happened from simply walking down the street publicly. Only this week I mentioned to my line managers the idea of feeling racial battle fatigue and always being ready to face racial stereotypes by having to defend who I am and why I do things the way I do. Educate your citizens please. Australia can do better.*

*More anti-racism learning included in mandatory training for staff and students - there is a difference between not being racist and being educated on the structures that uphold it, etc.*

*By taking action to educate about racism and bring awareness to unconscious bias. This could create a more inclusive and equitable work environment, boosting employee morale and engagement.*

*Please actively encourage and pay for sessional teaching staff AND full-time academic staff to attend cultural sensitivity training. I attended this in my first few years as a full-time staff member and it changed my perspective after growing up in Far North Queensland with what I now consider quite racist parenting. I have now educated my parents (to an extent) to understand the challenges and importance of racial discrimination, equity, reconciliation but I do find it incredible that a University does not educate all its teaching staff about such important matters. I did have to manage a situation where I had to develop the perspectives of a sessional who had not attended any education programs around cultural sensitivity - and thus held some racial views (unintentionally) as a result of her own upbringing. To me it is essential that not only everyone has access to this training, but that they are actively encouraged to participate in it. It's life changing and the more education and awareness we have in society around these issues - the more progress we will make.*

*Make training compulsory. Provide many options for training - online and face to face and make it an ongoing way to learn. Have signage around campus that shows [University] does not support racism. Bring back anti racism campaigns. Educate managers on how to handle racism so that they are not doing it to their team and so that they can support antiracism. Make the senior leaders support anti racism (the exec) through statements from VC. Help educate all staff on examples of soft antiracism too - i.e. oh yeah, my aunty is Jewish so I know all about it (not true and very dismissive of another person's culture and religion).*

*Integrate more antiracism units and programs into the early stages of someone's student and staff life at [University]. The moderate racism I suffered was in the hands of a staff member who I believe never did it intentionally, but just did not fully appreciate how hard it is for someone to write in English when it's their 3rd to fourth language.*

In addition, or as an alternative to training, some respondents suggested awareness campaigns that promote understanding, accountability, and inclusive behaviours across all levels of the institution.

## 5.2 Overcoming Isolation and Promoting Mutual Appreciation

Many respondents believed that racism could be addressed through increasing social contact between diverse students and staff. A recurring suggestion was that universities could host social events aimed at celebrating diverse cultures and bringing people together. A popular suggestion was working with local communities to host events, festivals, talks, exhibitions and performances to celebrate special days and showcase specific cultural groups.

International students from many backgrounds who were feeling isolated wanted more country-specific student clubs to lift the profile of their country and help them make friends with people from their home country.

Many respondents wanted universities to create opportunities for staff and students to meet people and make friends in a fun, relaxed atmosphere by hosting regular social events bringing together people from diverse backgrounds through music, dance or food. These were envisaged as small, local events such as regular multicultural lunches within a single school or department or alternatively as ambitious whole campus events.

To overcome social exclusion and promote intercultural friendship, respondents also suggested teachers should deliberately integrate the students in their teaching and learning settings by not allowing students to choose for themselves who they sit with and do group work with.

Some respondents wanted universities to create structured environments for dialogues between different cultural groups, such as facilitated forums, listening sessions, or restorative discussion circles. Relatedly, there were suggestions that intercultural dialogue training should be available for staff and leadership to enhance their capability in navigating complex racial and cultural dynamics.

Respondents further emphasised the need for these initiatives to be co-designed, ensuring that the voices and experiences of those directly affected by racism inform the development of policies, training, and cultural initiatives.

Collectively, these approaches aim to foster a more inclusive institutional culture, grounded in education, dialogue, and equitable participation, while addressing the interpersonal and systemic dimensions of racism.

## 5.3 Institutional and Structural Measures for Addressing Racism

In addition to education and awareness initiatives, respondents' suggestions emphasised the importance of institutional and structural reforms to ensure accountability and punishment, as well as sustained progress in addressing racism within universities. Many respondents wanted to see individual staff and students who exhibited racism punished. For example, they wanted students to fail courses and for staff to be sacked.

*Make consequences more severe and give less warnings as people get comfortable knowing no punishment is offered*

*Generally, it feels like racism is mostly permitted at university. My main piece of feedback would be that I wish racism was taken more seriously and punished more strictly. Currently it feels like any statement can be followed up with "it was just a joke", and both society at large and university culture will brush anything aside.*

*Remove staff and expel students participating in hateful and discriminatory behaviour towards people of certain nationalities, ethnicities and/or races.*

Others see racist behaviours as indicative of institutional shortcomings and put the responsibility on universities to improve practices and policies.

*Accountability must exist for staff or students who act in discriminatory ways.*

*There is no understanding or accountability for racism and no appetite for addressing it either.*

A key recommendation involved strengthening reporting and complaints mechanisms. Respondents want clearer procedures, confidential and safe reporting pathways, and consistent follow-up processes that promote fairness and transparency. Students were keen to see safeguards put in place so that teachers couldn't retaliate against students who reported racism by giving them lower marks. Some respondents wanted universities to more proactively investigate people who were the subject of allegations of racial discrimination:

*Believe victims and shift the burden of investigation away from the complainant. HR should be proactively investigating patterns of behaviour, not waiting for a single piece of undeniable proof. Provide truly independent advocates for staff and students who are not part of the HR department that may be focused on protecting the university from liability. Offer anonymous reporting channels that track repeated complaints against the same individual, so a pattern can be established even if no single person feels safe enough to make a formal case. Train HR staff to understand that a lack of direct evidence does not mean discrimination did not occur, and to look for other corroborating signs. Until the power imbalance is addressed, people will continue to suffer in silence.*

Respondents also identified the need for visible leadership commitment, with senior executives and managers actively supporting anti-racism initiatives and modelling inclusive behaviours. Another priority was empowering racialised groups to make decisions about research and teaching in relation to content specific to their peoples, communities, knowledges, histories and perspectives. Increasing representation of racialised staff in leadership, and governance roles was viewed as critical to ensuring diverse perspectives are reflected in institutional priorities and practices.

Some respondents advocated for changes to workload models so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff receive financial remuneration for the cultural load they carry:

*In universities, the biggest barrier is how success gets measured. Academic workload and promotion rules are built around publishing in white journals and chasing numbers, which sidelines community-connected Aboriginal academics who are working to make change for their people. Reports, community work, cultural mentoring, and policy impact should count the same as journal articles otherwise the system keeps pushing us to perform for someone else's standards. This is crucial for Aboriginal people who have always been strongly attached to their communities. They don't want to come to uni to be white academics. The cultural load and all input Aboriginal staff bring to their spaces is invisible in workload models. If the university is serious, it needs to make that work visible and measurable.*

Many staff identified their university's process for soliciting feedback on teaching quality from students as in need of reform to protect staff from students' racism. For example, one academic staff member suggested that while teachers should not be able to retaliate against students who give them negative evaluations, feedback should not be entirely anonymous, and instead selected staff should be able to access students' identities. Other respondents wanted the racial bias in student feedback to be taken into consideration when such feedback is used to support employment or promotion applications.

Initiatives to facilitate the career progression of culturally diverse staff were suggested such as having staff from racialised backgrounds speak about their career trajectories at promotion information sessions. Another suggestion was mentoring programs. Reverse mentoring, where junior staff mentor more senior staff was also suggested.

Regular policy reviews and equity audits were suggested to identify systemic barriers and monitor the effectiveness of existing diversity and inclusion frameworks. Some respondents favoured quotas and targets. Furthermore, embedding anti-racism principles into strategic planning, recruitment, and promotion policies was seen as necessary to move beyond symbolic commitments toward measurable outcomes. One respondent suggested:

*The University should start collecting data disaggregated by race, ethnicity and nationality so that we can have informed and contextualised conversations about the experiences of academics, professional staff, and students in different faculties and schools.*

Respondents also encouraged independent oversight and evaluation of university equity initiatives to enhance accountability and public confidence.

A major suggestion was that universities should diversify curricula, integrating content that explicitly examines racism, privilege, and the historical and contemporary impacts of racial inequality. There were also calls to review the existing offerings to check that courses on Indigenous Studies or cultural safety were appropriate.

Collectively, these measures were perceived as essential for developing sustained, system-wide approaches that align institutional structures and practices with the principles of fairness, inclusion, and equity.

#### 5.4 Challenges facing anti-racism initiatives

There were 5,942 responses to the questions in F12 from white Australian-born respondents. These reveal a complex and often contradictory range of perspectives on race, privilege, and discrimination within university contexts. These responses cannot be analysed in detail here, but they are a potentially useful source of information on the challenges facing efforts to address racism within universities. Table 5.4 presents a selection of coded examples of those responses.

Many respondents reflected on their experiences and perceptions of whiteness, expressing emotions such as defensiveness, resentment, discomfort, and shame. These reflections illustrate how white identity is being actively negotiated in contemporary Australian universities amidst broader societal discussions about colonisation, equity, and privilege.

Several respondents acknowledged their own white privilege, recognising the social and institutional advantages that come with whiteness in Australia. Some expressed unease or guilt regarding these privileges, particularly when reflecting on the racism faced by First Peoples and other negatively racialised colleagues and students.

Conversely, others rejected the notion of white privilege, arguing that they had experienced exclusion or unfair treatment themselves. A number of white Australian males expressed feelings of marginalisation and perceived discrimination in the qualitative responses to Question F12. A recurring theme among certain white Australian men was the perception of “reverse discrimination” or “anti-white bias,” with concerns that diversity or affirmative action policies could disadvantage them in hiring or promotion. While these concerns reflect genuine

feelings of frustration and uncertainty, they differ significantly from the structural and systemic racism experienced by racially marginalised groups. Rather than indicating a reversal of racism, these perceptions reveal the tensions that arise when historical privilege is challenged by equity measures. Such attitudes resonate with broader patterns of white fragility and racial resentment documented in scholarship (DiAngelo, 2018; Bonilla-Silva, 2018).

For some respondents, references to what they described as “reverse racism” in the qualitative data reflected concerns about perceived reverse discrimination, namely the belief that employment and promotion outcomes were influenced by identity rather than by transparent, merit-based assessment of skill and qualifications. The qualitative data suggest that such claims were symptomatic of broader anxieties surrounding social change. These concerns coexist with accounts from racially and culturally diverse staff, who reported clear, patterned instances of exclusion and bias. Addressing these concerns requires fostering an understanding of systemic inequities and engaging in nuanced, empathetic dialogues about fairness, inclusion, and institutional reform.

The inclusion of whiteness studies and critical race theory was identified as another point of tension. While some respondents valued these areas as essential for understanding systemic racism, others interpreted them as framing white identity as inherently negative. There were white Australian respondents who objected to being labelled “colonisers”, and resented being told they were not allowed to feel pride in their white Australian identity. Common misconceptions about the concept of white privilege were evident in the data, with some respondents struggling to reconcile the concept of white privilege with their own experiences of disadvantage, such as economic hardship or disability.

Additionally, some articulated experiences of white shame, that is, a sense of guilt or moral unease linked to colonial history and ongoing racial inequality. Among white academics, this discomfort sometimes manifested when teaching Indigenous content, reflecting an awareness of privilege coupled with uncertainty about the appropriate way for a non-Indigenous teacher to deliver this content.

## 6. Conclusion

*My experiences of racism are systemic and structural daily occurrences that reaffirms who is included, who is excluded, who's knowledge is valued and who's is not. It stems from a lack of indigenous governance structures that prevent Indigenous leadership true decision-making power, resources and budget to intact real change. There is also a lack of racial literacy throughout the academy. These factors contribute to higher burdens being placed on Indigenous staff and these normalised racial discourses impacts staff under the guise of "burn out". This then redirects accountability from the system to individual responsibility.*

The thematic analysis of over 18,000 qualitative responses illustrates that racism within Australian universities is not merely a collection of isolated incidents but a complex, systemic issue that varies significantly across different communities. Each community, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, African, Jewish, Middle Eastern, Muslim, Pasifika and Māori, Palestinian, South Asian, South East Asian, North East Asian, Chinese and international students and staff, experiences racism in distinct ways shaped by factors such as geopolitical tensions, cultural visibility, and the historical legacy of higher education. For some communities, racism may manifest through overt hostility and surveillance, particularly during periods of global unrest; for others, it reveals itself more insidiously through mechanisms such as accent bias, stereotyping, and chronic underrepresentation. The situation for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students and academic and professional staff is exacerbated by the lingering colonial underpinnings of the university system, underscoring the urgent need for truth-telling about colonial legacies within Australian tertiary institutions and systemic change.

Despite the varying contexts, this analysis uncovers a common thread: a shared experience of racial discrimination and marginalisation entrenched in systemic inequities across policy, curriculum, and institutional culture. These lived experiences reveal that racism functions on multiple levels, interpersonal, cultural, and structural, pervading everyday interactions, perpetuating the underrepresentation of negatively racialised academics, and entrenching Western norms as the gold standard of academic legitimacy.

However, it is crucial to recognise the resilience, solidarity, and critical consciousness that emerge from the narratives of affected individuals. These individuals and their communities are not passive victims; they are actively resisting oppression and advocating for structural change.

Considering these findings, racism in Australian universities cannot be dismissed as mere individual prejudice or sporadic incidents. It is a deeply ingrained, systemic issue that is relational and intersectional, perpetuated by institutional practices that fail to embrace diverse ways of being, knowing, and belonging. Addressing these entrenched inequities necessitates a commitment that far exceeds surface-level diversity initiatives or compliance-driven equity statements. It demands a profound rethinking of the university as a colonial and racialised institution.

Genuine transformation requires centring the voices and leadership of those most impacted by these injustices; ensuring inclusion in governance and curriculum; and moving beyond mere symbolic gestures of inclusion, towards meaningful structural accountability and redress for colonial legacies. This transformation cannot be achieved without meaningful collaboration with racialised communities, empowering them to lead and participate in decision making about structural reform.

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## Appendix 1

The illustrative quotes presented here were chosen because they encapsulated well a theme that had been identified across multiple respondents. Quotes that articulated a theme with an example or a poignant experience were also chosen. Sometimes multiple quotes are provided to illustrate the variations across the identified theme.

It is important to note though that the questions at F12 captured respondents' subjective perceptions of what they experienced.<sup>1</sup> These responses shed light on how respondents interpret and make meaning of their encounters in university settings. The report is not making determinations or judgements on whether experiences as reported via the Survey are 'racism' or 'racial discrimination' in the legal sense. This Appendix is setting out respondent's experiences and perspectives as they were reported via their response to Question F12 in the *Racism@Uni Survey*.

The Report contains quotes and examples that some readers may find distressing and may contain harmful language and potentially racist content. Reader discretion is advised.

**Table 2.1 Lived experiences of students and staff from Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander communities**

Theme	Sub-theme	Examples (description)	Illustrative quote
<b>Interpersonal level</b>	Overt racism	Blatant, intentional expression of racism	<p>I wasn't sure if I filled the question of witnessed racism correctly, so I will also leave that here with more detail: I have seen multiple pieces of graffiti in the men's bathrooms using slurs - mostly the N slur [sic]. This graffiti has been left untouched for weeks. The first incident I reported to [redact name] and they addressed the issue, but having seen it since in other bathrooms where it has also been left unattended for weeks, I felt that others had definitely seen it and chosen not to address it, which disheartened me from further reporting.</p> <p>The racism I experienced was at the hands of a student who believed that me being Aboriginal would severely impact his assessment and therefore demanded that I not mark his work due to my Indigeneity creating bias. The student has also expressed his disgust for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and made it known that teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content at university impacts on his beliefs.</p> <p>After I've told classmates I'm Indigenous in class, they've followed up with questions on what % I am, what benefits or scholarships I receive. On X a [University] student commented on my profile the N word, it made me feel horrible. [University] Institute is the main place I study, hang out and make friends because it's a culturally safe environment that fosters connection among the [University] Indigenous community.</p>

		Deficit narratives	<p>There is a lot of racism at [University] that is perpetrated by both staff and students. I have had lecturers tell the whole class that they think doing an acknowledgement of country is useless. I have had a lecturer make a 'petrol sniffing' comment about Aboriginal people in my very first semester at [University] in 2023. I have had students tell me I am getting it easy as I receive an Indigenous scholarship. It feels as if sometimes the university and the whole of Australia celebrates multiculturalism but won't celebrate its Indigenous peoples. Don't get me wrong it's not an entirely bad the whole time but when it does happen the experiences feel terrible and I'm not sure if there is much I can do or I am too scared to speak out.</p> <p>I was told by a course lecturer that I should pick something easier to study. I understand she meant law in general is a hard subject. I was sitting with 2 other Indigenous men and she said the same thing to them too. It seemed a little racist, as she had no idea of our capacities. I think she just saw a bunch of black fellas giving it a go. Felt a bit icky. We all had the same sort of response after we left the meeting. In saying that, I am so very grateful for the opportunities that [University] and the [redact name] centre have given me. I feel very supported in that sense. I think it was just the one case of silly white privilege making assumptions. It is overridden by the great work [University] and [redact centre name] has done to make it feel safe and inclusive.</p>
	Racial Stereotyping, racial slurs, derogatory language	Racist jokes	<p>I made a complaint about extremely inappropriate racist jokes made at university in front of the whole cohort last year, and the only staff member who had my back was [redact name]. [They were] the only person who openly called it 'racism' and sternly opposed the behaviour.</p> <p>The racism that I've witnessed at [University], was from a couple of people in my cohort when I first started my degree and it was disguised as a 'joke' multiple times about Aboriginal First Nations people. I felt quite disgusted and said something every time they made a 'joke' but somehow it'd turn into said person rambling on about stereotypes and false narratives, rumours and how 'they should just get over it' - referring to The Stolen Generation.</p>
	"Casual racism"	Everyday comments or behaviours that perpetuate an under-valuing of Aboriginal staff and power dynamics.	<p>Casual racism is commonplace at [University], whether it is in the form of interpersonal communication, under-valuing Aboriginal professionals by asking them to do work that a consultant would charge a lot more to do, expecting young Aboriginal students to be knowledgeable about Aboriginality when they're too young but putting them on a pedestal anyway, permitting enrolments of people who are only Aboriginal for the sake of alternative entry or a scholarship but who have no connection to community, this is all racism.</p> <p>Causal racism or comments made in passing by University staff are the most problematic - there is a power dynamic at play in a Teacher/Student relationships and casual statements or 'jokes' in an attempt to be approachable or chummy cannot be excused with a simple statement "Oh but we are not allowed to say that anymore". This is disappointing. Worse is when you are singled out in a discussion and tried to 'make an example' of when you do speak up by a lecturer. Again, the power dynamic comes into play, and this is a very real issue when discussing sensitive topics such as racism or homophobia.</p>
	Microaggressions	People being reduced to their Indigeneity	<p>Over the years, I've experienced repeated microaggressions and comments that reduce me to my Indigenous identity, rather than recognising my expertise. These moments, often framed as well-meaning, accumulate and shape how I'm seen and treated across the University. My identity is frequently positioned as my primary value,</p>

			with my professional contributions sidelined or framed as 'emotional labour'. This has even been formalised in written reports, including promotion applications. Institutional responses have compounded this, formal complaints are ignored, and I'm often directed to managers who lack cultural understanding. As the University increases its focus on access and equity, I've noticed more dismissive language and strategic framing, especially around Aboriginal students. These moments happen almost daily, and while they may seem small, their cumulative impact is significant. There's also a persistent pattern of being siloed, as a small example my office was assigned to me only after another Aboriginal staff member left, and committee applications have been redirected into Indigenous-specific roles, reinforcing tokenism. The visual markers of recognition around campus feel disconnected from these lived realities. I am hyper-visible in some ways and completely dismissed in others. This imbalance is exhausting and needs to be addressed through genuine, embedded cultural safety and inclusion, not just language.
		Microaggressions as the expression of assumptions that there is a "correct" or "authentic" way to be Aboriginal.	<p>I have been told me the only reason I have scholarships and am in this course is because I'm Aboriginal. This was by domestic students. Another couple times were International students questioning me that I can't be Aboriginal because I'm too white and don't know my language. I feel the times this has happened is due to being uneducated on the Indigenous Peoples here but still perpetuates colonial blood quantum and racist mindset of visual culture and identity that upholds the system that continues to oppress us.</p> <p>I often get told by students from different cultures at [University] that it isn't fair that I can say I am of Torres Strait islander decent because I present as a white person with blue eyes. I try and educate them where possible, but it is exhausting.</p>
		Microaggressions in relation to the performance of an Acknowledgement of Country	When classes start with an acknowledgment of country a lot of students and lecturers roll their eyes or sigh saying it's stupid but it's something the uni wants done. Address this behaviour
	Intersection between interpersonal and structural, cultural and/or institutional	Teaching staff not responding to racist remarks from students in a university teaching and learning environment	<p>In an Indigenous class that has a teacher, pull students up for comments such as "but you're white" and "you get free stuff" and also my favourite "It's their own fault there's a gap and we shouldn't be treating them different in hospitals because that just creates the gap"... all while there's a teacher in the room listening to the "opinions and concerns" and explaining rather than straight out calling it out!</p> <p>Casual racism is something that I commonly overhear on campus and have experienced personally. When targeted at Aboriginal people most of it is low-grade, "everyday" racism that I feel very accustomed to and feel comfortable to directly challenge. In general, my professors have all been well-informed, and in the one instance where I felt my professor clearly was inexperienced with teaching ATSI students or engaging in ATSI topics she had not directly said anything racist but had allowed highly racist comments to go unchallenged in class whilst not allowed time and space for other students to themselves oppose the racist comments. In this instance, I stayed behind and spoke to my professor about what I felt had gone wrong in the consultation, she was very apologetic and agreed she had made a mistake. I don't believe it is the responsibility of the University to exclude people with racist opinions from free expression within higher education. Generally, training in academic thought leads to people developing more liberal attitudes; this development requires free and open expression. It is my expectation that when entering any arena including [University] that at times I</p>

			will feel uncomfortable and challenged. I do not believe that this is something that is inherently bad, bears changing or can be reasonably.
		Being asked to represent “all Indigenous people” in class discussions or at university cultural events	I have also been the token Koori a few times, as the only openly Aboriginal person in my class (which I fear may identify me more easily), where discussions of First Nations culture have occasionally been pointed to me (e.g. Asking me to confirm information) I don't think this came with poor intent, but it is a bit uncomfortable being perceived as a resource on my culture, when I am only one person, and cannot represent the whole community...
		Clinical placement	I experienced racism from a nurse at my placement in [redact name]. She was complaining about the areas websites being changed to have Aboriginal art styles on their banners, borders etc. She was angry and complaining really loudly to me and other staff members at the nurses station. I said that I thought it was nice and inclusive. She responded with 'You're not Aboriginal are you?!' I said yes and then she said 'Well you don't look Aboriginal and I just think its unnecessary to have to put YOUR art on everything.' I felt embarrassed, confused, and angry. It was my first day on rural placement so I was already nervous and scared, this enhanced my nerves and made me upset.
<b>Between group racism/lateral violence</b>		Between group racism/lateral violence around Indigeneity but also by senior Indigenous position holders within university toward Indigenous academic staff	<p>The biggest concern I see is lateral violence, which remains a reality when working with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There are ongoing issues around skin colour differences, name recognition, and perceptions of who is considered "more Blak." For example, those from larger families, or families with long-standing connections to government or Indigenous agencies, can sometimes be regarded as more authentic. This can lead to exclusion or questioning of identity by others. Another issue is the shift in behaviour once you identify to mainstream colleagues. If you are not “obviously Indigenous” by appearance, people’s attitudes can change. I have personally been excluded from discussions, treated differently, or met with surprise when I am articulate. These experiences have been a constant in my life, and I encountered them more at other universities. At [University], I have found the culture to be far more welcoming and respectful overall. While individual incidents still occur, they are outweighed by the genuine openness of the broader community. I do believe [University] is a much better place to work in this regard. That said, I have experienced lateral violence here, which is a known issue for Indigenous staff across the sector. Addressing this requires ongoing attention, safe reporting pathways, and acknowledgement that racism and lateral violence can take many forms, not just those seen in mainstream settings.</p> <p>As a student the racism I experienced made me not want to identify for some time. As a staff member the racism (lateral violence) coming from a senior academic was very difficult as no one wanted to challenge that person and encouraged me to not do anything about it. This meant I withdrew from some things that were my job as I felt very unsupported and caused me to not speak up about issues.</p> <p>The racism I have experienced at [University] could be described as 'lateral violence'. I have had suggestions that my people, the Awabakal, aren't really a people by a senior Indigenous leader. I have had Aboriginal staff I supervise weaponise a 'lack of cultural safety' without being able to substantiate such claims. These experiences have been deeply troubling for me and at times I have thought it might be best not to identify as Aboriginal.</p>

<p><b>Cultural safety</b></p>			<p>I often find I have to advocate for my space and Indigenous equity with non-Indigenous Colleagues. I, in the past have experienced racism for not being, what is considered, the right colour for my Indigenous background. I have been asked to perform Welcomes to Countries and/or Acknowledgement to Countries minutes before the address is required because there is an assumption that this isn't something I need to prepare for because I am Indigenous. I have been asked to provide knowledge on Indigenous nations that are not my own because of a lack of understanding that we celebrate culture differently in our nations. I believe that some people are so scared of getting it wrong due to lack of being exposed to appropriate cultural practices that they have put this on their Indigenous staff. This happened as recently as the end of last week to a colleague of mine. That is not cultural safety.</p> <p>Aboriginal units should be taught by Aboriginal people. This should always be a priority for the safety of Aboriginal students. Lecturers should always pull up other students up on their ignorant statements during class and check in with first nation students to see how they are feeling.</p>
		<p>Ignorance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures</p>	<p>Many students I have encountered do not know what I am referring to when I mention 'Noongar' and sometimes even the term 'Aboriginal'. It often comes at a surprise to most people when I mention that I am Noongar (for those who have an idea of what a Noongar is). More shockingly, I find often domestic students have no clue what the relevance of these terms mean either and do not understand its depth of importance. I find a strong bias in the culture of [University] through the general ignorance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures which leads to harmful understandings of who people think we are. Other than this, I find the general pressure to agree to all political and sexual agendas presented across the campus which I assume comes from the general culture of the university. I respect and love all people, but I never want to feel pressured to conform to anything that goes against the teachings and principles of my God. This campus does not feel safe to people who believe differently like me. Given the opportunity through this survey, I believe this statement can help you understand more of this type of perspective to improve conditions to respect those who don't always agree to everything they are expected to.</p>
<p><b>Structural racism</b></p>		<p>Misrepresentation of Indigenous content in teaching</p> <p>Racist course content and racist lecturers</p>	<p>Subjects about Indigenous people and cultures, including IKC subjects and Indigenous care subjects in Nursing, require major overhauls. These subjects require Indigenous students to sit through traumatising content against their wishes and despite warnings on said content that it may be distressing, and then to write essays from a white perspective about how colonialism perpetuates harm on Indigenous people. We are made to write essays and sit through classes on the process of being retraumatised due to institutional 'norms' of being white, while simultaneously facing that retraumatising without any support. When questions are asked during lectures I initially provided my insight as an Indigenous Australian, but was repeatedly made to feel as though I was wrong because I did not have the right kind of standpoint that the course aimed to dismantle. I am constantly made to feel as though I am not meant to be in these classes, and yet am forced to be there. Writing essays about how my people are subjects to harm as if it is a mere hypothetical has me in fight or flight at all times. In an attempt to make the course accessible, the content feels sterile and lacks depth required for, in my opinion, people not of Indigenous background to build actual empathy and skills to care for Indigenous people. Surveys and speaking up is overwhelmingly not an option, as it is never anonymous when you are the only Indigenous student on that campus or in that class. There are no protections if we wish to speak out. Support may as well not exist with how inaccessible it is. I repeatedly reached out for on campus or</p>

			<p>online support, and was never replied to until my second year, after almost being forced to drop out in the first year after a lack of support.</p> <p>Despite the lecturing staff being trained about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's history, some things they say are incorrect. I'm completely aware that it's not done from a place of discrimination, rather ignorance. For example, during a criminology unit that heavily involved discussions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, a lecturer stated that "no one from the Stolen Generation is alive today". I brought this up in the unit feedback but I wouldn't know if it was addressed or not. While the comment caught me off guard (having a close relative from the Stolen Generation), I think that change should come from the university rather than just the lecturer. I've been told that it's hard to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lecturers, yet they often invite them to be guest lecturers. I'm not sure how complex it is, but I think [redacted] should put in more effort to hire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lecturers for units about them so it's more culturally aware/sensitive.</p> <p>Aboriginal people are constantly exposed to ignorance of Australian history and forced to contest it every day. It is very depressing to have to do this at a university. The university admin responds to Aboriginal issues in a knee jerk fashion. Very unpredictable. This is because great ignorance of Australian history and Aboriginal existence is pervasive.</p> <p>The lecturer seemed to be unaware of cultural and psychological safety concerns and triggering effects for students when they repeatedly boasted about personal affiliations to early Queensland racist political doctrines.</p> <p>I am a minority within a minority. There is no meaningful recognition of Torres Strait Islanders at this University even though there is a long history of graduates who identify. There is a complex culture at this university where the academic structures are supported and valued over the inclusivity. The lived experience of people like myself are not valued within this structure - for example, I raised the need for an Anti-racism policy and met with a senior leader about this and expressed my interest in being part of supporting the development of such a policy. I have since learned that there has been a working group set up and I have not been included. Discrimination via exclusion is a long-standing practice in this university.</p>
		Lack of relationality - few Indigenous academics or staff	Academic staff members despite teaching in the school of social sciences and teach about race fail to respect Indigenous academic staff. Issues of relationality are missing - expecting Indigenous staff to do the colonial work, lacking their own positionality and privilege. We need a process at the Uni to give Indigenous colleagues back power and have the final decision making when it comes to racism - racism is about power and structure not just individual experiences which this survey lacks to explore.
		Used for "reassurance" and help teaching by non-Indigenous (reflects systemic failures where institutions have not	Some subjects at the uni are based around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners and I found it to be targeting and offensive that a whole unit was about it and being white but with Aboriginal heritage. People were shocked when I spoke about my background and felt as though I was used for reassurance and help or teaching during the class instead of learning. Although the lecturer was doing amazing and getting support from Indigenous mentors from special guest to speak it was upsetting and I felt disrespected. The class felt like they were secluding indigenous students and that they were a different 'lot' compared to the rest of the student

		adequately employed or supported Indigenous academics and staff to lead Indigenous content)	
		Racial bias in teaching and learning settings	Experiences of racism at university provide an extra layer of stress and fatigue. As much as I want to report incidents and experiences, I don't have the energy to make that extra step. I have to interact with these people who are the deciders on how well I do in their subjects while also being made to feel like the clown who's singled out or used as a show pony to let the relevant industry know how much of a First Nations ally they are. And when the semester is over and I think about reporting it, I just feel stupid, because not only did these people affect my wellbeing they also are in positions of power that aren't threatened because of their actions and therefore I am in yet another situation when I am inferior because nothing will come from complaining.
		Existing job interview and promotion structures are misaligned with Indigenous cultural protocols and ways of relating.	I was discriminated against at another university as a result of a job interview, an interviewer thought they were being politically correct and tried to correct me post interview. They did not understand my background/culture and that, in my culture, I am required to answer certain things in a certain way to uphold respect. If I answer any other way, as a female, indigenous woman, I am showing great disrespect. I did not get the job but I did cry for three days after being given the feedback. It hurt that I had answered respectfully but as a result of lack of understanding, I was shamed.
		Lack of Indigenous governance structures  Lack of racial literacy	My experiences of racism are systemic and structural daily occurrences that reaffirms who is included, who is excluded, who's knowledge is valued and who's is not. It stems from a lack of indigenous governance structures that prevent Indigenous leadership true decision making power, resources and budget to enact real change. There is also a lack of racial literacy throughout the academy. These factors contribute to higher burdens being placed on Indigenous staff and these normalised racial discourses impacts staff under the guise of "burn out". This then redirects accountability from the system to individual responsibility.  The latest racial discrimination I experienced has been from a non-First Nations staff member who has continually referred to my behaviour as cracking it, and for a female First Nations persons this is racist. The staff member is implying I am an 'anger black women', which historically affects a number of Cultural groups across the world. This negative connotation was created by European people to supress black females from having a voice, due to a history of our voice being supressed or ignored. It is also inappropriate that this narrative has been allowed to occur in my current workplace and within other Faculties, by this staff member spreading racist gossip about me to other work colleagues, across the university. This matter was raised with the Director of the [redact name], and my concerns were dismissed and not supported. Which resulted in me self-managing the incident, I also made an active location change to self-manage my mental health due to this incident.
		Indigenous knowledges not being valued in curriculum	The curriculum is still VERY colonial and continues to support the majority of Australian students but does still not reflect the minority groups. In addition, leadership teams are NOT diverse.

		Curriculum assumes the students are white	<p>I am outraged that three out of four of my lecturers are Anglo, and not once have they encouraged the class to critically examine the racism embedded in the Anglo-Australian legal system. Instead of challenging these injustices, they appear to support, reinforce, and uphold them through the way they teach. They fail to highlight how these laws violate human rights and cultural rights under international law. By teaching the curriculum without critique, they send the message that it's acceptable to impose on my rights, that this is simply "how things are." Because of how uncomfortable I've felt constantly defending my rights, I no longer attend classes in person, and even online is difficult, as the curriculum clings to outdated, rebutted legal fictions that are over 30 years old. When I reached out to [University] Wellbeing Support line, the only concern seemed to be whether I was suicidal. There was no meaningful support offered for the specific challenges that First Nations people face living under ongoing colonial occupation, especially when those challenges are reinforced through the very legal curriculum being taught.</p> <p>I believe it can sometimes be strange during studies to always be looking at Cultural topics from an Anglo-Saxon perspective. There is always an invisible assumption that the student is not of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander cultures. For me, this can make one feel invisible and unheard. Otherwise, the actual content is correct in all aspects.</p>
		Tokenism	<p>[University] has often engaged in practices that tokenise Indigenous culture while failing to adequately address behaviours that cause offence to Indigenous communities. Over the past decade, the institution has lacked strong Indigenous leadership and, at times, has appointed individuals to leadership roles who were ill-suited, self-serving, and not committed to improving the University's engagement with Indigenous peoples, knowledges, and cultures.</p> <p>Explicitly focusing on [University] treatment of Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islanders, my current opinion is that they broadcast support for Aboriginal communities for marketing purposes. I am not aware of any Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islanders actually employed anywhere within the Faculty of Science. Nor am I aware of any Aboriginal people holding leadership positions (other than those specifically designated for Aboriginal people) at the University, in general. Therefore, I am cautious that their initiatives toward Aboriginal groups are primarily symbolic. Although I am aware of their initiatives to support Aboriginal students, I have never seen any statistics, measured results, or even completed actions beyond vague statements like "we support Aboriginal students to succeed." It is one thing to employ surface-level measures to encourage Aboriginal support, but when they also invest in projects that actively harm the Aboriginal community ([name redacted] partnership is the classic example), it comes off as disingenuous.</p> <p>I want to raise some concerns that have been completely overlooked in this survey. I am often asked to give talks about Aboriginal art or to self-disclose my Aboriginal identity in situations where it is not relevant to my role. These requests are framed as opportunities but are ultimately about making the organisation look good. This reflects a wider pattern where Aboriginal staff are expected to be front and centre for visibility rather than for their actual work or expertise. The university's use of Aboriginal art is often tokenistic. Hanging an artwork on a wall is treated as evidence of reconciliation, yet there is little interest in understanding the work, the artist, or the culture it represents. Real change—through policy and procedure that would alter how the university operates—is ignored because it is harder, whereas using art is easy and highly visible. The focus is</p>

			on appearances, whether to decorate an event or to signal that senior executives care about reconciliation, without genuine engagement.
		Cultural load	Remunerate Indigenous staff for the cultural load; have campaigns about what racism is and what can be done about it; review the training,
		Colonial load	<p>[University] says they are doing lots to make [University] a safe space, or that they want to do something but never actually follow through, or they take that long to start it that it's already forgotten. They know some of their units or lecturers are racist but do nothing about it. They say to 'fill out the insight form if you have an issue,' but first of all the units already finished by then, and second of all they never do anything about it when you fill out the form anyways. The colonial load is exhausting.</p> <p>I don't like hearing about why some people think that Welcome to Country or Acknowledgement of Country is pointless and tokenistic. I have taken to explaining greetings in the world area. For example, you wouldn't expect a world leader to not be received with some ceremony. It's respectful to acknowledge someone visiting your 'home'. There are so many experiences of racism...sigh...I'm white passing so I suspect I hear a lot more than someone that isn't white passing. An assumption that the derogatory comments would go unnoticed.</p> <p>Being singled out constantly to be asked questions about anything Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander issues, I sometimes do not want to leave the office, as there are always questions.</p> <p>I think one issue I see is that the Acknowledgement of Country is done quite tokenistically. I don't think the staff really understand or recognise the cultural importance of it and just do it to tick it off the list. I would be interested to ask the staff what they thought and see if they know why they are saying it and what it means? Do they all have to say it? Should they say it if they don't understand it? I also had a tutor once say "should we do the acknowledgement of country, or are there any aboriginal students who would like to do a Welcome to country" I think this really highlighted that they don't understand the cultural significance of an acknowledgement, or understand that a welcome and acknowledgement is different and that a welcome is not to be demanded, it is to be offered if appropriate. I also would be interested in ways we can empower students to stand up to people who say derogatory comments in public spaces/tutorials. I have seen this happen, and students around know that it is wrong but did not say anything, and I wonder what the reason for this is?</p> <p>As a Lecturer that teaches Indigenous subjects and knowledges, I am continually navigating a balance of ensuring a culturally safe learning environment for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and myself alongside ensuring that non-Indigenous are simultaneously supported and challenged. Challenging non-Indigenous students around misunderstandings, assumptions and stereotypes is a constant intellectual and emotional load that the university does not understand or recognise. The processes behind university student evaluations does not capture the complexity of teaching Indigenous subjects and often requires me reminding (as I've done it a few times now) the university that their systems don't always match up with how Indigenous knowledges are taught or learnt.</p> <p>There has been an increase in experiences of 'soft racism' during [University] process for Aboriginal staff members, especially around colonial load due to the time pressures of the project. Paired with working with organisations and people who haven't undergone the cultural training programs at [University] Aboriginal</p>

			staff have been left vulnerable in this process. Most of my personal experiences with racism come from a lack of understanding or opportunity to have received cultural training. Most people are empathic and don't realise but are open to learning, however there I've heard several experiences from colleagues of harmful experiences. There are so many great staff members at [University] and in my experience the actions of a few, especially if there is a higher power relation, can set the tone and experience for staff in vulnerable groups. I want to confirm that my experience and answers on this project are not 100% reflective of [University] but of the [redact name] being created.
		Cultural respect	Most of the incidences that I experienced were more to do with ignorance about cultural respect and not seeking information and/or permission from appropriate Aboriginal people, and less about deliberate and vexatious racist actions or attitudes.
		Proof of Aboriginality	[University] has actively denied my experience as a person of Indigenous descent because I don't have paperwork that aligns with their limited and discriminatory definition of Indigeneity. As soon as they did this to me my studies became a chore, rather than something I loved.
<b>Institutional racism</b>	Racial gatekeeping	Comments like "You only got in [the job] because of your Aboriginality"	Racism is embedded through university (all universities) structures, processes and curriculum. Academia is a hotbed of racism, whenever an Aboriginal person progresses other academics will make comments such as you only got here because you are Aboriginal. There is constant questioning of your credibility. If you speak out, you are quickly punished for doing so. Even other Aboriginal people are used against each other. Material violence is a tool used by these colonising structures all the time.
		People having their Aboriginality questioned by others	<p>The racism I experience frequently at [University] is faculty members and other students questioning my Aboriginality, and openly disbelieving my Aboriginality due to the lightness of my skin. I also often experience being in a tutorial or lecture and the professor will assume, by looking at the skin tone of the students present, that no one in the room is Aboriginal, and therefore the professor does not need to police their phrasing as carefully as if there was a visible Aboriginal person present. In situations like this, I find it difficult to speak up about my own Aboriginality because of how this has been questioned in the past. For me, it is not overt racism, simply a lack of belief in my identity due to my lighter skin. But, of course, this in itself is racism too.</p> <p>I find that I am careful about who I reveal my cultural identity to. I am a white passing Aboriginal person, and I have heard a few people in my life mention how they don't believe Aboriginals can be white. I find that I hide myself a little more around those sorts of people. Whenever I identify myself as Aboriginal, it sometimes feels like people look to me for cultural answers, despite the fact that I have very limited answers. While validating, I feel like it shouldn't be my responsibility to educate in this way. I also had an interaction where my identity was invalidated by someone I felt I should have been able to trust.</p>
		Being perceived as white increases exposure to racist comments	I have largely experienced covert racism, as I appear white, and I am often in situations where I hear racist prejudiced comments from other students. This has made me very hesitant to disclose my identity, both to students and staff members.

	Experiences of racism leading to feeling unsafe, mental health issues, and disengagement from study		<p>The university states that all staff are educated in racism but they do not display this. Both of my incidences have been witnessed in front of lecturers and nothing has been done about this. First time they said they will report and nothing came up since. The second involved a staff member and another staff member made excuses for them. But when I get upset it's a problem??? This is a joke the way people like me are expected to brush it off and move on. We should not have to do this. I am at university with my peers and colleagues and I should feel safe. This university is not a good place to feel safe.</p> <p>The voice referendum was an atrocious time to be on campus. The racist rhetoric and inability for the university to protect Aboriginal people was abhorrent. The staff and leadership did not take steps to help keep aboriginal and TSI people safe in class and on campus - despite a bunch of random emails being sent out to students it did not change anything in practice. I stopped coming to campus and as such failed all my courses that semester - that's how bad it was for me as a student on campus.</p>
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**Table 2.2 Lived experiences of student and staff from African communities**

Theme	Sub-theme	Examples (description)	Illustrative quote
<b>Interpersonal level</b>	Overt racism	Blatant, intentional expression of racism	<p>Not at my University, but during my clinical placement at the hospital. Some patients were racially abusive and discriminatory towards me. This affected my confidence as a student learning on the job; however, I also met some very kind patients/clients who were supportive and treated me with respect, regardless of my race.</p> <p>I was just talked to very rudely by a member of staff as I joined a conversation she was having with two Caucasian Australian students (Note- I have been in Australia for 10 years and I am fully fluent) - it was very obvious from her demeanour that she talked to me that way because she saw that I was an international student (brown) -every time she would talk to the locals her tone and demeanour would soften again. I drafted an email to the head lecturer to let them know about the incident but preferred not to send it - because I could not really explain that she was being hostile because I was an international student. I have heard from other international students that the treatment is still the same. Paying a lot more than locals for the same unit should make up for a better understanding and treatment. For instance there should be some training or awareness amongst tutors (especially casual tutors) that English is obviously a second language for international students and that we might struggle. Being met with rude and demeaning behaviours is just disappointing. This is has been an isolated incident in only one of my units, everyone else on campus has been welcoming and patient.</p>
	Receiving worse treatment than white peers	<p>Discrimination in employment affecting career progression</p> <p>Receiving less attention from teachers</p> <p>Fear receiving lower marks for work of the same quality</p>	<p>I felt not supported or included in class when one lecturer taught half of the class totally ignoring us the international students from Africa, not asking any questions to us or involving us in any way, the lecturer later said "nobody should tell me they don't know English"</p> <p>In academic settings I always feel scared to submit my assignment with my African name displayed as I fear my work will be marked with racial discrimination. This is because I have in the past experienced racial discrimination in academic and work settings. Unfortunately, many people have an unconscious bias towards people that look like them. With most lecturers being people that do not look like me, it leaves me feeling vulnerable of being discriminated against and not being given equal opportunities.</p>
	Racial Stereotyping, racial slurs, derogatory language	<p>Inappropriate racist jokes</p> <p>Use of the n-word (sic)</p>	<p>I have had very disturbing experiences with racism and sexism during my time at [redacted]. Some of the worst comments and treatment have come from lecturers, particularly white lecturers, but at times also from other people of colour, especially of Asian heritage. I have been ridiculed for my body features that are deeply tied to my cultural background, and it has been humiliating and degrading.</p> <p>During a [redacted] karaoke event, there was a song being sung and the N-word [slur redacted]' was sung by non-black students (specifically by a South Asian/Indian student). I was the only black person at the event. I didn't say it. So I was shocked someone else would.</p>
	Accent-based discrimination		<p>1 example is I was asked to do group work with someone who thought I wasn't good enough because of my accent. They disregarded my contribution and we got a low mark because of that and later blamed it on me in front of the</p>

			whole class, saying it was hard to work with me because they couldn't understand me and they preferred to be partnered with an Australian. I studied English since I was 7 years old and I took the IELTS test and I was graded as proficient. All other people I work with can understand me though I have an accent.
	Not being trusted	Being perceived as dangerous; being falsely accused	<p>The university literally thinks that if you're not getting called a slur it is not racism. So SO SO many times I have had racially insensitive comments or faced microaggressions. But the uni does not take this seriously at all. They do not care. I had incredibly racist allegations of aggression made against me by a former friend and they did not take this seriously at all. It was incredibly damaging for my mental health and the university could not have possibly cared less.</p> <p>On my first day at [redacted], I stepped out of the building for a while and I was locked out of the building by a colleague who did not believe that I worked there. She asked for my ID card, and I explained that I had not yet been issued one. I also provided the name of my supervisor, but she still refused to allow me entry. On another occasion, when I went to the pantry to get some milk to replace what had been used from the staff fridge, a colleague questioned why I was taking so much milk, stating that she had recently seen me take a pack a few days earlier. I had to explain to her that it was simply a coincidence that I happened to finish the last bit of milk on both occasions.</p> <p>I always feel we are the target of some false allegations so that it emphasise the system believe that we are bad people, but the underlying motive is race. So, we always have to be very careful than a "regular" person when we are at university compound. From my interaction I described, I am sure if it was done by a white male, it wouldn't have come off "weird, creepy and dramatic" as it happened for me. But it has completely changed my interaction with people at university, especially with white females in particular, in a way that, I try to avoid any interaction with them so that I never have to live the experience I live with the other person. This is unfortunate because I feel there is so much I can contribute to their education and research, but because I have to always be careful, I unconsciously limit myself when interacting with them. I also believe, there is probably how they view black men than I am not aware of here at in the university settings. However, I try to be useful to the students, regardless of race, gender, despite the fact that I am always careful that my interactions is not interpreted in a wrong way. While I will always give my best to the university, I have to spend more energy to carefully overthink and evaluate my steps and interaction when I am at the university. so I try my best to be professional and it is energy draining to try to be viewed as white-person equal, and same respect.</p>
	Casual racism and microaggressions	<p>Casual racism as everyday comments, jokes, or behaviours.</p> <p>Perpetuate racial stereotypes</p> <p>Negative assumptions about intelligence made based on appearance</p> <p>Microaggressions and racial stereotypes</p>	<p>The problem is not really overt racism or harassment but rather total lack of awareness of privilege and microaggressions and stereotyping.</p> <p>I have spent almost my entire adult life connected to [University]..., and working professionally at [University] for more than seven years. Throughout this time, there has never been a period when I did not encounter the quiet violence of racism. While I grew up experiencing overt racism in X, what I have found most insidious in Australia are the subtle, persistent microaggressions. They chip away at confidence, cause you to second-guess yourself, and leave you feeling that your contributions are never fully valid. There have been many occasions where I suggested an idea, only to see it dismissed—then later accepted when voiced by colleagues who are more “European-passing.” This repeated pattern forced me into survival strategies that, while effective in navigating the system, have ultimately proven unsustainable. I have reached the point where these coping mechanisms have taken too great a toll on my mental health, and I have decided to resign from my current role. I am under no illusion that these issues are unique to [University]. ....</p> <p>While overt racism is important to tackle, more commonly than not, the bulk of the racism is experienced through microaggressions and subtle behaviours rooted in underlying racism. I suggest staff and students also be educated on</p>

			<p>microaggressions and unconscious racist behaviours. Examples I have experienced at this university: - 'Your English is very good' (Assumption that because you have a foreign accent, English is not your first language and so this statement is often offered as a 'compliment'. ) - 'You look like Rihanna' or other mixed race celebrity (This is a common statement directed at mixed race individuals and seems to be rooted in the notion that all X people look the same) - 'Is your hair real?' (Question often directed to individuals with curly and coily hair textures) - Touching of hair without permission (Often done to individuals with curly and oily hair textures) - Dismissing or avoiding conversations with individuals who have accents that are perceived as difficult to understand</p> <p>The racial experiences on campus are subtle and are normally taken for a joke or granted. Sometimes you feel these things are consciously done or unconsciously done to undermine you.</p> <p>It is quite common to encounter racially discriminatory or stereotypical remarks and not know what to do about them since they seem so normalised and the conversation moves on like nothing happened since it's difficult to know how to tackle them in a productive way.</p>
		Lack of representation	<p>In my class I am the only black student and initially I did feel judged until I opened my mouth and spoke and suddenly people didn't have issue with me. Made me feel like they had preconceptions about my intelligence</p> <p>I feel like many people on campus are not used to having black people around them and do not know how to act around us as a result. I think working to broaden our demographic would be helpful to make all students feel a part of a group. there's a tendency for races to group up separately on campus, leaving us black students sort of floating around</p> <p>More African students are needed in the University. Currently, I always end up been the only Black person in a classroom. It makes me stand out too much.</p>
		Exoticisation	<p>What I encounter more frequently, on an almost daily basis, is a fascination with my appearance (particularly my distinctly coloured hair in long box braids). While I often smile through compliments and awed reactions, I am aware that my appearance is uncommon here and that many peers and staff may not have encountered someone of my ethnicity (or my hairstyles) before. Nonetheless, these well-intentioned reactions and frequent stares do not foster a sense of belonging. They often make me feel reduced to an ornament... something to be admired at a distance, rather than engaged with meaningfully as a person. Admiration does not equate to belonging, and in less tactful moments it can slip into objectification.</p>
		Racialised surveillance by campus security	<p>Even more recently, a security guard followed me everywhere from the entrance of the library, when I was searching for a quieter level and corner to read and write my research report and began interrogating the reason I was moving around. However, other students were moving around too, but sadly, they were not stopped or interrogated. But I was interrogated because of my appearance as an African.</p>
		Being negatively racialised and singled	<p>I have had a horrible experience of a white European teacher singling out students out colour in class, making assumptions and referring to us as "you" and pointing in class. The same was not experienced by white students. We</p>

		out in teaching environments	all had name tags, but the teacher did not try to say our names or ask us how to pronounce our names- rather we were just referred to as "you". The class was very uncomfortable, I found myself upset, crying after every session feeling like I was being singled out because I had a non-western name. Other students even came up to me noticing the treatment I was receiving.
		Racial bias and discrimination on campus	<p>I have experienced repeated instances of racial bias and discrimination on campus that have significantly affected my experience at [redacted]. One recurring issue is that teachers and administrative staff frequently mistake me for other Black students and vice versa, even though we do not look alike. This lack of recognition makes me feel invisible and undervalued as an individual.</p> <p>I have not seen a single person who looks like me in my classes, people count me out before I can even speak and stereotype me. I have not seen even a single teacher who looks like me either. The micro aggressions are obvious and it's so incredibly disheartening to walk through [redacted] and see the way people look at you, as if you are not meant to be there as a black person.</p>
	Intersection between interpersonal and structural, cultural and/or institutional	Refusing to work with negatively racialised students on group projects or not including them in social or academic activities.	There's no social life because if you don't fit into the cliques of race/ethnicity or you don't look like them no one really wants to be friends with you.
		Racist student evaluations	When it comes to students, some Unit reviews are bluntly racist. Some students complain about my accent. What makes them think that their accent is better? Which one is the good/acceptable accent? I often use examples from my home country in comparison with Australia to emphasize contextual uniqueness in applying theory. During a unit review, one or two students had a problem with that.
<b>Between group racism</b>		Racism from other negatively racialised communities	<p>Most of the cases of racism that I have witnessed is from people of Asian background (mostly Chinese) towards black people in general, attacking them purely due to their skin colour.</p> <p>The other issue is the racism that is often more open from people who come from countries where they for example consider 'Black' people less intelligent. Racism is often assumed to be perpetrated by 'white' people when this is often not the case.</p> <p>I think there needs to be equal treatment of people who experience racism and discrimination. One's cultural background must not define how a case is treated. I have experienced the worst treatment by a First Nations academic but I am still expected to work with her. I'm sure if I was of another ethnic group I would have been assigned or got another job faster within the university. Yes we understand how much First Nations people have been through but that does not mean they get to treat others like animals and get away with it and they are above the law.</p>

<b>Structural racism</b>		Lack of ethnic diversity among senior leadership	Thinking of [University] for example, the student body is very diverse, the staff are mostly white (except for I think 4 or 5 staff members) and that leaves a lot of room for miscommunication and discrimination. Also, students AND staff don't feel comfortable coming forward after hearing something racist or experiencing racism, and boy have we experienced a lot of racism. Hire more people of colour, we beg of you
		Lack of anti-racism training	Broadly, the university seems to utilise the operating delusion that racism does not exist within it as an institution, and it is defensive and protective of this veneer at the expense of students and staff. For example, despite extensive tutor training programs, I have never been provided with education or training about how to deal with racism from students in tutorial. Yet I am acutely aware of exposing myself to this behaviour when entering the tutorial space. In this way my experiences of racialisation are individualised, and both racism and myself as a racialised person are excluded from the university's image of academic education.
			During a seminar for academics, a facilitator mentioned that unethical conduct of study was from certain countries like China and Nigeria, and no one corrected them or provided context of this unfair stereotyping.
		Racial bias & devaluing of education obtained at overseas institutions	I believe strongly that for most part unconscious biases toward an Anglo-Saxon/Caucasian mindset as good and non-Caucasian groups as subpar especially if much of their education is overseas is responsible for most of my experiences of racism
<b>Institutional racism</b>			
	Intersection between institutional and structural racism Institutions failing to protect staff from backlash or do not create safe channels for raising concerns are complicit in maintaining racism. Where dominant norms discourage open discussions of race, privilege, or injustice, particularly when voiced by those most affected and those who speak out are vulnerable to retaliation or	Leadership bias in understandings of experiences of racism at universities	<p>I think the university is in danger of promoting a narrative/view that some racial discrimination is worse than others. There is a strong focus on antisemitism and also on racism/discrimination directed towards Aboriginal/Torres Strait islanders. Very little discussion about other ethnic groups. When we talk about diversity...its only framed in the context of gender/sexuality. It's like they think there are no other problems. Its offensive. The leadership of this university is white with a couple of people of Mediterranean heritage. There's lot of backslapping about the gender diversity, but I am very troubled by the lack of representation of the different ethnic groups that make up the region we support. Many of this leadership don't even live in [region] and have very little understanding. It's disappointing.</p> <p>An anecdote which I don't really know what to do with: talking about the genocide in Palestine in class and having a student email me to complain about it. While the whole experience was unsettling (although not unexpected), one comment she made stuck with me in a particular way - that because of my surname she would have expected me to be sympathetic to Israel. My (white) more experienced colleague who was convening the subject was reasonably supportive and I'm grateful at least for that, and feel pathetic in my gratitude. Why should I have to feel gratitude for someone telling me that it's (more or less) ok for me to speak the truth? I don't know if the student made a negative comment on the subject experience survey as a result as this was not shared with me, but I dreaded it and wondered if it would harm my probation. The experience made me feel very strongly how the ties of sympathy that many of us from the global south with histories of genocide and colonisation which have marked our ancestry and our own lives in profound ways lead us to solidarity with Palestine which go beyond a simple recognition of the depth of atrocity being committed there and the injustice of it, and the ways in which we are censored from and censured for expressing these things in class or outside of it.</p>

	professional isolation		In the current context of the world we live in, the University sometimes appears as favouring one side of the current conflict in talking about addressing anti-semitism. However, it would also be good if we acknowledged what people from Palestine must be going through at this dark time. And to clarify we need to condone any hatred or negative actions towards any group of people but rather it seems a bit one-sided at times.
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**Table 2.3 Lived experiences of students and staff from Jewish communities**

Theme	Sub-theme	Example (description)	Illustrative quote
<b>Interpersonal racism</b>	Overt racism	Hate speech and death threats	<p>I just want to come to work and teach. I do not want every day to potentially be confronted with hate speech and distortion of my culture, religion, history and values.</p> <p>I witnessed death threats yelled at Jewish students last year.</p> <p>There has been so much hateful speech and imagery around campus in the form of posters, stickers, chalk written on buildings and walkways, and clothing. Both teachers and students have made comments during lectures and classes that have deeply upset me. During these instances, I experience great levels of anxiety and stress, and I can't focus on my work. I don't feel psychologically safe on campus when I have to interact with these hateful messages every day. I never tell any of my peers or my friends about my culture or religion because I'm scared they'll be hurtful or won't want to be friends anymore. I'm scared if I tell people then I won't have any friends left at uni. I don't want to be lonelier than I already am. I've stopped coming to lectures, extracurricular activities, and clubs because I'm scared to be on campus. I only come for my compulsory classes so that I can pass my subjects. This semester, I've managed to fit all my classes into one day, so I only have to come to campus one day a week. It's really limited my experiences of uni life, and I'd love to be more involved, but I'm worried about my mental health. I hope this survey helps to enact some much needed change.</p>
		Verbally racist expressions explicitly and intentionally directed at Jewish identity	<p>Been told to take a shower (I am Jewish), been called "a Shailo", been told that "all Jews look the same", got told I look like a comic relief character, when in conversation and revealing my heritage been told "don't worry, I don't read the news" but subsequently excluded, people constantly making Nazi and money jokes around me.</p> <p>People at [University] have spoken quite sarcastically if not disrespectfully of Jews. Comments about Jewish wealth, Jews "running the world" (literally said to me in a meeting), Jews complaining and Jews committing genocide. There have been weeks where I could not work on campus because I felt so unsafe at [University] and in [redact city] in general. My husband has begged me not to wear my star of David to campus because he fears for my safety as well as my career being negatively impacted. People have said to me that freedom of speech, even if it is calling for the murder of my people, supersedes my "sensitivities." There are signs in [redact name] that say "F..k Israel" and worse posted on people's cork boards - just a normal day at [University]? I will not file a complaint - that would be career suicide - and even as I type I'm thinking of deleting this entire paragraph because nothing will change and I fear I will be targeted. And every day I read how our PM and his team ban Israelis from entering Australia, do nothing when our synagogues are burned down, when neo Nazis parade in the streets and thousands of people chant horrible words against us whilst crossing our iconic bridge. I have written emails to some [University] leaders that went unanswered - another sign. Stay quiet. Do my job. Go home.</p> <p>In the last 22 months I have witnessed [University] turn into a seething mass of anti-Israel and anti-Jewish sentiment. From Nazi-style stickers and flyers posted all over campus, to marquees set up at Union area, to raging marches past my office chanting for "global intifada" (a call for violence against Jews everywhere) and "from the river to the sea" (a call for the elimination of Israel). And this has been allowed to continue seemingly</p>

			<p>with impunity. The student union has devolved into a Socialist Marxist hatefest whose primary focus appears to be boycotting Israel rather than improving campus life for students. All this, plus many more incidents, adds up to a pretty hostile environment for Jews and those of Israeli origin. While I understand passions can get inflamed about conflicts on the other side of the world, it is glaringly obvious that there is absolutely zero concern about on-going conflicts in Sudan, Congo, Yemen, Syria, Ukraine. Somehow the only thing that matters is Israel and the Jews, which is why this stands out as blatant racism. It is the racism of double standards, where Israel and Jews are expected to uphold a morality that no other people are subjected to. And this has become all pervasive at [University]. In my daily work life, fortunately, incidents are few but that is probably because I keep my head down and mouth shut on politics, knowing I would be immediately ostracized if I make any attempt to combat the group-think. Still, it does casually rear its head. Recently while having lunch in the communal tea room a student asked me about the pita bread I was eating. I explained that they are Israeli-style pita's, only to have another staff member at the table respond "Yuck, well I won't be buying those again!". People seem to feel that it is completely acceptable to demonize one specific group...and that is because it HAS become acceptable at [University]. It is a sad state of affairs, because apart from this I really do love being a researcher at [University]. I also know this is not unique to [University] but common in university campuses across Australia.</p>
	Microaggressions		<p>Mostly really bad microaggressions from dumb/ignorant people: Pre current middle eastern conflict - people making concerning jokes making light of the Holocaust/Nazism purposely in the presence of Jewish people, one person giving me a dirty look when I said I learnt Hebrew at school and changing the subject, one person telling me they were very interested in the Holocaust and they had a "great" holiday in Krakow, steamrolling my opinions and being interested in my trauma in a non-sympathetic, purely academic manner, people in my college stopped speaking to and then began bullying a student because she was Israeli although she never specified her opinions on the conflict. During current conflict - forgot that I was wearing a jumper with a Magen David on it (common Jewish symbol but also on the flag of Israel), boy in a politics class said something very critical of Israel and looked pointedly at me but I just nodded because I agreed, then realised later he was trying to start an argument because of my jumper, seeing slogans around the free-Palestine encampment that were extremely ignorant of past Jewish suffering, having people stop speaking to me because I am Jewish without knowing my opinions on the conflict, friend told that she was not welcome at a feminist protest because of her pro-Israel views, friend kicked out of her house by housemates with no warning due to her pro-Israel views. Note - while I am not pro-Israel I believe a lot of the discrimination people face for expressing any form of pro-Israel/sympathetic to Israel views are rooted in antisemitism because they are applied liberally and without nuance. After a few of the situations I faced, I have stopped wearing any clothing or jewellery that shows others I am Jewish and I am extremely cautious of bringing it up. Some suggestions: initiatives that promote peaceful discussion and learning from each other, the main issue is not the conflict or the racism itself but the division on campus. If there were forums where people could openly discuss topics in respectful manners and understand other peoples' perspectives I think this could help. Also I mostly enjoyed my time at [name redacted] Hall however, it is insane that the hall is in the centre of campus. While I agreed with the aims of the encampment, it was extremely distressing to have to pass it (with its antisemitic slogans and distressing imagery) every day on my way to class, work, grocery shopping and social arrangements to the point where I often actively went out of my way to avoid it. I understand that the university did not want the encampment there and employed certain ... tactics to move it and reduce its power. However, [university name redacted] residents should be given more support not just for this instance but for the fact that they might hear noise from nights out, future protests and just generally never be able to escape the centre of university life. I know that the college is aware of some of</p>

			these aspects, for example they have worked extremely hard to curb the instances of 'wake up [university name redacted]' but the university should be aware in general.
		Harassment based on identity	Being a Jewish student has become exponentially more difficult post October 7th. I wear my Star of David and have been harassed because of it, they didn't care about my political views, just that I'm Jewish. I've been called "supporter of genocide" and "Zionist scum" just because I'm Jewish. The harassment is relentless, when people who are "pro-Palestinian" infiltrate our classes, that are supposed to be safe spaces, and spew misinformation is confronting and it adds significant distress to my university experience. Additionally, I do a class on research ethics and we discussed the history of ethical guidelines, specifically around the holocaust. I found it interesting for the atrocities inflicted on my family and community to be discussed in such a matter-of-fact way, with zero cultural sensitivity, despite that often being described as something central to nursing practice. It seems to apply to everything except for when it comes to Jewish people.
	Racial vilification		This has been a difficult two years to be Jewish. There is EXTREME pressure socially at universities to be anti-Israel, which is complicated when you have Israeli family. Usually, I leave conversations/rooms discretely when this comes up. I would say this happens about once a month, which isn't much but does add up. I do not feel people causing this discomfort are anti-Semitic per se, but their perspectives are extremely biased and they are not open to Jewish perspectives unless they are explicitly pro-Palestinian jews. I do not feel the university has done enough to openly deal with this - the false equivalency to "Islamophobia" which I have never personally seen at the uni, does not help. I have never seen anti Islamic graffiti at the uni. This year alone, someone wrote "The Jihad is coming" on my office building. I saw a sticker saying "a thief can never be an owner" with a crossed out Star of David attached to a light post. A Jewish professors office was stormed and nothing ever came of it, and I heard some students minimizing how bad it was (someone described it as his fault because he had an "open door policy" and they were "allowed to use his office hours" ?????). I feel the university has massively harmed real support for antisemitism because forcing this false equivalency with Islamophobia makes it seem like they are problems at equal scale, when statistically, they are not. The uni seriously needs to reflect on how behaviour here compares to responses to Russian students and professors at the start of the Ukraine war. Both are unjust wars, but surprisingly these issues only come up when you get to harass Jews.
<b>Structural racism</b>		Feeling unsafe in university settings	<p>Jewish students should be treated with the same respect as all students and feel safe to express their beliefs without potential harm. Respectful language and conversations are needed. Some of the on campus protests for Palestine have called for the destruction of Israel and the protestors assumptions that ALL Jews and ALL Zionists are bad, are not respectful or constructive assumptions to make, and definitely do not make me feel consistently safe at [University].</p> <p>As an Israeli and Jew, since the war in Gaza, I have not felt safe on campus. The protests against Israel are legitimate, but there have been too many incidences that crossed the line to antisemitism. The worse incident involves students targeting an individual Jewish staff member and protesting in his office. This has made me fear my safety. Support from the University was minimal.</p> <p>I feel very triggered by the hate and blame students are communicating their rage against my home country, Israel. Obviously, war is a terrible thing, it is important to acknowledge there are two sides, even when they are not equal in power and I feel like there is only one side who get any attention. While criticising a government, or</p>



			my identity from others. This also turns into resentment against myself as I feel like a coward and that I am hiding who I truly am.
		Hiding Identity	<p>I feel extremely uncomfortable telling anyone where I was born (Israel) and even more so sometimes telling them I'm Jewish, I immediately get judged and blamed for Israel's government like I had anything to do with it and I immediately get lectured by people about how bad me and my family must be as well as on a couple occasions being told I'm inherently genocidal with the only thing they knowing about me is that I was JEWISH they had no idea I was born in Israel.</p> <p>Over the last two years, I have avoided wearing any jewellery that might indicate my religious background on campus and avoided places of protest; I have been surrounded by posters denigrating aspects of my cultural background and peddling lies; I know of students who have hidden their identities and felt extremely uncomfortable on campus or avoided coming on to campus. I understand the complexities and the passions; I follow a range of news sources daily, and at times during the night. Propaganda is a powerful force, and popular narratives are not always based in facts; some of the calls of protesters have themselves been threatening and offensive. This has been a very difficult period. I think [University] has done its best to manage a difficult situation...</p> <p>Used to be negative stereotypes of Jews, such as weird comments about deserving to be kicked out of the country and other predominantly white countries, and/or money-related things. It has changed to be more aggressive, even when I disagree with the current political situation, and I no longer say I'm a Jew nor that I'm part Israeli, due to fear. And I had to remove a Star of David necklace I was wearing to honour a family member who died during the Nova massacre in 2023, due to angry stares and comments.</p>
	Policies	Within group disagreement	Some of my Jewish colleagues that are Zionists have reported criticisms of Israel as being antisemitic. I do not agree that criticism of Israel or the political ideology of Zionism is inherently antisemitic and think that extreme care should be taken in understanding the context of complaints. I strongly reject the Universities Australia definition of antisemitism which is poorly written and creates confusion about whether criticism of Israel is antisemitic or not. The definition should be repealed.

**Table 2.4 Lived experiences of students and staff from Middle Eastern communities**

Theme	Sub-theme	Example (description)	Illustrative quote
<b>Interpersonal racism</b>	Overt racism	<p>Overt racial slurs or jokes directed at students based on Middle Eastern identity</p> <p>Staff and students identifying as Middle Eastern experience racialised comments about being terrorists</p>	<p>I hate when people say the N-word and when people who know nothing about a culture make fun of their hardships as a people.</p> <p>Jokes about Arabs being a danger and bad people were made out quite frequently in my Law degree. I was surprised when I also double standards on me when I took a role in the Law society. I tried to seek help but most of the staff gave me the impression that they are too busy with their work (including the diversity and wellbeing officer). In other clubs, one white person introduced me as the resident terrorist to newer members. Some of my friends felt very upset that I have experienced that without them speaking up at that moment. They were just in a shock and speechless. That's why most people from my country avoid having friends from here. Because of the comments that are not true that hurts us. I feel in most of the times that whenever I give my feedback I'm avoided. Our Labour law professor once said "I don't think the Middle East deserved having the FIFA World Cup" I didn't know what respond honestly about it. Whenever I got my marks, he kept pushing the fact that my English is not good because it's not my first language in an offensive way. While other staffs don't say that.</p> <p>Whilst this is low level I am often mistaken for someone born in Australia as I no longer have an accent. Australians find my name hard to pronounce and often refuse to try. I find myself pronouncing it in an Australianised way just to avoid awkward conversations. It would be nice to be able to use my actual name.</p>
	Social exclusion	Students excluded from group work in teaching and learning settings.	<p>In my experience with in-person classes, I felt that some Australian students were not very open to interacting with students from other cultural backgrounds. They tended to keep to themselves or stick with other Australian students. This was based on one class that I joined midway through the term. However, a friend of mine from Pakistan, who had been in the class from the beginning, shared a similar experience. She mentioned that she emailed the class introducing herself as a new student and asking for help, but none of the other students responded.</p> <p>I didn't pick up on the subtle racism until I began trying to making genuine connections with people in my previous team. I assumed we had little in common due to an age gap and they meant well, but as time went on there were many subtle racist remarks made in casual conversation or as whispers in the office about other groups of people, protesters etc. Once I shared where I grew up, my ethnicity, where I currently live etc it felt even more jarring trying to make normal conversation with people. Although these remarks were never aimed at me, I felt alienated and shut myself off at work. From then I felt left out of conversations, activities, staff events etc - all interactions were transactional with passive aggressive undertones about my outfits, accessories etc. This worsened when I began wearing jewellery and pins in support of Palestine and Lebanon. Seeing the treatment of Pro-Palestinian group organisers and the general distain for any protesting in general made me feel uncomfortable to voice my concerns about what is unfolding in Palestine and Gaza. I</p>

			<p>don't feel [University] is doing enough to support all students or staff - only catering to select groups. The past few years have been disheartening, I don't feel proud to say I work at [University]. The culture is elitist and efforts for 'progress' feels artificial. I don't see myself here for much longer.</p>
<b>Structural racism</b>	Racism as hidden or occurring behind closed doors in university settings		<p>It is not always possible for people who are "minoritised" to know that they are experiencing racism. Some behaviours and decisions happen behind closed doors. It is telling though to note that our white Australian colleagues don't experience microaggressions the same way as us or as frequently as us, they are not "told" how to do their job (this has been happening a lot more frequently ever since I was appointed to a leadership role) and they don't have to do additional emotional labour and go out of their way to "smile" so as not to risk upsetting fragile feelings of those who cannot stand to see the sight of a person like us in a position of leadership. I am repeatedly asked to answer admin questions even though the professional staff on my team are responsible for it. I don't think my colleagues want to accept my academic leadership position. I have asked two of my predecessors (both white men) if they had to deal with the same types of requests, and they said no.</p> <p>I think one of the most difficult aspects of racism at university is that it is often very hidden. It rarely shows up as explicit words or clear actions that can be pointed to as a breach of policy. Instead, it is reflected in subtle behaviours – the way people look at you, the tone they use when speaking, the hesitation in including you in conversations, or the different level of respect shown compared to others. These actions might seem small, but they accumulate, and as someone experiencing them, you feel them very clearly. The challenge is that such behaviour allows individuals to satisfy their discriminatory attitudes without ever being “caught” breaking a rule. This makes it hard to raise concerns formally, because it can easily be denied or explained away as unintentional. But the impact is real – it affects confidence, sense of belonging, and the overall work experience at university. I believe more awareness, education, and acknowledgement of these subtle forms of racism is essential. Universities should not only address explicit acts but also recognise and take seriously these “hidden” behaviours, which are just as damaging to individuals and to the inclusivity of the workplace.</p>
		Hiding identity	<p>I am always afraid of presenting myself in terms of where I come from because of potential prejudice and racism. I present myself as mildly European, though I am not. It is a very tricky time for people of Arab background, and I find that as soon as I present myself in those terms, there is an immediate worry that I might be antisemitic (which I am not) and I have to go out of my way to show that I am not. I find this extremely disconcerting. I also find it in general unsafe to present myself as being of Arab background at this moment, and I find that the University is not doing enough to protect people like me.</p> <p>It makes you afraid to represent your religion or culture, particularly through your dress and appearance</p>

	Racial discrimination		<p>I have personally experienced racial discrimination at [University], both online and in-person on campus multiple times over the past two years. I have complained countless times but there has been little to know meaningful action taken in response to these complaints; which generally take several months to address. I have been ignored, misinterpreted, gaslit, and dismissed. I have since withdrawn from teaching responsibilities and moved to complete my studies remotely as [University] refuses to create a safe environment for me on campus - specifically by enforcing existing policies in a uniform way.</p> <p>As a strong believer and person of faith, I always have been able to observe my daily prayers and able to use my prayer space as a place of solitude to reflect upon myself. However, for the first time I was denied access into a prayer space. With all due respect, I love the facility provided by university to observe my prayers. Its spacious and easy to access. However, it is disheartening to be questioned about which facilities I am using and stopped and inspected my identification details. This seems to be unnecessary while rest of the university spaces do not require this much permission.</p>
		In university employment settings in relation to tenure, period of time on contracts, and promotion	<p>I have experienced racial discrimination in my IT roles. Despite having relevant qualifications and over a decade of experience I was repeatedly denied opportunities to explore other IT areas, even after raising this with managers. I eventually moved to a new team where my female manager supports diversity and inclusion. However, during cross-team projects, I continue to face exclusion particularly from Anglo/European male colleagues who talk over me, dismiss my input and have even told me to stop speaking mid-conversation. My manager has advocated for me, but the behaviour continues. I'm also concerned about a colleague (in another team within the same division) with a PhD (in a IT subject) who is consistently denied project opportunities due to his verbal communication style. He does not wish to escalate and those who have noticed have raised it with the division's leadership without result. I'm sure there many similar experiences at [University] that are being swept under the carpet.</p>
<b>Intersection between interpersonal and structural, cultural and/or institutional</b>		<p>Racialised tokenism</p> <p>Curbing of academic freedom</p>	<p>I am too disappointed to make a recommendation here. We not only need a change of policies but also a rethink of our structure, leadership that is so white, and the extreme tokenistic approach to diversity. We need academic freedom to be able to talk about what is happening in the world. We need to be able to talk about Palestine and the Islamophobia affecting staff and student at university. This university culture is suffocating me and the likes of me. We don't have a community, our students are our only hope.</p>
		<p>Being profiled and treated with suspicion, including by security staff.</p> <p>Having quality of assignments questioned</p>	<p>Although my time at [University] has been very rewarding, there have been many instances of racism and racial discrimination that I have experienced throughout my time here. In my first term of university while attempting to visit the main library between classes security asked for my ID card (they had asked others for their ID so this didn't seem too bad). Shortly after presenting my ID card [University] security searched my bag and asked awkward questions to determine if I was in fact a student at [University]. They only did this to me, the only Arab guy queuing to get into the library. In a recent commerce course I completed, shortly after submitting an assignment my tutor asked me if I actually wrote it because the writing quality was of a high standard. They accused me of using an AI chatbot so I gladly offered to show them my Google Doc edit history and they</p>

			<p>immediately dismissed the matter. A few weeks after this, following the submission of my final assignment for the course, which was worth 30% from memory, my tutors feedback comment outright said that they had reduced my mark because they suspected I used assistance. I requested a formal review of the results since my tutor had decided to penalise me with no due process and argued that it was inappropriate for them to not go through the proper channels of an academic misconduct investigation where I would have had the chance to defend myself with my Google Docs edit history. The course convener reviewed the review of results request and chose to keep the mark as is despite the tutors comments and breach of university policy. I had to settle with a mark of 70/100 whilst upon comparing my assignment with my peers, who were white/Asian, received marks in excess of 85/100. Additionally, I must comment on the Israel Palestine conflict in the Middle East and the effect it has had with my sense of belonging. Shortly after the conflict erupted I felt extremely out of place and isolated during my classes. I am usually the only Middle Eastern person in my tuts/lectures/societies so it is often difficult to have a sense of belonging anyway and this conflict exacerbated my sense of isolation. I am also generally fearful to speak about the conflict in any capacity due to the fear of being perceived as antisemitic, especially with my peers in class and in my clubs. Ill say outright that I am not antisemitic, I am just vehemently against the conduct of the current Israeli government and their starvation and ethnic cleansing of the people of Gaza. I recently attended my first protest at the Harbour Bridge March for Humanity and posted a picture of the march to my personal Instagram account. A member from my student society screenshotted my post and sent it to my club's messenger group chat labelling me an 'dirty op' - slang for opposition/opponent. My peers, of all races and religions, have said that they are fearful to speak about the conflict or make any comments whatsoever, both online and in person, because they fear they may be punished by the university or it may affect their employment in the future. I feel that I have been subjected to increased racial discrimination when applying for employment or for extracurricular roles at [University]. It's already hard enough trying to apply for jobs as a middle eastern person from [location redacted] but I had a handful of intern ship offers in 2022/2023. Immediately following the start of the conflict all of my applications were ghosted and only up until the end of last year have I started to receive interview offers here and there. When working in a group task or during a tutorial class I always feel like I have to prove I'm not stupid or uneducated despite my qualifications because people always seem to underestimate me because I feel like they think I'm less sophisticated or unintelligent.</p>
		<p>Racial profiling by academic staff in teaching and learning settings</p>	<p>While studying at [University], I experienced a moment in class that felt overtly racist and left a lasting emotional impact on me. During a lecture, I shared my ideas. The lecturer looked at me and said, "You are a person with a foreign name in Australia. You think you will be successful?" This comment was made in front of the entire class. I was shocked, humiliated, and deeply hurt. As an international student already trying to navigate a different system and culture, hearing that from an educator made me question not just my place in the university, but my future in this country. It reinforced the very barriers I had come here to overcome. I didn't feel safe or supported enough at the time to report it. But these kinds of experiences stay with you. They can seriously damage a student's confidence, self-worth and engagement with their studies. To improve equity and address racism, I believe [University] should: Provide compulsory cultural awareness and anti-racism training for all staff, including academic and professional staff. Create safe and confidential</p>

			<p>reporting pathways where students can share incidents without fear of academic repercussions. Appoint trained diversity officers within each faculty to handle complaints with care and understanding. Increase the visibility and voice of students from diverse backgrounds in decision-making roles and public campaigns. Actively challenge deficit-based thinking that assumes international or culturally diverse students are less capable. Racism does not always show up in extreme or violent ways. Sometimes it's a single sentence that tells a student they don't belong. I hope [University] continues to listen and create safer, more inclusive spaces where all students are treated with respect and dignity.</p>
		<p>Reporting of Islamophobia to university without action</p>	<p>We've reported many times Islamophobia to the university and they refuse and neglect to address any of it. The university is currently working on addressing antisemitism after one year. The university has demonstrated capacity to address racism but has avoided addressing Islamophobia for years. The university has also refused to address the racism report produced by two African students, one a refugee, but quoted it as their own work during a presentation despite ignoring the students who produced and partook in the studies requests to respond to the racism on campus. Furthermore, the university is taking away the mussallah space regularly used by Muslims and moving us to a space that risks the privacy of Muslim sisters. The sisters mussallah has been a sanctuary for them for the longest time and now they are losing this safe space.</p>

**Table 2.5 Lived experiences of students and staff from Muslim communities**

Theme	Sub-theme	Examples (description)	Illustrative quote
<b>Interpersonal racism</b>	Overt racism		<p>Had someone randomly airdrop me a photo of 9/11 attack to my computer white my name is Muslim/nonwhite on the eve of 9/11 last year in the library.</p> <p>While working there was once a student who made a comment about 9/11. It was very minor, and he never came back again...</p> <p>With the recent protest about immigrants being kicked up, this is disgustingly racism. There are many people from [University] who have attended this protest. They make racism comments at uni, ruining [University]. Many from [University] are from overseas studying and born overseas who live here. It is hurtful and makes many feel unsafe around that person and lowers self-esteem. More attention should be given to racist remarks especially on sensitive topics like immigrants.</p>
		Islamophobia	<p>Forget broad stroke 'racism'. There is rising Islamophobia that goes completely unaddressed. The genocide in Gaza is seen as a contentious political issue that is somehow racism free, when it is nothing but. It is all about racism; the genocide itself as well as the enforced silence within universities. How can a university be considered as trying to tackle racism when it is pointedly silent about a genocide and indeed oppressing any significant speech or action against it. You cannot be trying to take action against 'racism' when you can't even take action against the violation of fundamental human rights rooted in racial inequalities.</p> <p>We've reported many times Islamophobia to the university and they refuse and neglect to address any of it. The university is currently working on addressing antisemitism after one year. The university has demonstrated capacity to address racism, but has avoided addressing islamophobia for years...<sup>34</sup></p> <p>I believe the racism I experienced at university can be contributed to a global issue and I did not take it personally because I know it's a worldwide issue. I sent students an email inviting them to an Iftar dinner which is an Islamic dinner in Ramdan (an important moth for Muslims) and received many Islamophobic responses from students. When discussing these racist/Islamophobic replies from students I did not feel supported I felt I was being blamed for sending out the invitation (expect for a couple of staff including my manager). I work with student clubs and the process to approve student events is almost always harder when it's for Muslim students. Once, even after approving an event, the venue/security teams wanted to investigate the panel speaker which was a Muslim community member that was invited by the students. This would never happen if it was for any other club.</p>

<sup>34</sup> The remainder of this quote has been removed as it contained identifying information that could not be redacted or the point being made would be completely lost.

	Racial stereotyping, racial slurs, derogatory language	Racist jokes and mocking	<p>Jokes about Arabs being a danger and bad people were made out quite frequently in my [redacted] degree. I was surprised when I also double standards on me when I took a role in the [redacted] society. I tried to seek help but most of the staff gave me the impression that they are too busy with their work (including the diversity and wellbeing officer). In other clubs, one white person introduced me as the resident terrorist to newer members. Some of my friends felt very upset that I have experienced that without them speaking up at that moment. They were just in a shock and speechless. That's why most people from my country avoid having friends from here. Because of the comments that are not true that hurts us. I feel in most of the times that whenever I give my feedback I'm avoided. Our [redacted] professor once said "I don't think the Middle East deserved having the FIFA World Cup." I didn't know what respond honestly about it. Whenever I got my marks, he kept pushing the fact that my English is not good because it's not my first language in an offensive way. While other staff don't say that.</p> <p>Some of the fellow students like to mock my accent and hide it under "joking". Some groups avoid talking to me or keep the conversation "short". In group assignments my opinion is not important, I was laughed at in a meeting once for suggesting something. I suggest that the university observe the ethnicity present in each class or field and address whether an ethnicity has an issue with another or not, because I never thought Indian people have a problem with Islam and Arabs until I came here to Australia.</p>
	Everyday covert racism	Social exclusion in social and teaching/learning settings including in group work-based on racial identity	<p>I have experienced instances where I felt excluded because of my cultural background. These situations made me feel uncomfortable and less confident in class. I believe more awareness and open conversations about diversity and inclusion would help create a more supportive environment for all students.</p> <p>In my experience with in-person classes, I felt that some Australian students were not very open to interacting with students from other cultural backgrounds. They tended to keep to themselves or stick with other Australian students. This was based on one class that I joined midway through the term. However, a friend of mine from Pakistan, who had been in the class from the beginning, shared a similar experience. She mentioned that she emailed the class introducing herself as a new student and asking for help, but none of the other students responded.</p>
		In university accommodation	<p>The dormitory situation is pretty messed up. I lived there the first 6 months of my uni life with another friend from the same country and 2 Aussies and 1 lady from Mongolia. There was often casual racism, for example comments like "Your English is really good for your people", "Your food smells too much", "Your cooking fogs up the house etc", There were times when, they would write comments in the fridge saying we had too much waste in the bin or that we can't keep our food in the fridge etc. other times, they would come yell at me for something they were upset about with my friend saying, "You can talk to her, you're from the same place" etc. At one point we even sent an elaborate complaint to the Dorm authorities only for them to ask us to go down to discuss everything rather than asking for the people causing the issues to have a chat. That also felt like subtle racism because it felt like they wanted to interrogate us instead of the people causing the issues. Either way, after some point, we left early because things stated to get really exhausting with the constant back snarky comments. The authorities are absolutely horrible at tackling issues and holding people accountable. So yeah.</p>
	"Casual racism" and "microaggressions"		<p>When I started at [University], it was quite difficult as I encountered micro aggressions and dismissals based on my cultural background and my gender. After Covid hit, things changed a lot and staff and stakeholders accepted the skills, experience and knowledge I was able to bring on the table. Since, the Palestinian genocide became a well-known affair, I found that the University sided with the Zionists and anything anyone would say became an attack against Jewish staff and students. I felt really unsafe and uncomfortable with the situation and just kept quiet. I am</p>

			<p>so proud of staff and students that were not worried to speak their views. I could not afford losing my job as I have younger kids and I love what I do. But this is how I felt saying 'I am against genocide' would lead me. I do find that the University should have stayed neutral. It seemed that it was the case unless you read between the lines.</p> <p>The passive and persistent micro aggressions of administrative staff takes a toll. They have been allowed to carry on this way and it's made easier with the distance online communication offers. When you keep getting talked down to you start wanting to retreat from communication altogether. Taking a moment to respond to a human being like a human being and not a hateful AI robot goes a long way. I'm so grateful for the faculty of my course for their continuous kindness and generosity. If it wasn't for them, I would never return or recommend this uni to anyone I know.</p>
		Uncomfortable gazes (being stared or getting a look from people)	I always get the look from people around me. It makes me uncomfortable like have they never seen a middle eastern guy before. Especially when it comes to facial hair or skin/hair colour. This is how I was born, I can't change my genes, and I don't want to. I'm proud to be Arab middle eastern however I respect every race and ethnicity, why people can't respect back?
		Marginalisation and othering	Particularly due to my [redacted] background, I have been subject to a number of isolating in marginalising experiences within the university. Particularly members of [redacted] sects have made me feel quite marginalised and othered. These individuals have labelled me an "infidel", a "slut", a "non-Muslim", and have made me feel unsafe to disclose my cultural and religious identity in university spaces, particularly those that are social. Considering current political climates in the Middle East, it is difficult enough having to deal with what's happening to my family over there in the current Syrian genocide of minorities, but the additional discrimination I am experience here adds to the difficulty. I don't feel safe, I don't feel represented and I don't feel that this is an issue spoken about enough. These individuals are hardly reprimanded or spoken to about their behaviour and discrimination towards other students who are just minding their own business. There are a number of individuals and collectives at [University] who support the Palestinian resistance and some of these individuals are the ones who have made me feel uncomfortable in these spaces as they have often pushed me to have discussions about [redacted country] geopolitical issues which I don't want to partake in. It has made me very uncomfortable.
<b>Intersection between interpersonal and institutional racism</b>	Racial discrimination	Employment-based racial discrimination	I believe the way the university employs staff can at times reflect underlying stereotypes related to race, ethnicity, and age. Based on my experiences—both working at the university and applying for various roles—I've observed that assumptions are sometimes made based on a person's appearance, religious background, or age. These assumptions can lead to perceptions that someone is inexperienced or unsuitable for a role, regardless of their actual qualifications or capabilities. There also seems to be a pattern where individuals from the majority cultural or ethnic group are favoured in recruitment or progression, and older candidates are automatically seen as more experienced, even when this may not reflect their actual skill set. In addition, I've noticed that accents can influence how a person's competence is perceived, with a clear preference for a particular type of English accent. This can create the impression that fluency in English—or speaking with a certain accent—is a marker of intelligence or experience, which is both inaccurate and exclusionary. I've also experienced and witnessed behaviour that reflects cultural insensitivity, where assumptions are made about someone's culture or religion. In particular, I've noticed that there are often false or stereotypical perceptions associated with Islam and the hijab, which are sometimes viewed as regressive rather than being recognised as a matter of personal choice. These kinds of biases and discriminatory

			<p>behaviours can affect how respected a person feels in the workplace, impact their self-esteem, and make it more difficult to build social connections with peers.</p> <p>I have found the situation in my workplace very upsetting and distressing. I often feel overlooked and as though I must work harder than others just to be considered. This has left me with an ongoing sense of unease, where I try to focus on my responsibilities but feel weighed down by the environment. I reported the bullying and racism I experienced to HR, and while I received personal support, there has been no visible accountability or action taken regarding the leader involved. This lack of resolution has been discouraging. While the general work culture is supportive, the conduct of a particular discipline leader (Indian) has created a harmful atmosphere. Concerns include conflicts of interest—such as appointing a spouse to the same workplace—and a pattern of hiring within a narrow circle of his former Indian student, which raises issues of fairness, inclusivity, and balance. These practices make the environment less conducive for collaboration and equity. Academic leadership should not be appointed solely on the basis of how many publications and grant success. True leadership also requires integrity, fairness, inclusivity, and the ability to foster a respectful and diverse environment where all staff feel valued.</p> <p>-don't feel supported to have a CAREER where I can actually progress - I feel like a cow being milked for all I have - I constantly hear microaggressions from my colleagues and management and have to brush it off -ONCE I called it out and then I got painted to be “emotional” and “passionate” (which is in itself a microaggression) -I constantly have to hear racist and discriminatory things about my religion by my colleagues -one of my colleagues is dehumanising and talks down at me in front of my students, which then affects how they treat me How this has affected me: all I want to do is work from home. I feel hopeless about a career I have dedicated a lot of time and effort toward. I feel I have to hold my space because I need my students to look at someone like me holding their ground and know that they should hold their own space too. But it's really hard to do so day in day out and my mental health is suffering</p> <p>There needs to be clearer boundaries set for academic staff and the processes at the university. I often find myself limited in employment opportunities despite having the required qualifications, while others with fewer qualifications, often from non-diverse or white backgrounds, are given preference.</p>
		In teaching and learning settings	<p>I am a student pursuing the Bachelor of Nursing program at [University]. I am writing regarding [University] ‘bare below the elbows’ (BBE) policy—in relation to sleeves—within the University’s teaching laboratories (labs). While I support rolling up sleeves when providing clinical patient care to protect both patients and staff against infectious risks; I find the policy’s uninformed blanket enforcement in non-clinical, low-risk teaching environments unjust—especially when it conflicts with religious requirements and holds no comparable risk to patient safety or infection control. The failure to accommodate religious requirements in such spaces feels discriminatory and fails to uphold our human right to practice our religious beliefs in a setting that does not present the same risks as real clinical practice. As a Muslim woman who observes the hijab, covering the arms is not just an extra garment, it is part of a Muslim woman’s head covering and religious obligation. Therefore, being made to remove our sleeves when it is not absolutely necessary is as serious as being made to remove our head coverings—and thus, our identities as Muslims—and is prohibited in our religion (Islam). Islam only permits such exceptions in cases of absolute necessity, such as when compromising safety and cleanliness—not in simulations with manikins or role-play scenarios. The current policy is overall distressing for all Muslim women students who believe in this Islamic legislation as it compromises one of two matters: our religion or our ability to become nurses. The policy also offers little support to students, as</p>

			<p>we are only provided the option of either entering labs BBE or being turned away for not complying with institutional policy—thereby, nullifying course progression and academic success. This leaves us feeling stripped of our rights where they are due, i.e., in controlled spaces—such as [University] labs. Additionally, it is disheartening that this policy is being enforced by nursing educators, who not only shape the future of the profession but also have a professional and ethical duty to maintain cultural safety. Prior to joining [University], I completed my Diploma of Nursing at a TAFE institute in [city redacted] that accommodated religious needs by allowing Muslim women to have their sleeves down in simulations and teaching labs on campus, with the BBE policy in place only during clinical patient contact. There, I was able to thrive both personally and professionally—having my religious requirements safely upheld while also having the privilege of becoming an Enrolled Nurse. When applying to [University], I had the best expectations of joining its diverse academic community, I cannot say this so far. It is the first place where I have encountered such a culturally unsafe and unreasonable policy. Therefore, I, along with other Muslim women students facing the same concern, respectfully request that [University] consider appropriate religious accommodations within its policies—such as allowing Muslim women to keep their arms fully covered in simulated environments and teaching labs where no real infection risks are present. This would ensure that all students can succeed without compromising their beliefs and academic progression. Thanking you.</p> <p>My most recent experience with racism at [University] came directly from my tutor. I was retaking the unit which was already a confronting and upsetting situation for me. She had seen my sticker on my laptop during my previous attempt and made a crude comment towards it and had an opinion of me ever since. During the first interaction in a year of not seeing her, she addressed me in a fake exaggeratedly “caring” tone, saying “you didn’t pass?” Not as a genuine question or offering support. Rather she said it with a smug smile and in a mocking way. It was belittling and she was deliberately provoking me. This was particularly distressing given our past history. Even so in my last semester in a different unit where I had been doing particularly well in, she had the opportunity to second view my work and had given me a much lower much than the first marker, she had awarded me with a poorer grade and provided feedback that didn’t make sense at all. Her behaviour in both instances carried a passive- aggressive, racially charged undertone that made me feel targeted, disrespected and unwelcome in the learning environment.</p> <p>In last year,2024, I have experienced racial discrimination by multiple Caucasian lecturers, the thing I have never experienced in my Bachelor degree at [University], as it was solely domestic degree that had different ethics groups who were born in Australia, in contrast to my Master degree where the majority of students are international students, which made me believe that I am assumed to be an international student due to my accent, hair and eyes colour. The racial discrimination I was subjected to is basically related to not being given the same opportunity as the Australian students were given when making mistakes or asking questions. I was made to feel out of place and out of logic, in contrast, the Australian students were treated like they were smart but had misunderstandings and just needed clarification. This treatment made me quit attending workshop classes in the last half of my trimester Also, I believe that I received worse marks than I deserved, especially when one of the lecturers toughly criticised some students who write longer answers than others, like me, even though the answer is correct but the way I answered the question made the lecturers feel I am writing a lecture, which is incorrect as I believe, but rather is due to having lots of information to justify the question. This criticism was never made to me by any non-native lecturers, nor by most of the native lecturers who didn’t exhibit any racism towards some of the non-native students. The other reason I believe I was treated this way, is due to the fact that I was very active in responding to any question asked by the lecturer, the thing I believe the lecturer didn’t like because he might felt it put me in a superior position to the natives particularly, after several participants he started ignoring my answers by focusing his eye contact on</p>
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			<p>the area were the native students sitting encouraging them to answer even if they are going to have a wrong answer, unfortunately native students gather together in isolated groups than the internationals. This is just one example from one course. However there are similar experiences in another different course. These experiences are related to particularly two courses over the last year. Overall, the other courses ran well and both native and non-native lecturers are fair and accommodating.</p> <p>An example that I experienced: - Academic writing workshop that target all student from different disciplines, the lecturer decide to bring reading material related to female Muslim negative experiences in one of the Muslim country. being the only female Muslim student in that lecture, made uncomfortable, vulnerable because this is not representing Islam female empowerment. It is a racism to pick such topic in this case and I can't see any explanation of a lecturer choosing such sensitive, minor topic in such type of workshops...</p>
		University services discrimination	<p>Make the Muslim prayer space open and accessible to all without restrictions. Over the past year, [University] has limited access to the space, especially on the holy day of Friday where congregational prayers are supposed to be performed. There has also been ongoing bullying and intimidation tactics from the university with their installing security on Fridays in the [redact name] building and requiring swipe card access to the building. Furthermore, security were insisting that students present their student cards for ID checks before entering the building and prayer space to make sure it was legitimately theirs. There would be multiple guards on Friday and multiple checkpoints to pass through just to reach the prayer space. It was nothing short of bullying and intimidation and made many students feel uncomfortable and harassed to say the least. Furthermore, on one occasion on Friday (4 July 2025), when the Muslim students decided to pray on the grass outside the [redacted] building after access to the prayer space was restricted, the university had close to 10 or so cleaners with leaf blowers and ride on sweepers to continue circling the area and the clean the place. This went on for about 2 hours and was done close to noon, at the time of the congregational Friday prayer. The cleaners with leaf blowers continued to use their leaf blowers to make noise and went around in circles around the same area despite there being no debris or leaves on the ground. The noise was extremely disturbing, and the cleaners stood around with leaf blowers on their shoulders in an intimidating way. The cleaners on the ride-on sweepers kept doing circles in the areas where we were supposed to pray, and again, there was no debris or dirt visible to be cleaned. When one of the students approached the cleaners asking them what was going on they told them that they had been told by their supervisor to keep cleaning the area until they were told to stop. Eventually, a student approached one of them and explained that the Muslims would be praying in the space and they stopped and apologised.</p>
	Hiding Identity		<p>I am a Muslim female, but I do not wear a hijab (headscarf) although it is technically compulsory to do so in my religion. One of the prominent factors, if not the only factor, that stops me from wearing a hijab is due to the fear that if I start wearing a hijab, it will reduce the academic and career opportunities available to me. This fear stems from my belief that the people around me will make stereotypes and assumptions about me and my skills (even if it isn't consciously) because they won't be able to see me beyond my hijab. And the reason why this fear stops me is because I have high goals that I want to achieve in life like getting into honours and masters, and progressing further in my academic journey, beyond undergraduate studies.</p>
	White passing	Policing of identities	<p>I am a mixed race Muslim who looks like a white guy. Growing up I was more outwardly Muslim in my dress etc., and was called a towelhead a few times. More recently I don't "dress like a Muslim" and I am often dismissed as a "white man" whose opinions are therefore invalid. At the university, especially in more politically active circles, my</p>

			whiter appearance is used to decide that I am privileged and so should be "last to speak", in some sense. I feel tempted to defend myself by saying I am mixed race but that shouldn't be a defence, nobody should be seeing my pale skin and assuming they know me in the first place. I shouldn't have to be a stereotypical Muslim just to be taken seriously. I was raised in Australia with no Muslim friends, wearing a thobe, shalwar Kamiz and turban would not be true to my Australian culture. I feel stuck either way.
<b>Structural racism</b>	Policies	Poor anti-racism policies	<p>I do not believe that a survey can address the everyday incivilities, harm, and erasures that happen to people who do not visibly identify with a group that is extolled in tokenistic ways by the 'diversity' imperatives of the university. White privilege remains unchecked in everyday interactions and there is a palpable silence and silencing of those who offer divergent views to what is deemed acceptable or 'palatable' by institutions.</p> <p>The University needs to do much much more to fight all types of racism and not only Antisemitism. There are far more people experiencing other forms of racism that is not antisemitism. As a global university with campuses located across Asia, [University] needs to do MUCH more to address this issue. For a start, senior leadership needs much more diversity away from white male or females.</p>
		Antisemitism	I think a blanket definition change of antisemitism will have long lasting impacts for people who are impacted on both sides of the definition and the potential to impact projects that can be supported by institutions based on the changes.
		Freedom of speech	I began experiencing increased racism after the university implemented new policies that selectively restricted freedom of speech, particularly targeting Muslims and those speaking out against the genocide. These measures have empowered supporters of the genocide, who now feel emboldened to harass and silence anyone who disagrees with them. The university leadership is directly responsible for fostering an environment where such racism is tolerated and even protected under the guise of policy. These new rules seem designed to shield those promoting hate, rather than protect marginalised voices.
		University handling of conflict on campus due to geopolitical conflict	The recent narratives about conflating support for Palestinian liberation as antisemitic left me feeling like Arab lives do not matter, and also reflect such a poor understanding of the complexity of what is happening. It has taken pictures of starving babies to shift this - minimally. The message this puts out to Arab and Muslim staff and students that there is a hierarchy of justice, and they are lesser. There is also an undertone of Islamophobia, and anti-Arab sentiment from the ABSENCE of acknowledgement that this occurs at the same time as the actual antisemitism that is currently occurring (not the conflation issue). The silence means a lot. Further to all of this, the very fact that we cannot get our cultural/ religious holidays acknowledged as cultural leave is cultural violence. Cultural leave is only allowed if you are leading a religious congregation, but not as an attendee. If this was true of all, who are the religious leaders talking to?? Instead, we have to sacrifice our annual leave, which people from the dominant cultural groups do not have to do. Further, annual leave approval is subject to less stringent rights than that of, say, sick leave or actual cultural leave. This tells me that the rights of racially and culturally minoritised traditions and identities do not matter.
		Silencing voices	I feel the way the university is silencing pro-Palestinian voices on campus who are upset about a genocide taking place has made me as a person of Arabic heritage feel discriminated against in that it seeks to minimise the suffering

			<p>of people like me and it de-values the lives and experiences of suffering of people like me have experienced and are continuing to experience the worst atrocities of our time. The mental impact &amp; trauma this has had on my community is profound and has led to distrust of institutions such as this one who have succumbed to the pressure of lobbyists rather than upholding the civil rights of their staff and students to protest and disrupt when a genocide is being live streamed. This is an urgent human rights issue- as a prestigious higher education institution [University] should be leading the way on this matter. Instead my community is afraid to speak about these issues, we feel collectively less safe and have been de-humanised by our leaders who have made it clear that our death and destruction is treated as less of a problem/ issue than the discomfort of others.</p> <p>Silencing and gaslighting about the reality of the Israeli genocide against Palestine and perpetration of war-crimes. This includes a clear prioritisation in addressing antisemitism above all other forms of discrimination, including those experiencing the impacts of the genocide and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There is also an incorrect narrative by leadership in conflating being against the actions of the Israeli government and what drives those actions and actual antisemitism.</p>
<p><b>Intersection between interpersonal and structural, cultural and/or institutional</b></p>		<p>Interpersonal racism in workplace environment</p>	<p>The following examples of questionable comments were not directed at me but they were said in a conversation I was present at, on various occasions, all made by a manager. I paraphrase: - Unnecessary comments made about fat people on planes and the amount of space they take up in a seat and that there should be different seats available to them. - Comment about how some people of some cultures look the same and when I raised my eyes, they backed it up by saying it is across all cultures and exemplified a situation she experienced in Asia where an Asian lady said that she and her friend look the same (they are white, female, Australian) Additionally, within the department I reside within, there is evidently one team and their manager who is very 'cliquey'. There is a particular type of person within that manager's team - while it isn't without diversity in relation to gender orientation or ethnic background, they are all visibly white. And all come from the main western democracies within the world. Perhaps what I write here is subjective. After 3.5 years of observing said manager, it is hard to shake the feeling that decisions are fuelled by biases.</p>

**Table 2.6 Lived experiences of students and staff from Pasifika and Māori communities**

Theme	Sub-theme	Examples (description)	Illustrative quote
Interpersonal racism	Overt racism	Racist slurs Racist remarks Mocking	<p>Some of the class content in sociology, criminology and psychology has a history in racism, which is often acknowledged in lectures (as negative). However, discussions during tutorials and lectures about these topics often open up avenues for students to make racist and inconsiderate remarks and call it "intellectual discussion" (which it is not).</p> <p>Despite not being targeted by racial harassment myself the multiple blatant racist remarks and I have overheard and been privy to by other students has make me more afraid to be on campus and less open to discussing my beliefs with others.</p> <p>I don't know I'm still annoyed at the woman in my class just commenting as her stupid brain thinks things she just put inappropriate comments in the chat without thinking- she said the Māori ate a whole race and wouldn't admit it- this took place in an indigenous subject were I never in my dreams excepted to hear a comment like this and you would think she had the insight to know this comment was not appropriate.</p> <p>I have been called [N-word], 'coconut', 'Moana' (even though I present as male), I've been called a 'black shit', 'fug-ly', 'monkey', etc. I've been told numerous times that I should go back to where I came from and I have been told to 'f#@ken kill myself because I'm ugly and dumb'. I very often have people who ignore me and I also had to deal with one person who refused to take something from me directly - I had to place the item on the desk then I watched them pick it up with a tissue and wipe it as if any physical contact with me would cause the person harm - it's degrading, de-humanising and I just swallow my pain and keep going because I need my job to put a roof feed my family and put a roof over our heads. I am not an academic or in senior management - I'm a staff member just trying to do my job and make ends meet. Some people do it as a joke or they saying 'teasing' but I feel hurt because it's not once...it may happen once or twice a day - sometimes more</p> <p>Racism can be very difficult for people from different backgrounds to experience. Often, others mock their culture and reduce them to a single stereotype, placing one "face" on an entire community. Much of this happens subconsciously, because we are too quick to judge. If we took the time to learn about the major cultures and religions around us, we would gain a deeper understanding of how to communicate respectfully. This knowledge would help us move past fear and avoid mocking what we don't understand.</p>
		Being treated with suspicion	My cousin was physically harassed simply for walking around campus with a backpack as he was suspected to be carrying something dangerous inside it, he was wearing [University] clothing and was clearly going to class. He is of Samoan and Asian descent and wasn't causing any harm to anyone, it has since been reported but behaviour like this is not ok.
	Casual racism and microaggressions	Everyday racism manifesting as	I was born in Australia and my grandparents and mother migrated here from [redacted], my father was born here, so whilst I appear ethnic, my command of English is good, and I understand the

		<p>racialised stereotypes</p> <p>Awkwardness and discomfort around negatively racialised people</p> <p>Subliminal actions</p> <p>Being stared at</p> <p>Mispronouncing name or refusing to pronounce name</p> <p>Microaggressions in the form of compliments</p>	<p>customs and norms of Australia. I'm privileged in that way so whilst I've experienced ignorant comments regarding my cultural background from other students and sometimes been excluded from group tasks in tutorials due to my ethnicity, my experience hasn't been as bad as international students I've completed the course with. They are excluded and often had comments made about their capacity to do the work due to speaking multiple languages, with other students often holding the misconception that their fluency in English is going to affect their effort or quality of work in group assignments.</p> <p>I have often received subtle racism due to my skin colour and other physical features. Although I have a much lighter skin tone than those of my heritage, I do have the build associated with it. Whilst I do not receive overt racism, the subtle actions I receive are similar to other subliminal actions taken by offenders around those of a race they perceive as dangerous or distrustful. Comparatively, a classically white European friend of approximately the same height and build can take the same actions in close proximity to me without receiving any of the same reactions as I do.</p> <p>The prejudices are often subtle, in the tone of voice or attitude; it can feel very unsafe when you encounter a group of people with this attitude, and even more worrying when it is from a group of young people who have been exposed to diverse cultures but still hold this attitude.</p> <p>I find people, staring at me when I walk into coffee shops here, or into a room for a meeting, or workshop. I have come to take it as just people seeing unfamiliar face for the first time. Otherwise for me, I control my own perception when experiencing racism. I tell myself not many people have lived experiences in diversified cultures, so they don't know how to react appropriately.</p> <p>Throughout my time at the [redacted university name], I've encountered subtle but persistent forms of racial bias that have left a lasting impact. These weren't always overt acts of discrimination, but rather quiet exclusions, assumptions, and microaggressions that made me feel like I didn't fully belong. There were moments in group projects where my ideas were dismissed until repeated by someone else. Times when lecturers mispronounced my name repeatedly, despite corrections. And instances where I felt my academic work was judged more harshly than others, especially when my name was visible on submissions. These experiences weren't isolated, and over time, they chipped away at my confidence and sense of safety in the university.</p> <p>In my time at [University], I have experienced racism in ways that are often subtle but deeply harmful. Senior leaders in the Centre for [redacted] would frequently make comments about how "I write really well," said with surprise as if it were unexpected of me. While presented as compliments, these remarks carried an undertone of racial bias that as a Pacific woman, my ability to produce high-quality writing was unusual. Over time, these repeated comments left me feeling undervalued, as though my professionalism and expertise were not automatically recognised but treated as exceptional. I have also had my leadership style mischaracterised as "too assertive" or even "aggressive," particularly by white women in. These descriptions reflected racialised and gendered stereotypes, where confidence and strength of women of colour were judged more harshly than in others. Such misrepresentations have been damaging, leading me to question my sense of belonging and to constantly second-guess how I am perceived. The emotional and cultural</p>
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			labour of navigating these spaces is heavy. It is exhausting to experience microaggressions and stereotypes in a university that claims to have social justice at its core. The impact is not only professional but also personal, affecting wellbeing and confidence. These experiences highlight how racism does not always appear as overt hostility but is embedded in everyday interactions, assumptions, and structures that continually diminish and undermine the contributions of racially diverse staff.
<b>Intersection between interpersonal and structural, cultural and/or institutional racism</b>	Social exclusion	Social exclusion in social settings and group work in teaching and learning settings based on racial identity	<p>While I have not experienced explicit discrimination of any kind while at [University], I have noticed and experienced a difference in treatment/attitudes among my peers. The predominantly domestic Australian population and individual attitudes of most domestic students exhibit slightly racist or standoffish behaviour towards coloured students, or students that have a diverse background. While it is not outwardly displayed or harmful, it is noticeable and causes me to feel disappointed and left out at times.</p> <p>Being here, I've only made friends with other international students. Those of European descent are usually hard to make friends with as they tend to only socialize with themselves.</p> <p>At [University], racism often manifests through social exclusion, where fluent English speakers and non-fluent English speakers remain separated. Students from different cultural backgrounds tend to form distinct groups, with limited interaction across communities.</p> <p>Often times in group work settings, when I'm the only ethnically/culturally diverse person at the table or in the group, my contributions won't be acknowledged, appreciated or I'll be excluded and often other participants will pair up with other people before having to pair with me. In lab work when having to work with a partner, often myself and other non Caucasian students will be last to be paired with anyone. I've had people avoid sitting at tables with me until there was nowhere else to sit. At my university where a majority of students come from a wealthy background, the first questions you'll usually get are "where do you live" and depending on your answer you'll get negative or positive responses, often when you don't come from a similar background you find they become uninterested in speaking to you.</p> <p>I see that people of darker skin gets treated differently, especially in group work setting. Teachers and administrators are really nice, just some classes I experience this especially when it's a group of females. My age also plays a major role here because I don't understand how this generation work. An exchange student privately messaged me to talk about how I did not do my work in the group, but I did it and because no one was responding to my messages so they didn't see my work being pasted. My friend who has a much fairer skin than I am gets treated with respect and was included in their conversations. Whenever I say my ideas, it gets treated less important than theirs. I do not like this and hence why I don't participate much in university activities.</p>
	Bias	Bias in marking of assignments (e.g. harsh feedback and lower marks)	I have felt the harsh treatment especially from the feed backs from submitted assignments. I feel distressed and this affected my study journey. I feel just because English is not my first language, my skin colour and my age should not be discriminated against the marks I get from submitting my assignments. I pour my heart and soul, money, time, effort and resources including having lived a domestic violence and struggling financially to look after my growing children while studying. This issue must be seriously looked into as this has affected my health and wellbeing also.

			What feels even more difficult to accept is that in some assessments, the standards do not always feel consistent. Because of different student backgrounds, the expectations can shift, and white male students often appear to receive more subjective approval from examiners.
		Receiving less recognition for the same work	<p>These questions are directed at overt racism. They do not address the quieter racism where you feel you have to work harder in order to receive the same recognition if you not white. People of colour will tell you how prevalent this is.</p> <p>The real 'killer' of happiness is the silent, cold shoulder treatment - have faced this when I was a student and now when I am a staff member. The feeling of not belonging, not being needed, not being appreciated, not being heard or seen. Having to work 2-3x as hard, just to get similar marks to domestic students (and no, I was not a struggling student and have finished my doctorate).</p>
		Domestic students being assumed to be international	I haven't personally experienced racism however, there have been occasions where people tend to assume that I am an international student due to my appearance. It would be nice to educate or spread awareness about the discomfort from these assumptions. Also, questions like "where are you actually from" should be rephrased to "what's your ethnicity?". Simple changes like that would be much appreciated, but I'm not sure how it would be implemented at university. Maybe through posters or announcements or maybe incorporating it in the respectful relationships module that first year students had to complete.
		Racism from teaching staff in the classroom	Very disappointed with how teaching staff can get away with being racist towards students and not stopping conversations where making racist remarks and topics aren't being shut down but entertained. I've had racial experiences with two teaching staff in particular, seen and heard other students having bad experiences with the same teaching staff as myself.
		Soft censorship	Regardless of sex, I have seen darker skinned people like myself made to feel as though they are taking up too much space (voicing their opinions, speaking etc.) in tutorial discussions. This soft censorship comes exclusively from white students, and very rarely from white staff. Overall, I believe most students and staff at [redacted] go out of their way to welcome the voices and opinions of those who come from diverse backgrounds. Unfortunately, there does remain a quiet type of racism in which speaking over someone who isn't white is simply accepted as the norm.
		Being dismissed as too sensitive	So far, racial discrimination has not been very obvious, but I can feel that it does exist. Some staff members sometimes show an unconscious arrogance toward students from unfamiliar backgrounds. They may ask questions that make others feel uncomfortable, and when students express that discomfort, it is dismissed as being "too sensitive." This is unacceptable.
		Clinical placements	Discrimination intensified during clinical placements. Debrief Hours: During placement debrief sessions, I was subjected to mocking of my accent. Other students openly laughed at the way I spoke, yet no intervention was made by the placement director, who allowed the harassment to continue unchecked. This silence from a person in authority compounded the humiliation, signalling tolerance of racially motivated bullying. [redacted] Hospital: While on placement at [redacted hospital], I was directly targeted and told I looked "scary." This demeaning comment

			<p>reduced me to a racialised stereotype, with no acknowledgement from supervisors or staff to correct or address the discriminatory behaviour. [redacted] Hospital: At [redacted hospital], staff members singled me out inappropriately, rolling their eyes at me when I spoke or participated. These gestures were not isolated but repeated, signalling a pattern of exclusion and disrespect rooted in bias against my cultural background and presence.</p>
		<p>Pressure to conform to white cultural norm</p>	<p>The racism here is subtle and presented as me being un-Australian. For e.g. in my culture, speaking in turns is formally required, and means people can get their grievances off their chest or have their opinion heard - regardless of who agrees or not. Despite explaining this to my manager, supervisor and the constant rotation of staff where I work - I still get talked over in meetings. Worse, I get sighed at or get an eye-roll because I'm extending their meeting length when I finally get to address their behaviour or the concerns and opinions they voiced. This usually results in 'we need to finish this meeting because we have other appointments, We'll continue this offline' or 'can you put it on the next meeting'. I've stopped participating in meetings, I've stopped asking clarifying questions while at work, and generally treat meetings as presenteeism - paid time wasting. My colleagues see it as an Australian way of having meetings - but they don't see that as racism.</p> <p>I struggle to be my authentic self in a predominantly white affluent environment where cultural ignorance among my peers is common.</p> <p>I don't think the way these questions are framed paints a complete picture. Because what we do is conform to a kind of workplace camouflage. Very little discrimination is overt. The staff room has salt and pepper but does it have chilli? Knives and forks but are their chopsticks? The images in artwork and statues around the premises don't celebrate/honour diverse representation. We have morning teas for Easter and Christmas (paid for by work) but celebrate Lunar New Year if a staff member brings something in. I can't use greetings and sign-offs in my emails in my language because "it would be confusing to International students".</p> <p>I feel that I come from a place of privilege, in how I was raised and am proud of the person I have become. I view myself as a strong independent Samoan female, and carry myself so because that is what is expected of me and I know where I stand...when I am with my family, my community. The expectations and standards to which I hold myself, are because I was raised with the intention that I needed to be strong to prepare myself and hold my own against a western man's system that is so different to my cultural/traditional upbringing. When I am outside that safe space, I find myself trying to make myself adapt to fit into the expectations that this society makes of me and it is hard sometimes to separate what is racist or discriminatory, and what is just the norm with the culture at work. I find myself wanting to warn and shape and protect my younger loved ones because I know there is stereotypes about their culture in the world we live in that has become almost normalised, in an attempt to make their pathway as smooth sailing as possible, without weakening their love and respect for who we are as Pasifika people. I find myself wanting to push and carve pathways and pipelines for people like me, knowing they are living and working in a system that is not built for them, and yet feeling slightly guilty that I am wanting more for my people, and wondering if that makes me a bad person.</p>

		Tokenism	I also observe a noticeable amount of tokenism and erasure in the direction of First Nations. There is a perception that the inclusion of First Nations material is a token approach to tick "PC" boxes, with this idea often carrying into the classroom where there is a small inclusion of First Nations related material without really looking into it to deeply.
		Non-European knowledge systems not being valued in curriculum	There is also the systemic racism. European centric research, methodology and precedents are held up without question. It's very much the Anglo worldview with mention of the "others".
		Exploitative research practices	This is institutional racism in action – a system that commodifies vulnerable communities for academic gain while silencing those who demand accountability.
		Other academics doing deficit-based research on Pasifika communities	Also had manager who is white and privileged and would use me as a piece of tokenism expertise of cultural diversity in teaching and exploited me for local First Nations connections for her research project. Levels of exploitation of researchers and teaching staff, by senior academics is a tired trope - but I'm sorry to say that it keeps happening today. In the last two years, seeing my Māori perspectives in research & writing - alongside my networks with fellow indigenous academics - being repeatedly taken (i.e. stolen) and used for the furtherment of others' senior academic careers is depressing. After watching a grant that I worked VERY hard to write and apply for, being taken by these same senior academics to divide among themselves - my colleague wrote to [redacted university name] admin to complain. Nothing was done. Seeing the same old white/western predominantly male senior management/admin in schools, faculties and Uni - I know that I'm wasting my time trying to fight a systemic problem. University, and the way it is set up, is probably not the place for indigenous researchers/thinkers.
		Not disclosing identity	I don't work on campus but at a near-by workplace with several other university staff and/or honorary staff members. I have experienced racism as a 'white passing' Māori and Chinese woman, mainly in questioning the authenticity of my Māori ethnicity (interestingly my Chinese heritage is never questioned). Although I think the vast majority of people don't hold racist views, it can be difficult to identify who those few are until it is too late. Therefore, in general I won't disclose my ethnicity unless necessary or relevant.
		Questioning of identity	I have had my ethnicity and heritage questioned because of the colour of my skin. Although people at [university name redacted] are very aware of the sensitivities around Aboriginal history, colonial structures and that skin colour does not determine your connection to culture and community, they do not seem to realise that these same colonial structures exist in many countries and are happy to ignorantly/disrespectfully comment on your appearance/heritage.  I feel disadvantaged being a white person in that people assume my heritage. I have south sea Islander decent. No one ever asks what my background is. They just presume I am white. And how I see that is white = bad. I feel humiliated when I sit in classes where we listen to and learn about white privilege. I find it so offensive and so insensitive. It shows me there isn't a full understanding

			of the history into the state and country as if there was there would be recognition of what my ancestors were subjected to when they were stolen to be slaves in Qld sugar... throw in the fact that I am Anglican, I would NEVER feel safe wearing a cross to uni, I would feel that would make me a target from other people who are not Anglican. I feel that there isn't safety for people who appear to have white skin and who have Christian beliefs.
		Lack of cultural safety	It is often not clear why mistreatment I experience and observe is happening - rarely are directly racist things said, more often misogynistic terms are used or it's just general aggressive or disrespectful language. A more obviously racialised problem occurs in the options for resolution. Once inappropriate behaviour has happened, the absence of cultural safety at the local level makes it difficult to address and/or resolve matters. I can't raise issues in a way that is culturally safe, so I don't raise them at all. I have directly observed this for colleagues from other cultural backgrounds too.
		Lack of support for career progression	Being a minority in this country is a challenge. Most people are pleasant superficially but deeper it can be hard to find a group that I really identify with and feel 100 incorporated with. This has affected my confidence and I would say my over all ability to really thrive career wise. Opportunities are less forthcoming I am expected to stay at an entry level or basic level job vs thriving to the top or I have experienced it is more obstacles to overcome for me to reach further advancement.
		Responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict	<p>The lack of follow through with complaints against senior (White) academics for racist conduct is making many of us Indigenous staff feel unsafe, and many of us are looking to leave. The contradictory response to Gaza, focused on protecting Jewish students, and neglect of the safety of our Palestinian and other Arabic colleagues and students, is hypocritical and adds to an unsafe environment on campus and especially in the classroom.</p> <p>On a personal level, I am deeply disturbed by the Universities Australia definition of antisemitism and what this means for Palestinian students and any staff or students who oppose Zionist settler colonialism.</p> <p>If you want to do something stop the attacks on Jewish people and stop supporting the crazy activists supporting Hamas.</p>
		Being perceived as white increases exposure to racist remarks	<p>While in comparison to most, my experiences with racism have been minimal. I am privileged enough to be very fair-skinned, which allows me to be a chameleon amongst others, but that in itself has its own issues; people are more confident in making racist comments around me because they think I will agree, because I look like them.</p> <p>I am biracial but am white passing. People often feel comfortable expressing views about non-white people to me because of this, including towards me group because they assume I am fully white. Furthermore, people often discount my biracial identity because of the colour of my skin, despite being raised immersed in both cultures and having a strong relationship to my ethnic and cultural identity. I do not feel as though I fully fit in to either the White or Pacific Islander communities because of this.</p>

		Progress	It needs to be remembered that I have also witnessed people trying to address their errors in understanding and rectify their ignorance. I have seen the university attempt to ensure every student is educated in respect and practices working towards cultural security for all across all domains. Please remember to balance the research with insights on progress. The results, delivered poorly may be potentially inflammatory and in some respects it could be quite misleading as the untold story is there are a lot more incidents of people striving to update, evolve and work towards cultural security.
<b>Between group racism</b>		Racism from other negatively racialised communities	<p>The most painful racism occurs within culturally diverse communities of Australia, especially if you identify with one or more of them. These are more nuanced and harder to identify, but no less important to tackle head on. Internalised racism occurs A LOT within Western hierarchal cultural institutions and when non-European individuals enter them and their systems, they are pitted against each other to survive, economically and status wise. It's also important to consider Australia's racist based policy histories towards indigenous peoples as well as racist immigration policies (1901 Immigration Act, one of Australia's founding pieces of legislation designed to keep non-whites out of Australia) that are perpetuated in and symptomatic in Australian contemporary culture</p> <p>Sadly, when other ethnicities see this differential treatment, they too think it is okay to behave towards others this way, just because the original perps do it.</p>

**Table 2.7.1 Lived experiences of students and staff from South Asian communities**

Theme	Sub-theme	Examples (description)	Illustrative quote
<b>Interpersonal level</b>	Overt racism	<p>Overt racial slurs or jokes directed at students based on Indian identity</p> <p>Escalation of Indian student's experience of racial hate following anti-immigration protests in Australia</p>	<p>When I was facilitating a presentation to a group of Graduate researchers and Academics, I was threatened verbally by an academic and called to go back to my Quickie-Mart (reference to Abu from The Simpsons who is of Indian origin and owns a convenience store) at a separate meeting with this group a Graduate researcher of Indigenous background asked me in front of the audience why wasn't I driving my uber eats delivery bike.</p> <p>I feel like [University] isn't addressing the racial abuse that Indian students are facing both online and on campus. We've been called names like "curry muncher," "scammer," or "Raju" just because we're brown and Indian. It's not only international students' domestic students like myself have also been targeted. I've been experiencing this since I joined, and I never expected it to be this severe. The name-calling doesn't stop, even when I ask them to. And it's not limited to just my class it's happening across campus.</p> <p>...in the uni campus was a fellow Indian student being called out racist comments like curry muncher and worse, it was by a group of Aussie nationals and they laughed about it</p> <p>There is unfortunately a lot of hate spread to Indians specifically and it has become quite normalised to insult Indians even as a joke and passing comments even in public doesn't seem to be frowned upon. Especially with the protest on the 31st [August 2025] it just seems to be getting from bad to worse.</p>
	Racial Stereotyping, racial slurs, derogatory language	Stereotyping based on skin colour	<p>I'm a Sri Lankan and I have a dark complexion. So, I naturally appear to be south Asian, particularly Indian. But I'm actually from Sri Lanka. On campus I've faced so many instances where people automatically assume that I'm from India and would proceed to ask me so. This often makes me feel down because not all dark skinned, south Asian looking people are from India. Sri Lankan people often look very similar, but we are a completely different country and nationality. To be judged and stereotyped just because of one's skin colour and appearance is hurtful, at least for me. I often have to correct people saying that I'm not from India and I'm actually from Sri Lanka. Also, I wanted to mention this one experience I had when I was with my mom on campus. She was visiting and I wanted to show her my beautiful university. While we were walking, a random man screamed at us as he passed by saying "Go back to India". I was shaken and felt sad. However, the funny thing is, I wasn't even Indian. This was the only time I've had to face a major instance of racial discrimination on campus. Most of the time students and staff are very welcoming and warm and kind. They've never discriminated me or harassed me like that. But I feel that when people see me, they automatically assume I'm Indian which saddens me because I come from this beautiful country called Sri Lanka and the people there are warm and kind and the most welcoming. I want to be seen for who I really am, rather than who I appear to be based on my complexion.</p>
		Racially derogatory comments about employment capability	<p>The most challenging form of discrimination to address is what I perceive as passive racism. Everything appears inclusive on the surface—until opportunities for promotion, recognition, or encouragement arise. When I look at the senior management structure, it is hard not to notice the lack of cultural diversity at the top levels. One of the most concerning moments for me personally was hearing a senior manager comment</p>

			<p>that, “Indians are great to have around as long as they are doing service jobs like cleaning, servicing, or driving—but they are not suited to sitting at the same table making decisions.” This highlights that the problem is not always about formal education or qualifications, but about deeply rooted attitudes and perceptions that remain unaddressed. Often, the most difficult behaviours come from highly qualified, long-serving leaders who lack empathy, understanding of cultural differences, and basic awareness.</p>
	<p>Everyday covert racism</p>	<p>Social exclusion in social settings and group work in teaching and learning settings based on racial identity</p>	<p>I’ve noticed some subtle patterns, like people choosing to sit together at lunch or collaborate on projects, where they don’t necessarily avoid others but seem more comfortable sticking with the same group—often those who share the same cultural or racial background. It happens both ways, not just within one group. I’m not entirely sure how to address it, because I also understand that when you’re living in a country away from your own, like in Australia, there’s a natural sense of comfort and connection in being able to speak the same language or share familiar experiences.</p> <p>As I am doing an [redact name] degree, I had to participate in a lot of group activities. Mostly this group would consist of 3-4 people. The racism I felt is that they ignore me or doesn’t allow me to participate in discussion or activities. I feel excluded and most of the time I will have to do the work by myself. I know that I am an introverted person, but I try my best to keep active in group discussion, but they never acknowledge me or my views.</p> <p>I was mentally traumatised. I was being mistreated and often times that would refrain me to socialise with people. Most people are very unwelcoming and anti-social to international people. Often times I would be labelled as ‘Indian’ which I’m not and my religion to be oppressive. Most local Australians at my university and workplace would not want to socialise, specifically females. I would also be deprived of job opportunities since I am an immigrant, and I have visa conditions. Employers mostly prefer citizenship over calibre and often times I would get rejection from an internship or an engineering job in my field. There is also less support for international students at [University]. Often times I felt that the University is taking advantage of huge sum of fees international students are paying and in return we are just getting the privilege of studying in top listed universities but that is temporary and after our visa ends, we don’t bring any value to the country.</p> <p>I’ve sat for many tutorials where my peers have opted out from doing a group assignment with me saying my “English isn’t good enough” and that they wouldn’t want a “bad grade.” Mind you, my English is pretty good for an international student from Nepal and people are often taken aback when I tell them I’m Nepalese. I am often mistaken to be Filipino but that does not bother me. If I have made a few friends on campus, it has mostly been because they initially believed I was a local. When they find out I’m not a local they sometimes start avoiding me. However, there are a few who have remained being friends with me which makes me believe my ethnicity is not a problem, it’s just how they view my ethnic group. Peers often enjoy my company when I’m labelled nothing more than my name, when there are no ethnicities or nationalities attached to me. I have made friends, but I can count them all on my fingers and yes, they’re all international students. Sometimes, other international students can be racist towards other international students too and that can be really disheartening. I’ve sat with groups of local students who have very openly passed racist comments about other peers in our class and most times I have refrained from admitting I am an international student myself. Over the time, I’m in my third year of studies now, but I feel I have</p>

			<p>gradually lost interest in attending any of my classes. There's always a fear of being left out and it's hard to even try and mingle when I feel so. Tutors can be tough too sometimes. They often overlook international students and focus mainly on the locals. You would be surprised to see how international students are completely avoided in group discussions like in one of my classes last sem. And guess what? It was an Aboriginal Studies class. lol.</p> <p>The teamwork or group projects are also one of the situations where people get verbally abused for race/religion.</p>
<b>Intersection between interpersonal and structural, cultural and/or institutional racism</b>	Social exclusion	Social exclusion in academic research settings	<p>A few months ago, on a number of occasions, I felt excluded while discussing a new project. This took place in the office space or after the conclusion of a meeting when 4 of us involved in the project were standing and discussing the project. One staff member turned her back towards me in a way that excluded me from the discussion. On one occasion, when 3 of us were standing and discussing something, she came and stood right in front of me with her back towards me and started talking to the other two. What hurt me the most was the other two people in that scenario didn't even notice or made no comment when this was happening or later. It made me feel invisible.</p>
		Racial mockery or laughter from other students in teaching and learning setting	<p>Very recently I faced racism in my tutorial while working on a group assignment. I don't have a strong Indian accent when I speak English, mostly because I forced myself to get rid of it. I have gotten judgemental eye rolls or stares when I used to talk, and I felt that in my tutorial recently. My Australian group mate refused to listen to my ideas and would not let me contribute, later complained to tutor. My tutor was biased against me without listening to what I had to say. My other two Asian group mates seem to be introverts and were probably avoiding any trouble, so they did not interfere. Several times tutors ignore my questions in class or respond rudely.</p> <p>Back in my first semester, I had a really unpleasant experience that stuck with me. It was my very first uni presentation, and I was prepared and confident. My group members were supportive, but while I was presenting, I noticed a bunch of Aussie students laughing at the way we spoke and our accents. Even though I'd read about this sort of thing happening, experiencing it firsthand was honestly traumatising. I spoke to my tutor about it afterwards, but since it was the last class of the semester, nothing much could be done. I let it go, but it stayed with me. Since then, I've always preferred classes with a mix of students from different backgrounds, because that made me feel safer. Whenever I've ended up in groups with only Aussies, especially the girls. It's been the same story. They'd happily talk to everyone else but ignore me, and it wasn't just once. Over time, it started to feel like groupism. On top of that, they'd make me feel dumb, never really valuing my input, and would always take over the leadership roles in group assignments. I was left on the sidelines, even when I wanted to contribute. Because of all this, I've never really had the "uni life" people talk about. When I applied, I looked at rankings and all the good things written about the uni, but the reality didn't match. Most of the time I've just panicked before tutorials, dreaded coming to class, and honestly felt sick to my stomach. I wanted to share this because it's my last semester, and maybe this feedback could help improve things for future international students. I've been lucky to have supportive parents and friends who helped me get through it, but not everyone has that.</p>

			<p>During classes, comments made in the past about Indian immigrants in Australia in history have been raised insensitively by professors in a couple of my law classes where there are mention of the term 'coolie' meaning a labourer in India. I've been told to go back to my country. I couldn't spot this person though it was said behind my back. My accent has been made fun of. I've been told I should be privileged to study and work in Australia by a fellow student. I am proud of where I am from and have a great life back home. I just feel disrespected by assumptions made about people from my race and country.</p>
	Racist bias	Racist assumptions about English language proficiency and academic abilities(students)	<p>People automatically assume Indians can't speak English well and are surprised whenever I speak English with the same fluency as them. I have to explain to them that a lot of people in India grow up speaking English in their everyday life and to friends and complete their schooling in English as well.</p> <p>There is unfortunately a lot of hate spread to Indians specifically and it has become quite normalised to insult Indians even as a joke and passing comments even in public doesn't seem to be frowned upon. Especially with the protest on the 31st it just seems to be getting from bad to worse.</p> <p>Racism need not have to be outright and spoken or reacted to one's face. It can be subtle, taking privilege in making decision, making decisions based on simply looking at someone and believing that this person will be capable or not for assigning a work. It is in the details, sub-conscious decisions that your supervisor takes "assuming" one is capable for a work or not based on their culture and racial background. This action cannot be complained about or pointed out because the devil is in the details.</p> <p>The tokenistic attitude is a big problem here. While there is no doubt that some staff and students are very invested in seeing change, there are also the ones who pretend to be invested but are the ones making subtle remarks and laughing it off. I understand the need to dress, speak and behave a certain way. I have migrated here for a better quality of life and I respect and will adhere to the norms, so for example, I don't mind not wearing the jewellery I am expected to wear if I was in my home country and is so important to us (like a Mangal sutra- a chain with black beads married women wear in India), I am hurt when students or staff from other areas, think they will somehow get better advice from a Caucasian (who sometimes have to consult with me) for an enquiry. And no it is not an issue with the language/ accent- I have a neutral accent and I am not assuming that- I have been told by many people. It is hurtful to see others get acknowledged when you go to an event where you have taken others to encourage the organisers and you are totally ignored. There are more hurtful experiences that is experienced in daily life not only at university and it cannot be written in a response box. The sad part is my children will have to experience this too. I tell myself that I chose to live in a 'white country' and I can't change my colour or race to fit in. I will be me- ethical, honest, diligent. If people choose not to see that and only be prejudiced with the skin tone then I just have one thing to say to them (and I have first-hand experience as a past medical practitioner)- next time you get a blood test- ask to look at the collected sample- you will be surprised- it is red just like the people you are prejudiced against.</p> <p>I had a professor in the first year who thought I brought my assignment or made AI do it because she could not believe an Indian could write that good in the first year of nursing. It was the worst feeling ever. I mean I</p>

			<p>understand a lot of people use AI and it can get hard to identity that but, this one was way too obvious. She told me the word "analyse" is too complex for a first year to use. I have been using that word since grade 6.</p>
		Racist assumptions about English proficiency (staff)	<p>I had a student evaluation that once stated that they could not understand my English accent, which, considering how proficient in English I know myself to be, could only be a racially motivated and ignorant comment.</p> <p>My teaching skills were questioned when I first commenced work as a sessional academic, the comment being made by senior faculty was: can she speak English to teach a class? As someone whose first language is English and had to take a proficiency test to enter this country for my education, I found it quite demeaning. This was followed by the academic staff not including me in emails regarding de-casualisation opportunities despite meeting eligibility requirements and being one of the most qualified applicants.</p>
		Assumptions about capacity to perform the job based on culture or racial background	<p>Racism need not have to be outright and spoken or reacted to one's face. It can be subtle, taking privilege in making decision, making decisions based on simply looking at someone and believing that this person will be capable or not for assigning a work. It is in the details, sub-conscious decisions that your supervisor takes "assuming" one in capable for a work or not based on their culture and racial background. This action cannot be complained about or pointed out because the devil is in the details.</p>
	Racial discrimination	In university employment settings in relation to tenure, period of time on contracts, and promotion	<p>I have been on fixed-term contracts (sometimes lasting 3-6 months at a time) at this university for the last 7-8 years. My promotion was denied with the explanation that I needed to prove myself further, despite having an internationally recognised profile. In contrast, a White Australian staff member was promoted and given an ongoing role, even though their contributions to the university's work and research culture were minimal and their profile was mediocre. It seems that culturally and linguistically diverse individuals are expected to work almost twice as hard as White Australians at this university. We are required to secure more research funding to cover our own salaries, supervise more students, teach more courses, publish more, and take on voluntary "leadership" responsibilities to justify our employment. Meanwhile, some white Australian staff members can get away with anything, including bad behaviour/lack of commitment toward students, not showing up to work and being "casually racist" and homophobic to their fellow culturally-diverse staff members.</p>
		Racial discrimination in teaching and learning settings	<p>I have experienced that due to my name I have been failed from few subjects few times and it was the same teacher who did this, I would advice that when we are submitting our papers there should be only student number used instead of any name and results should be given on student ID instead of student name.</p> <p>The course coordinator for [course name redacted], in year 3 semester had created a very uncomfortable atmosphere for us study. My classmates (from the same country as me) and me weren't given equal support or encouragement. Even when reaching out to the professor for queries in the subject we received delayed, unclear and very professional responses. While my Australian peers were encouraged to participate in various site visits, we were ignored. This environment made us feel very inferior and isolated. Even after working hard and trying go through the course on our own, we were graded in a very biased way. Due to our usage of formal language in assignments we blamed for using Artificial intelligence. When we asked for sample references to understand better where we were wrong, we were denied. While my Australian peers received</p>

			<p>detailed feedback, we were met with cold and short responses. This environment highly affected my mental state as we had no choice but to carry on the way it was due to fear of being failed. Lack of basic human understanding made the in-person classes very dreadful and uncomfortable. I hope my feedback is taken seriously. As international students we pay massive fees when compared to the domestic students only to be treated in such disrespectful ways. Since we are away from our families it also very difficult to ask for help to anyone, the said resources aren't very accessible, and they put us at a risk of being exposed to such professors. We are well aware of repercussions that can happen when we complain about such instances before our course finishes. I hope such things are taken more seriously and resources for international student and made confidential and safe. Thank you.</p>
		<p>Racism in clinical settings</p>	<p>During a clinical learning activity at [redact name] Hospital in 2023, I experienced differential and demotivating treatment that I perceived as racially charged. My caseload was reduced without clear rationale despite prior performance, and I was subjected to discouraging comments. Multiple peers observed and acknowledged this as unfair. When I informed University convenors, I was told to tolerate it rather than offered support, and I have since felt remembered and marked strictly by the same teaching group or their close colleagues. This left me feeling unsafe and unheard, undermined my sense of belonging, and affected my academic engagement. Going forward, I would like to see clear, trauma-informed pathways for reporting racism during placements, active advocacy from convenors when concerns are raised, and safeguards to prevent downstream marking bias after a student reports such incidents</p> <p>I was on a phone call with my tertiary supervisor [name redacted] about 3 weeks ago, as a part of my professional placement as we were organising for her to visit me at the school where I am placed which is [redacted]. She demanded to book a parking for her. She commented on how the non-native teachers are unclear when they speak in class. Then she asked me what my first language is and when I told her that English is the official language in India she said "but you would have been taught by teachers with an accent. Now that is a "problem" because you carry that accent with you." She didn't get the subtle hints I dropped trying to communicate that she was being discriminatory and shaming my heritage and accent. I emailed my lecturer in charge and they organised another supervisor for me who was lovely. I just hope that [redacted] is trained in cultural sensitivity and given an explicit list of things that count as racism. she seems to be very old school and quite closed off to the idea of multiculturalism.</p> <p>I had a racist Clinical Facilitator at my Uni placements. We were total 8 students, 4 out of us were Indians, and rest were Aussie. Among 4 of us, 3 were placed on CLP in the first week for very silly reasons, we were monitored and assessed nearly double the times compared to other students. She ended up terminating placements of two of us, and other two passed on a CLP with only satisfactory grades.</p> <p>A significant portion of racism that I have experienced comes from patients at placement. I don't think that is something that the university can do anything about really but I would have appreciated an explicit heads-up that I might experience such a thing. It's not something that I didn't expect but I suspect not everyone considers such things. So maybe education for students about potential racism they may experience during placements.</p>

			<p>The marking of assignments should be done without the assessors having access to the student names. Clinical facilitators at the placements also treat people of colour differently, basically interrogating us and making us feel bad about our accents (multiple students have shared these experiences with that same CF). Feedback to international students is given without respect and confidentiality that is given to our Caucasian colleagues. Some CFs do not try at all to understand our accents and making us feel bad, while others have no problem at all even if they're all Caucasian. Our buddy nurses at placement ask racist questions and judge us based on our accents and impose their political opinion about immigrants on us. And the fact that we can't say much to them because we have to spend next 2-3 weeks at that ward working with those same RN's. If we report that and we are taken off that ward, uni does not provide us with placements till it's too late, potentially delaying our graduation and costing us more visa fees</p>
<b>Structural racism</b>		Barriers to career advancement	<p>I have at times felt excluded due to my cultural background, including situations where assumptions or stereotypes were made about me. While not always intentional, these moments affect confidence and sense of belonging. What would help is more visible encouragement of diversity, open conversations about unconscious bias, and consistent action when issues are reported. As an example, a colleague of mine who seems bit racist towards staffs from other ethnic backgrounds. We are both in a team with similar position where people reports to us. He likes to only hire people from Australian heritage and mostly locals while I look for talent and equality of merits. Recently a staff member asked about the hiring process and application sorting while we all went for a team lunch and his reply was that he don't even look for CVs from those who are on some visas or sound like a foreign name to him. He rejects them instantly. Some recent example also included of him engaging in promoting only those staffs who he favours and not staffs who deserve and specifically from other ethnic cultures. It seems like he doesn't like people from south Asian countries and tries to demean me in meetings and other forums. I believe [University] should continue to lead by example through ongoing education on unconscious bias, celebrating cultural diversity, and ensuring that all staff and students feel safe and valued.</p>

**Table 2.7.2. Lived experiences of students and staff from South East Asian communities**

Theme	Sub-theme	Examples (description)	Illustrative quote
<b>Interpersonal level</b>	Overt racism	Overt racial slurs or jokes	<p>Having experienced more racism in my life after having moved to study on-campus at [University] it tends to severely affect my mental health and how I see myself. It happens enough that I am used to going through a perpetual cycle of identity crisis, feeling like I do not belong anywhere as an "Australian" or even as a "Filipino" due to feeling like I fit neither category entirely or by stereotype. I begin to be disgusted in myself, and fear other white people around me, being prepared that any conversation could end in a racist remark, comment, etc. It genuinely upsets me to the point of having wished I never went to [University] or even was born in Australia at all. It's terrible that the reality is, it can happen anywhere. Most notably, many of these remarks come from students of the [redacted] private and Catholic college on campus. These guys are almost entirely white, rich, Anglo-Saxon Australians from rich farming families. I and other Asian people have been called slurs, racially identified, or quietly talked down on particularly during sports games, but also in town. I used to work as a bar tender at the [redact name] Hotel, in which served many of the [college named redacted] students and their parents, as well as those of [redact name] College who also come from similar backgrounds. In this space I have also been slurred at. I have overheard these people say things like "get the fucking Chink at the bar to take our rubbish" or "your kind have ruined our country and brought the virus over". I have been upset by the lack of action done to sort this. One time at a sports game the [redact name] students were singling out me and the other Asians in my college's team, and called us slurs under their breathe. Their residential leaders forced the [redact name] team to apologise, but they did not even apologise directly to us Asian students! They went one of the white students on the sidelines and apologised to them! I was also physically targetted by them in one game of Ultimate Frisbee, which is a no contact sport. Yet they constantly bashed into me, pushed me, and laughed it off each time. I am lucky to live at [redact name] College where it is quite diverse in terms of race, sexuality, and background. Most people here are understanding, kind, and accepting. However, even within this safe space there has been one individual who also is white, Anglo-Saxon, and comes from [redact location] from a middle-class family with teachers as parents. He too has singled me out as "the Asian", made many a racist joke, commented on my race, racially profiles me and associates me with racial stereotypes, and has told me that I should expect this sort of racism in a country town and brushed off my experiences of racism. This man has come from such a privileged background, and yet talks to me in such a racist way. He has made comments about other Asian people too, and it is absolutely devastating that he was able to be the president of our social club, the [redact name], last year, and is now considered a Residential Leader and is in a high position over the college.</p>
		Racist stereotypes and assumptions about a person's identity and behaviours	<p>Where a person who is of foreign descent does not fit into the 'stereotypical norm' of their cultural/ethnic group, they are complimented or commended for not showing the behaviours that are often presented in these damaging stereotypes. A personal experience of mine is telling others about my background (Indian), and people have expressed surprise to my fluent, Australian English, with comments such as "your English is good for an Indian" or "you're one of the good ones" being followed. Combating the casual integration of racial stereotypes in conversation and in social interactions is imperative to prevent people from developing more damaging attitudes towards marginalised people and immigrants. It often starts with jokes about races and their associated stereotypes, but when these stereotypes are reinforced from the</p>

			<p>negative portrayal of immigrants and foreigners from the media or through social media accounts, they become more entrenched and harder to eradicate.</p> <p>I would like to share my experience with racism at a tutorial class as I would like to let people know and be aware these situations are still happening. This was the very first tutorial for the semester and it was mainly based on working in groups. As we were forming groups, the tutor (Caucasian male) made a racist and nasty comment saying "Just because they are Asians doesn't mean they will do their work well or on time." There was only a maximum of 3-4 Asians (including me) out of 20 people in that class. That is just so rude and disrespectful. No one should ever be put in this situation or even experienced this situation at all. As a suggestion, I do think the tutors and lecturers there know what racism means but they don't think about the consequences before opening their mouths and that's not good enough. Especially senior lecturers and higher ups can get away without any consequences in these situations. The university needs to have a proper procedure the people have to follow after these situations (e.g. suspension or an apology to the victims- if the victims are comfortable for face-to-face interactions)</p>
		Racist jokes and mocking	<p>Saying a racist joke is being racist. assuming/generalising someone's skillset based on their appearance is indirect racism. Raising awareness is the first step.</p> <p>The normalisation of racial stereotypes in casual or 'joke' settings has proliferated negative and ultimately degrading views on foreign students/faculty and of immigrants in general. The experience of racism in [University] is not often the visceral, abusive experience that is often portrayed in public campaigns, it is instead a series of casual 'jokes' and euphemisms which undermine an ethnicity or cultural group. This can be done through racist stereotypes being incorporated in jokes (e.g. A person making jokes in a foreign accent such as Indian, Asian, African to make a joke about a certain ethnic/cultural group).</p>
		Code switching and power	<p>For those who do not come from Anglo-Saxon backgrounds, there is a strong understanding to "play the game" and code switch for all environments of "white" masses. This knowledge and understanding is crucial in surviving and thriving in the workplace, external relationships and everyday life. Specifically about this survey, one of the queries about observing racial discrimination between groups, I found the list of multiple choice questions disturbing but unsurprising. Racism occurs when those from the dominant group(s) i.e. considering 2021 Census top ancestries in AUS being English (33%), Australian (30%), Irish (10%), Scottish (9%) use their positions of power (in so many various ways) to discriminate against those of less dominant groups as well as benefit those within their own groups. The idea of racial discrimination occurring from people in less dominant groups to people in dominant groups is not racism or 'reverse racism'. How can this survey be useful or effective if the basic understanding of racism and racial discrimination is incorrect and misleading? The examples listed can be prejudiced but not racist. Already this demonstrates one way cultural biases play out in this survey. Unfortunately and ultimately, ineffective in protecting people from less dominant groups and signalling that safety is not a priority but that data is needed to push a particular agenda. Furthermore, there are so many anti-racism strategies and policies already established globally, with even more books and articles from anti-racism activists, especially First Nations academics and authors. Let's stop pretending Australia is any different from its western counterparts. Anyone can refer to what's available and already published via Indigenous and black authors, academics, institutions, etc. Another survey collects much-needed data but when will anti-racist policies actually produce anti-racist practices and support positive everyday outcomes for First Nations and people with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds from the Global South? Equality and health outcomes of a country's Indigenous Peoples will always give you the true reflection of how racist and/or how effective anti-racist policies exist. In Australia, it's worsening for</p>

		<p>First Nations people. This inevitably trickles down to those in from less dominant cultures who are 'marginalised' at whatever given point of time the survey or research is being conducted. Where once Italians and Irish were racially discriminated against in Australia, this racial vilification has transferred to those from African backgrounds, and now people from Arab and Muslim backgrounds. All the while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands have consistently continued to be racially demonised, imprisoned, etc. while other ethnic and cultural groups move up and down in Australia's psyche of acceptance and equality. As always, I am hopeful for new learnings and change. Let us see if this research will be effective or tokenistic in eliminating racism at [University redacted]. Thank you for the time and opportunity to submit my experiences and thoughts.</p>
	<p>"Casual racism"</p>	<p>Incorrect assumptions about people's identity. I was asked once in a meeting by someone I met for the first time if my surname came from either China or Korea. I was unsure why this was relevant, and why those specific countries were singled out, especially considering I am not from either country. Ultimately, it seemed that the other person was trying to relate and also show that they were a bit 'clever', but it kind of fell flat. Ultimately, I have not experienced overt racism at work or more generally in Australia. Usually it's casual racism resulting from ignorance. However, as someone who is non-White, it is impossible to know whether you are coming up against systemic racism behind closed doors. When decisions are made about you where you are not present, how do you know that you are not being looked at differently because of race? This is the insidious nature of racism, it manifests in so many subtle or invisible ways. White people tend to focus on avoiding or calling out overt racism, but tend to forget their own racial biases that are subtle or invisible even to themselves.</p> <p>There didn't seem to be an option for interpersonal racism, there was one on experiencing racism but not casual. I think I've experienced a lot of casual racism and haven't really felt like I got complete support from my supervisors. I was half told that I was a bit sensitive to that and so haven't felt I could bring it up again. I think it's important to highlight the effects of casual racism because even tiny experiences build up and can affect the way someone views themselves. It also shouldn't be such a great effort to convince people that a casual racist comment is not okay. It's okay to an extent but people need to learn those boundaries.</p> <p>Casual racism towards international students and their ability to speak English is a problem.</p> <p>I have often witnessed casual racism from people in senior roles at the University and found it hard to challenge but have tried to do so.</p> <p>It can be hard to deal with incidents of casual racism or verbal abuse, especially when you are a staff &amp; student simultaneously and your manager &amp; supervisor is the same person. You're stuck in between both roles and there are many grey lines on things you can/cannot do. And as an international student as well there is the fear of my academic supervisor not letting me graduate if I cross him the wrong way. The university should have some support for such cases.</p> <p>My experience has mostly been receiving and witnessing casual racism in the workspace. My role is a service/support role that does not have senior management opportunities so any barrier for career progression is minimally applicable to me. I have witnessed people describe my Executive who is (to retain confidentiality) "racially diverse" as "passive" or "hard to understand" or "not passionate enough" and I believe those comparisons are based on Anglo Saxon standards (like research into ivy league entrance processes) as well as some gender bias. Unconscious bias is difficult to tackle, casual racism is similarly difficult to tackle. Last weekend's anti immigration protests were less reported on</p>

			<p>prior to and apparently less controversial to the masses on than the Gaza protests. University Leadership in Australia is predominantly "White" just as is the case for Australian C Suite Executives in corporate, Celebrity gossip columns, and our own government so there is a national / "Global West" issue of racism and lack of representation here. Most senior leaders and general staff in our sector know enough to publicly support anti racism and social justice rhetoric and practices i.e. to restrain themselves in public forums but it's the casual racism that comes out in "private" workplace discussions that shows how insipid racism is in the workplace and broader Australian society...and it's toxic in complex ways that white feminism, saviour complexes, "do as I say not as I do" parenting...not sure what solution you are after but sharing findings is helpful for real issues to be seen so thank you. Final comment...There is a difference in genuinely respecting women and wanting to surround yourself in them to pretend like you treat men and women equally when the opposite is (and most likely subconsciously) true. Promote good and smart women and "others", not "Women"/"Others" for the sake of pretending to be "for" equality.</p>
	Homogenisation		<p>My professor was asking some people what ethnicity they were, or rather saying a country and guessing, and hoping they either confirm or correct him. I was the only Asian girl in the room, and he looks at me and goes, Chinese? and then listing every Asian country until he got to Vietnam. Obviously, he didn't know, I had to laugh it off, I felt embarrassed and didn't know how to respond.</p> <p>Almost every instance of racism I've experienced at uni has happened when the aggressor has assumed I'm a Chinese international student. I'm not Chinese and I study domestically, but maybe I look Chinese to them. It would be so easy for me to internalise a distaste for Chinese people and culture because of this happening to me, but I don't want to be Sinophobic because that's bad. I think somehow addressing Sinophobia in uni would be beneficial, not only for Chinese students, but for all students that some people might assume are Chinese.</p>
	Unwelcome gazes		<p>Makes me feel like I have to try extra hard in class to 'compensate' for negative perceptions people have about me on the grounds of race. It also means that I try extra hard to facilitate a welcoming environment for the people I talk to because it sucks feeling unwelcoming gazes on you.</p>
	Subtle behaviours		<p>From what I have observed, racism comes in different forms, including verbal, physical, and non-verbal expressions that reveal people's thoughts, such as facial gestures. Some people at the university avoid writing, chatting, or speaking in ways that could be used as evidence against them in reports. Instead, they show their attitudes through behaviours like laughing, eyerolling, winking, or changing their tone, since these actions are much harder to capture and use as evidence of racism.</p>
<b>Intersection between interpersonal and institutional, cultural, and/or structural racism</b>	Racial bias	Racial bias in the curriculum	<p>I find the racism at [University] to be predominantly one of unconscious biases that go unchallenged by the white dominant culture, and perhaps to some extent, embedded in the curriculum. I understand that, particularly in my field, critical analysis of politics in both historical and contemporary contexts will involve broaching controversial subjects; however, the framing of the West as having some inherent moral superiority is a problem. Rarely does a week go past without hearing of the terrible acts of the "authoritarian regimes" of the likes of China, DPRK, Iran, Russia, etc, while the West, while analysed critically, is still promoted as the upholder of Human Rights. Further, the positives of Global South "regimes" are never mentioned; the framework is one of orientalism. I pose the simple question of how many invasions of sovereign states the listed Global South state has engaged in vs the West? It is one between them vs easily double digits. I simply wish for the outlook to be balanced.</p>
	Racial discrimination	Name-based racial discrimination	<p>I really hated being Asian at one point in time. Even staffs and students wanted me to have an English name because my name was difficult or hard. Someone once said it was too exotic.</p>

	Social exclusion	Social exclusion in social settings and group work in teaching and learning settings based on racial identity	<p>I experienced in classes where nobody doesn't want to be peer or group with me because he/she/they prefer to be with English speakers rather than the foreigner who's speak English and happened many times, hard to sit in class sometimes because u feel left behind. I came for study and I have my goals to achieve so I tried to just focus on it even I come home and cry everyday but being here have to be strong and stronger.</p> <p>No idea but the engineering degree is rife with racist individuals. I wish the ethics modules included forcibly making them learn some form of empathy because I am constantly in despair whenever I hear something new coming out of their mouths. Sometimes I wonder why they pick a degree that is meant to be about working in teams of people that just happens to have math in it. It is also incredibly hard to prove that someone is discriminating against you in a group project based on your background. This semester alone I have been kicked off a group without warning despite having started on part of the group report. I had already begun to feel that they had not wanted me there but that was what really drove the nail in the coffin. They didn't even reply to my messages when I asked for confirmation.</p> <p>Racism, a lot of the time, is not about direct actions of racism (e.g. ethnic slurs, harassment). More often than not, it is about the feeling of being excluded, the feeling that you're being targeted by a minuscule facial expression or gestures, the constant feeling of not belonging, especially in this climate where everything that is going wrong in Australia is pinned on migrants/international students. That said, the university should start addressing racism at an individual level. Policy will work to some extent, but a more granular understanding of what motivates racist behaviour is needed.</p>
		Employment-based racial discrimination	<p>A key concern is that the University environment often judges and discriminates against individuals based on "international" features such as names, accents, and physical appearance. Staff who do not fit the stereotype of an "Australian academic" may be treated as outsiders, regardless of their qualifications or contributions. This reinforces barriers to equal participation and recognition, and contributes to the invisibility of academics from minority-international backgrounds. Nepotism is another form of discrimination that affects the academic culture at this University. It is not uncommon to see staff employed because of family ties, with spouses or close relatives working in the same area. This practice disadvantages equally or more qualified applicants, undermines fairness in recruitment, and perpetuates a culture of exclusion. For casual academics, especially those from international or minority backgrounds, this can close off pathways to permanent roles and reinforce the perception that opportunities are determined by personal connections rather than merit. The University governance processes rarely include or consult casual academics in decision-making, even when policy outcomes have a direct impact on their work. This lack of consultation perpetuates inequities and fosters a sense of invisibility among casual staff. To address this, formal mechanisms should be established to ensure casual academics are represented on committees and advisory groups, and that their perspectives are actively sought in governance matters. Since the University is "silencing" casual staff, discrimination also manifests in the culture of silence surrounding casual employment. Many casual academics fear that raising concerns about inequity, workload, or treatment will jeopardise their future work opportunities. This dynamic disproportionately impacts staff from minority and international backgrounds who already face barriers to progression. The University should therefore establish confidential reporting channels, with clear protections against reprisals, so casual staff feel safe to raise issues. By addressing these issues, the University has an opportunity to demonstrate leadership in building a fair, inclusive, and equitable academic environment. Recognising the diversity of casual academics, ensuring transparency in governance and employment practices, and creating safe and respectful channels for participation will strengthen the University's reputation and create a more supportive community for staff and students alike.</p>

			<p>I have experienced both subtle and overt forms of racial discrimination during my time at the University. Some of these behaviours were exclusionary, such as being left out of social or professional opportunities, and others were more direct, including racially motivated comments and unfair expectations about workload based on stereotypes about my ethnicity. These experiences have been isolating and have affected my sense of belonging and wellbeing at work. I believe that racism and racial discrimination at the University are not always acknowledged because they can present in indirect ways, such as microaggressions or “justified” decisions that disproportionately impact people from non-Caucasian backgrounds. It is important that these behaviours are taken seriously, because even when subtle, they accumulate over time and cause harm. I hope the University will continue to build stronger accountability measures, more transparent reporting processes, and active education for staff at all levels about racial bias, discrimination, and inclusion.</p> <p>I have not been given the opportunity to be promoted into a role that, according to my colleagues, I was already effectively performing. Despite taking on a significant portion of the responsibilities, the role was initially given to two white male staff members, both of whom were eventually removed from the position due to underperformance. When I approached management to express my interest in stepping into the role, I was denied the opportunity. To this day, I continue to carry out much of the work associated with the role, yet management has consistently refused to formally acknowledge my contribution or support my professional progression. Additionally, I have observed a concerning pattern of workplace bullying in my area, with what appears to be a disproportionate focus on performance managing female staff. This has created a sense of distress among many of my female colleagues. Promotions also appear to be more readily given to white male employees. It was only after issues of racial bias were raised in a recent staff survey that an Asian staff member was promoted within that team. This sequence of events has further raised concerns about fairness and equity in the promotion and performance management processes. This is the first time in my long tenure at the [University] that I have witnessed such concerning treatment of staff by members of the highest levels of senior management.</p>
		Racial bias in teaching	<p>I have noticed that there seems to be a pattern of bias in the way students are treated with one Teacher. It often feels like students from multicultural or international backgrounds are singled out or treated more harshly compared to other students. This makes the environment feel unfair and uncomfortable for those students.</p> <p>I have experienced racism for the first time this year and I must say it is the worst feeling. People would look at me head to toe and would look at me with disgust. I understand that the common culture with friends here, is to stay with your circle but since I am an international student and I live here by myself I would want to meet new people and make new friends. The professor sent me an email that I haven't been doing work on [learning management system] but the 2nd week of classes I asked him why weren't there any things posted on [learning management system] because everything is on [learning management system] and I have done all the work. I asked my friends if they received an email like this and told them what happened and they said they didn't receive or experience this. At first I thought I was overthinking it but as I realized I am getting targeted since I am one of the two Asians in my class and everyone is white made sense what was going on.</p>
		Racial bias in grading assessments and giving feedback	<p>As an international student, I sometimes feel that there may be unequal treatment based on cultural or linguistic background. For example, I once received a mark that was 20 points lower than a native student for a similar task, which made me question whether the criteria were applied consistently. Some peers who reviewed my work also found the difference surprising. This experience affected my confidence and made me worry about fairness in assessment. Additionally, I heard from a friend in another class that when a student asked a question in Chinese, the lecturer responded in Chinese in front of everyone, rather than in English. While this might not have been intended negatively, it</p>

			<p>gave the impression of favouritism and exclusion for those who could not understand. Such incidents make some of us feel less included or disadvantaged in the classroom environment.</p> <p>One experience I remember the most is from a practical exam. There was a question about setting up Kohler illumination. When it was my turn to use the microscope, I noticed that the XY adjustment was broken. I raised my hand and told my TA that there was a problem with the microscope. She came to check and said, "I told you not to touch the XY adjustment." I explained that I hadn't touched it and it was already like that when I started. She repeated her statement in a louder voice and then asked, "Do you understand what I'm saying?" I have worked in labs for over two years at that time and use a microscope almost every day. I also completed my HSC in Australia, so I felt really bad being treated that way. At the end of the exam, the TA replaced the microscope. I successfully set up Kohler illumination and I knew I had done it correctly, but I still received a zero for that section without any explanation of what I did wrong. I didn't want to argue because it was only one mark, but I felt the TA was being racist, as throughout the semester she treated Asian students with accents in English differently. I also had another subject where she was one of the TAs. Because of my previous experience with her, I decided to drop that subject and choose something else instead.</p> <p>I've had a few experiences that made me feel like my assessments weren't marked fairly because of my name and ethnic background. When I compared my grades to those of some Australian peers, it was obvious I was graded much lower, even though my work was at the same standard. Some of them even said they were surprised by my grade, which made me wonder why I was marked differently. When I asked for a re-mark, my grade went up, which just made me more sure that the initial grade wasn't fair. Another thing I've noticed is that when I give feedback or participate in class, it doesn't always feel like it's taken as seriously as when my Caucasian peers speak up. Not every tutor is like this, but it's something I've seen happen often enough to feel like my voice doesn't carry the same weight. I've observed a clear divide between how different groups of students interact. Students from international or non-Caucasian backgrounds tend to stick together, while Australian-born students form their own groups. The only non-Caucasian students who seem to mix with the Australian groups are those who've adopted the "Australian" way of life, like speaking with an Australian accent. It feels like there's an unspoken divide that shows up not only in the social setting but also in how students are treated academically.</p>
		<p>Segregation in university accommodation</p> <p>Discriminatory treatment in residential services</p>	<p>Racism is deeply rooted in Australian society, including here at the [University]. Subtle racism is everywhere, in conversations, how student halls are segregated (indirectly), etc. Reforms must start inductively. Racism interventions should not be "tick the box," it should be mandatory! Cultural training and induction are essential for all students and staff.</p> <p>I mean, I am Asian, and I could feel some sense of racism within the residential services. I have witnessed the situation many times, where an Asian student is treated differently from European student. Even myself has witnessed this, they yelled at me, and that is crazy, they did not provide much support for me, their attitude is uncomfortable. I have never express this to my Uni, as I am afraid that they also not listen to my words, and I am afraid that things could be worse.</p>
		<p>Racism in clinical settings</p>	<p>During my clinical placement, there was a consistent shortage of opportunities. A peer from the year above told me, "You'll be placed last and won't get any opportunities," citing the example of an Indian student in their cohort who had still not been allocated a placement. At the time, I didn't believe it. However, in my own year, I've observed that five Asian students including me have yet to receive placements and are still waiting. This pattern has raised concerns for me about fairness and equity in the allocation process.</p>

			Some of the clinical tutors are racist & shown discrimination towards students from different cultural background. We know we can report them but we are in fear of retaliation & we do not believe we will be protected by university and our names might be disclosed to the tutors we reported. We do not think that university will do something about it rather than protect their staff.
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**Table 2.7.3 Lived experiences of students and staff from Chinese communities**

Theme	Sub-theme	Examples (description)	Illustrative quote
<b>Interpersonal level</b>	Overt racism	Overt racial slurs or jokes	<p>It was extremely disappointing to see someone in the leadership calling Asian colleagues as "banana skins" and everyone else with European origin laughed about it. The culture of racism at [University] are so deep-rooted in the system. Furthermore, the mainstream discussion of racism only takes into account those of European origin and the Aboriginal and Torres Islanders; people from other ethnical groups were alienated and forced to keep silence in the discussion.</p> <p>While walking on the campus path, I was suddenly and without any provocation verbally abused by an unknown man who shouted racial slurs at me, including phrases like "F chink" and other discriminatory terms targeting my Chinese identity.</p> <p>I was once called a dog eater. I don't like this name, and I don't think it's fair to call me that. I was so angry, but I have no idea how to protect myself and the image of my country. I still feel awful when I think about that experience.</p> <p>I would like to share an incident that I came across from another student at [University]. She was studying late at the library when a male student walked in and made a racist remark, saying things like "f***ing Chinese" in a very offensive and discriminatory way. She reported the case to the university and followed it up for several months. However, despite her efforts, the student who made the racist comment did not face any visible consequences or disciplinary action. This incident left me feeling very disappointed with how the university handled the matter. [University] promotes diversity and inclusion in its public image, but when a real case of racism happened, the response seemed indifferent and ineffective. It makes me question how seriously the university treats such issues and whether students can really feel protected and supported when they experience racism on campus. I truly hope [University] can strengthen its response mechanisms, take racist incidents more seriously, and ensure accountability so that students from all backgrounds feel safe and respected.</p> <p>During my study at the [University], I have experienced and witnessed some incidents that made me feel shocked and helpless. First, one day after studying in [redact name] Library, my classmate was suddenly slapped by a local middle-aged woman, and she shouted at us to "go back to our country." This was the first time I directly experienced such aggressive racism, and it made me feel unsafe even around the campus. Second, one of my close friends faced humiliation when she tried to change classes. A teacher called [redact name] checked her personal information in front of the whole class and finally told her to "get out."</p> <p>I was an international student at [University] about ten years ago, and unfortunately, I experienced racist conduct on my very first day on campus. While I was walking around, trying to get familiar with the classrooms and excited about starting a new chapter, a car stopped nearby. A young person, who appeared to be a student, rolled down the window and shouted a racial slur at me before laughing and driving off. I was completely shocked and momentarily frozen. After calming down, I even searched the term online to ensure I hadn't misheard – I didn't want to wrongly accuse anyone. It turned out to be a derogatory term aimed at Korean people. Although I'm of Chinese background, I still felt deeply insulted and mistreated simply because of my East Asian appearance. That was the first incident, but sadly not the last. During my time as an international student at [University], I overheard domestic students making disrespectful comments about my culture and heritage. These experiences left a lasting impact...</p>

		Racist assumptions about academic abilities	I feel that there is an over emphasis that Chinese students "cheat" using AI software and it can feel very degrading in terms of the confidence in our academic ability.
		Racist stereotypes and assumptions about a person's identity and behaviours	<p>I remembered it was a cultural awareness workshop for our Speech Pathology students who need to pay attention and respect future clients' or patients' culture background when we offer assessment and treatment in different contexts. Our lecturer, who I heard already involved in multiple racism reports, is the person who held this lecture (which I think is inappropriate). She just separated students into different groups and designated each person "a cultural background" based on students' appearances (which is very inappropriate). She asked us to discuss how we deal with clients coming from different cultural backgrounds. After the group discussion, she asked different group to report back. She just asked one of students who looked like Indian, and asked questions about Indian culture. However, that student actually moved to Canada a long time ago. It is just a starting point. Later, she asked some Chinese students "why you are coming to Australia? Is this because you want a better life?" But I remembered one of the students just said, "Nah, Australia's life is worse than China, I just move here for my son's education which does not require that much pressure." I could see clearly the facial expression of that lecturer, which is disappointed and abrupt. She thinks of students in her own mindset, which is old and out of age! I heard from students graduated before that some of them already reported her for many reasons including racism, but there is nothing change. She is still here providing "education" to us though 1/2 of master students are international students. That's why I felt it is unnecessary to report her again since it will not change anything at all.</p> <p>Domestic students are wary of us. But I guess it's just human instincts to be weary of foreigners / outsiders / people who look &amp; speak different. They also regard us with the stereotype of "rich, don't try and competing for opportunities". The discrimination is just perceptible and everywhere but not significant to bring it up. And you can see that people tend to group up with their own people in class and assignments. Sometimes teachers deliberately group people from the same background together in assignments. As I don't self identify with my culture, it's often uncomfortable for me to have the assumption forced on me.</p>
		Racist behaviour in workplace settings	<p>When management makes racial or stereotypical comments in public (lunch rooms, meetings, etc) and it is not challenged or corrected by other present staff members, it feels like this sets a precedent of allowable behaviour. When staff members/peers makes comments in public and it is also not correct or challenged (even in the presence of management), it feels that the management, through inaction, indicates that this is an allowable and reasonable behaviour. When middle managers agree that the head of service is making inappropriate comments, and explains that it is "just the way he is" and preach tolerance and understanding, it feels that my discomfort, distress and feelings matter less than "keeping the peace". Overall, the experience has made me feel unsafe, unsupported. It has damaged my views on [University] in general and I no longer promote [University] as a place to work or study to my friends, family or acquaintances.</p> <p>My manager seems to only bring up a person's racial identity in conversation or stories when they are of a particular ethnic group. It seems that when they bring up the said nationality, she implies negative stereotypes or uses negative wording around whatever activity the person was doing. It is completely inappropriate. This also makes me concerned that other groups more closely linked with my own identity may be spoken of in the same way when I am not present.</p>
		Racist jokes and mocking	In my tutorials, which are all white groups, students mocked a Chinese child for "only speaking Chinese" and laughed about his hobbies in front of me. It made me feel unsafe, excluded, and unwelcome. Experiences like this have made me

			feel unsafe and excluded at university. Instead of being able to focus fully on my learning, I find myself dreading classes and worrying about whether I will be respected. As an international student already far away from home, the lack of cultural respect has amplified my sense of loneliness and made me feel like I do not belong. I thought university should be a place where diversity is valued and respected. Instead, this experience has affected my confidence, my sense of belonging, and my ability to participate fully in class.
		Racially derogatory comments about nationality in the context of politics	I have too many experiences of racism to recount. But I always find it a bit funny to face racism as an Asian, because Asian is not a real race and means nothing to Asian people. Besides, as a Chinese person I feel sad about being blamed for what the Chinese government has done and is allegedly going to do in the future...
		Mocking speech	Some girls chatted about how they hate the way some Chinese people talk because they pause a lot while speaking English and mocked the uh— sound, while me the Chinese, sitting very next to them, they did not care about my existence. I know it's not serious, but it makes me uncomfortable. Some people would ask me do we eat cats in a joking way because of the stereotype. Not in [University] but a bus stop nearby, when I was talking to my friend in Chinese, a guy came to us, told us not to speak Chinese, to use English, or go back to our country
	“Casual racism”		Casual racism to China and Chinese-appearing people is deeply engrained in Australian culture and the West in general. I have been surprised by the Sinophobic comments I hear quite often from otherwise reasonable colleagues at [University] denigrating China, Chinese-made things and people. There was very little support shown to Asian-appearing people for hate-crimes in the COVID era - quite eye-opening and disappointing that there was no large social outcry or a commissioner appointed. I see very skilled and hard-working colleagues of Asian descent who are continually passed over for promotion at [University] because they are not part of an invisible club.
	Subtle behaviours		<p>While Australia has come a long way, racial discrimination is still very much part of life for non-white people. Now that I'm in my 40s, I have the emotional maturity to handle it but deep inside, it hurts every time. The feeling of unjust is hard to swallow sometimes. Most incidents I have experienced are very subtle - they don't say in your face that they hate you but they just treat you differently - talk down to you, question you more, doubt your ability, dismiss you etc. It's not something I can prove and file a complaint about. Most of the time I just let it go because I don't want to make a scene, especially on campus. I have no other options but let it go. But it hurts.</p> <p>I think my experiences of racism have been subtle but insidious, for example feeling like I need to water down my Asianness to assimilate into the mainstream university culture that mainly values Whiteness. I also feel some pressure and burden knowing that people may perceive me to represent my entire race (e.g., if people have a negative experience with me personally or a negative perception of me, they may generalise it to other Chinese or Asian people), whereas I feel like White people have the luxury of just getting to represent themselves. I have an Australian accent which I feel protects me to some extent, but I observe that my peers/colleagues who are Chinese international students and who do not have an Australian accent experience a lot more racism and exclusion. A lot of mainstream events in my uni circles are catered to White Australian culture (e.g., Australian drinking culture) and I observe this to culturally exclude people from diverse non-White backgrounds.</p>
Intersection between interpersonal and institutional,	Social exclusion	Social exclusion in social settings and group work in teaching and	In my first and second year of my degree, I have been excluded from group discussions, especially when most of my classmates were Australian. Additionally, I've been living on campus and I've found it really hard to make friends with the locals living here. It was easier to make friends with international students like myself. I find that every time I interact with locals, I put my guard up, to protect myself in case they are racist to me or judgemental because of my ethnicity.

structural, and/or cultural racism		learning settings based on racial identity	<p>Lastly, I have been yelled and screamed at while walking on the sidewalk back home by people in their cars multiple times over the years. I don't think that this should be the experience of international students here. A few friends over the years have also related to my experience and shared that they have experienced similar things. I think it's hard to change mindsets especially when majority of the population does not like foreigners entering the country, "stealing their jobs", "stealing opportunities" and "stealing housing". This issue is far bigger than what the university can do as the government themselves have biased opinions about people of different ethnicities. I suppose the university could make better efforts in educating local students about the culture of international students and challenges that we face when coming to a different country. I just hope that students in [University] can have more compassion, understanding and empathy, challenging their beliefs of people from different ethnicities. Similar to what's being done for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. I have held back my thoughts about this situation ever since I've step foot into Australia as I am afraid of my visa being revoked, being judged for saying something and felt that even if I did speak out, it would not change anything. I trust that this is a safe space to speak about my experiences and I hope that maybe something will change even if it's after I've left Australia, for the future international students who would like to study in Australia. I love Australia, I enjoy living here while completing my studies but I believe that these issues should not be swept under the rug and ignored. Thank you.</p> <p>It is common that Chinese students tend to be excluded when it comes to group works. No matter how academically talented we are, some of the people just immediately assume that we are not as intelligent and skilled. We got asked if we could understand English properly, or we just got excluded from the project when it comes to allocating tasks. One of my friends, who is very smart and reliable, went into a group that's all white, they immediately assumed she's not skilled, and even she wrote her parts (which is really good quality), they changed all of her content without asking. This is not directly racism, but it's a stereotype that really hurt us. We have to do extraordinary to be recognized, which is not fair, when learning in uni should've been a safe space. Other than that, I'd like to say there's no much direct racism on campus, but unfortunately in public spaces, it is very common.</p> <p>Most of the time it happens in a passive way because people are not stupid to get caught and into trouble. But generally, you can see teachers are more favoured to white students. I have some occasions get neglected in discussion. Mostly of time if you start a conversation people will just look away or move to another group with white ethnicity. You never feel inclusive in discussion in the university. The way people look at you are out of curiosity or totally not interested in having a conversation.</p>
		Informal segregation	<p>I was born in Australia and sound Australian, but my ethnicity is Chinese. If I am attending classes where I do not know anyone (like university electives), quite often people assume I am an international student because I look Asian. Similarly, I have been in situations where I notice all the white people sit on one table and the Asian people sit on another table. I think there is a strong cultural segregation between the two groups at [University].</p> <p>Although not racism, I feel that there is a barrier/segregation among Europeans looking and Asian looking. I am unsure if it is the culture barrier or language. But I can observe that Europeans tend to stick with their own and same for Asians. I feel as an Asian we are a little left out, but might just be me.</p>
	Accent-based racism		<p>My direct encountering with racism on campus occurred about two weeks ago. Our DVC-Education came to our School meeting to talk about the university's new units of study evaluation pilot program, which allows students to evaluate individual teachers. When a colleague pointed out such evaluations were often biased against females and teaching staff</p>

			<p>who spoke an unfamiliar accent, the DVC-E's response was 'we can send them to accent training'. This makes me feel more than ever that I have been used as a token in the University's CALD women's leadership training program. Because clearly instead of genuinely promoting cultural and linguistic diversity, the university validates and institutionalises race and ethnicity-based discrimination.</p> <p>I have experienced some racism in my youth, and perhaps some casual racism when I moved to the Sunshine Coast. I have not directly experienced racism and/or racial discrimination at the [University name] that I am aware of. This might sound strange to not be aware of it, but sometimes it's so nuanced you're not sure what it was, and whether you're being overly sensitive. I think the lived experience of a non-white person living in Australia can be quite varied, depending on different individual factors. English fluency, cultural fluency, manner, personality, locale, and dress. I occasionally feel slight judgment when I enter a store, for example, but it mostly evaporates as soon as the store owner or shop assistant hears that I have an Australian accent. My ability to mirror my speech style with my audience makes people more accepting of me - something I started doing as an adult to better fit in and reduce social issues. I guess it highlights how the more common traits you can demonstrate to make you appear less "other", the more accepting people will be.</p>
	Racial bias	Racial bias in the curriculum	<p>I greatly value the emphasis our university places on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, history, and culture, which is incredibly important and should never be diminished. At the same time, I feel there is a significant gap in education around the experiences of immigrants, particularly Asian Australians and other culturally diverse communities, who make up a large portion of the Australian population and have done so for decades. Unlike in the United States, where Asian American history, literature, culture are increasingly integrated into the academic curriculum in most schools, Australia provides very little formal education about the contributions, hardships, and racism faced by Asian Australians and other immigrant groups. This absence can feel disregarding, especially as many of our patients, clients, and colleagues in fields such as medicine, nursing, and business (to name a few) are immigrants or from Asian backgrounds. I believe incorporating education on immigrant and Asian Australian experiences into the curriculum would strengthen cultural awareness for the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse population, better prepare graduates to serve our diverse communities, and promote a more inclusive and equitable environment at the university.</p>
	Racial discrimination	Name-based racial discrimination	<p>The tutors tend to read "white-presenting" names outloud i.e. "George made a good point when they said..." , while any non-white sounding names they'll say "as someone said... the point someone said earlier" which leads to people with white sounding names to participate more than others. I think they should either read everyone's name (and maybe say "did I pronounce that correctly?" Etc) Or not read any ones name at all.</p>
		Employment-based racial discrimination	<p>The racism is ingrained in our institutions. Being doubted about my ability to work or teach simply because I'm not white has severely impacted my confidence. It is also incredibly frustrating to be offered classes and then told it was given to a white male candidate that you know isn't as qualified or doesn't have the experience you do. It's disheartening to overhear students say they expected to be taught by a white person and leave negative evaluations that have nothing to do with how you teach and everything to do with their own racial biases, or to have complaints made against you that are patently untrue and are proven to be so. I also don't think it is appropriate for the vice chancellor (not the current one) make racially charged statements and to get away with it. Or to see how white staff can behave badly towards those who are of a different ethnic background and bully them, but it is the victim who is blamed and subjected to pressure by executive staff. Everything is rancid.</p> <p>I have experienced situations where my colleagues and group leaders have dismissed or questioned my work outcomes because I am not white. My contributions have not been acknowledged, and I have felt that my career development has</p>

			<p>not been supported as equally as others. In the workplace environment, I have also been subjected to exclusionary behaviours, such as being ignored or treated with coldness, as well as being asked inappropriate questions about my personal life. These experiences have made me feel undervalued and isolated.</p> <p>I would like to describe an incident that had a profoundly demoralising impact on me and my sense of value within the university. When my previous manager left, a clear opportunity arose for professional growth. However, the Director exclusively appointed a casual staff member (of European background, like the Director) to an Acting Manager position without any transparent process. The inequity was stark: I was fully capable of performing the role, while the appointed colleague required me to train them for a week. The situation was further exacerbated when that colleague then took a pre-approved five-week annual leave during the short two-month acting stint, meaning I effectively supported the role without the title, recognition, or higher pay. This experience felt like a clear case of preferential treatment that excluded a qualified candidate of a different background. It sent a message that merit and institutional knowledge were less valued than personal background connections, creating a hostile and discriminatory work environment.</p>
		Racial bias in teaching	<p>I have experienced racism for the first time this year and I must say it is the worst feeling. People would look at me head to toe and would look at me with disgust. I understand that the common culture with friends here, is to stay with your circle but since I am an international student and I live here by myself I would want to meet new people and make new friends. The professor sent me an email that I haven't been doing work on [learning management system] but the 2nd week of classes I asked him why weren't there any things posted on [learning management system] because everything is on [learning management system] and I have done all the work. I asked my friends if they received an email like this and told them what happened and they said they didn't receive or experience this. At first I thought I was overthinking it but as I realized I am getting targeted since I am one of the two Asians in my class and everyone is white made sense what was going on.</p> <p>The teaching team are insensitive to people's cultural backgrounds and often abuse their position and power to get away from making racist jokes and preferring white students over others. It is very frequent but subtle, like they would always cheer white students on during presentations and offer them the best placement opportunities, creating a very toxic favouritism culture. They threaten they would easily find out about student surveys so we are all scared to complain in them.</p> <p>Racism happens to campus in a more subtle way, as said the soft racism. I can feel teaching staffs are trying to talk in a nice way, but when it comes to assessing the assignments, they tend to rate down as telling the students' background for the name spelling or writing styles. Specific examples can be, at the introduction early in the year, as most of us are international students, and the teachers just kept listening to us in turn without obvious interaction. And when it came to local students or students with western backgrounds, the teachers started talking more with them more responsively. Another example, which is very confusing and strange to me is that, one lecturer, who is even a senior staff here in our program, mentioned once that if we do not have spelling mistakes or something, she would doubt if we have used AI to help generate the work. This particular view for me, is really so not encouraging, especially when students in class are mostly international students. I would always expect to see the senior teachers with high academic reputation demonstrate their inclusiveness in their real practice and everyday teaching, not just something to advocate only at lectures.</p>

		<p>Racial bias in grading assessments and giving feedback</p>	<p>Based on my personal experience, the grading of the architectural design studio is not completely fair and impartial, just like what I have experienced before. If my tutor likes Chinese people, then they will give me the normal score. But if they don't like me, they will always be able to find reasons from the design to deduct points. And such a result is difficult to appeal because the coordinator is very likely to side with the tutor. This is difficult to improve for subjects that are more subjective in grading, such as design or art. Unless they change their teaching methods, for example, in some art colleges in the United States: they do not grade students' design projects, but only offer two results: pass or fail.</p> <p>I am writing to formally report a serious incident of racism that occurred during [redact course name]. The lecturer, [redact name], openly told all Asian international students to “get out” of the classroom. This statement was deeply offensive, discriminatory, and created a hostile learning environment. I had previously raised this issue with the university; however, no effective action appears to have been taken, as this individual has continued teaching at the institution without consequence. His behaviour not only violates the standards of respect and inclusivity expected at the university but also breaches the principles of equal opportunity and non-discrimination. Such conduct has caused significant distress to affected students and undermines the integrity of the academic environment. I strongly urge the university to investigate this matter thoroughly, take appropriate disciplinary action, and ensure that international students are protected from this type of misconduct in the future.</p> <p>Some students suspect that tutors might discriminate against non-native English speakers when grading assignments. They worry that their English writing skills, rather than the actual quality of their ideas or work, are unfairly judged. This can lead to feelings that: Scores are lower than deserved. Feedback focuses more on language mistakes than on content. The grading is not fair or equal compared to native speakers. This creates a concern that academic performance is negatively affected by language background, not just academic ability.</p> <p>During my time studying abroad in Australia, I experienced various forms of racial discrimination both on campus and in public spaces. Although these discriminatory acts were not always direct or malicious verbal attacks, they had a profound emotional and psychological impact. On campus, I noticed that discrimination occurred more frequently in smaller classes, often those taught by older white male. The discrimination was not overtly offensive but manifested in ways that were uncomfortable yet impossible to ignore. For instance, in some courses, I observed inconsistencies in grading criteria—the same assignment was initially graded following a "one point per correctly translated word" rule, with the instruction not to leave any blanks, yet in the final exam, full marks were only awarded if an entire sentence was translated perfectly. However, the assignments were identical to the practice quizzes. Moreover, some of my final grades significantly differed from my own calculations. Exam scores were not made public, and when I emailed the instructor to inquire about my mistakes, my score would be adjusted slightly upward, yet the exam itself remained undisclosed. This made it difficult to understand where I had gone wrong. In the cafeteria at a remote campus, I also faced differential treatment due to my Asian appearance. While there was no direct verbal harassment, the unwelcoming and indifferent attitude was palpable through the staff's body language, eye contact, and overall demeanour. This form of subtle power imbalance is difficult to prove and report, yet it undeniably exists and affects our daily experiences... What I found most contradictory and disheartening was the stark contrast between the symbolic gestures of "inclusion" on campus and the reality. At the beginning of each class, instructors would display an Acknowledgement of Country on their slides, paying respect to the Traditional Custodians of the land. While this gesture is meant to symbolize respect and multicultural values, to me, it felt more like a superficial and perfunctory ritual. As an Asian student, I never truly felt that this was a diverse and inclusive society. The reason these experiences are difficult to articulate is not because they are rare, but because they are so common and normalized. I share these stories not to complain, but in the hope that by speaking up,</p>
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			<p>more people will become aware of these seemingly "subtle" issues, engage in reflection, and ultimately drive genuine change.</p> <p>Teachers should behave in the way they try to teach us, which is being inclusive and open-minded to all culture. Passive discrimination is common. It is always noted that students and teachers from western cultural background intentionally ignore students from other cultural background in lectures, tutorials, workshops and placements. The learning environment is not inclusive and supportive to students who are not Australians or come from western countries.</p> <p>When submitting an assignment, my teacher who marked my work left the feedback stating "I know English is not your first language and that must be difficult". No feedback about my work just commenting on race, culture, and assumptions. When I confronted them about it, it was said "oh that was meant for another student". When I spoke to another teacher about it they said "mistakes happen". I had been online in class with this teacher, I have an Australian accent and my first name is western. The assumption I was another student who is talented enough to speak/write in more than one language as a race issue was not okay. There was no feedback about the assignment itself and no correction was made. It was just racist assumptions and stereotypes. It made me sob I felt attacked and anyone who looks like me would also receive this treatment. When speaking with other East Asian students they are also aware this teacher does not like Asian looking students.</p>
		Discriminatory treatment in University services	At [University], overt racism has become uncommon. Nevertheless, within our College I have observed certain staff in [higher degree research] student management provide little support to international students. On occasion, they dismissively remark, 'If you find it difficult, you can always choose to withdraw'. Such responses are not only irresponsible but also deeply demeaning to international students. It is important that the University take these more subtle, covert forms of discrimination seriously, as they can be just as harmful to students' sense of belonging and wellbeing.
		Segregation in university accommodation	Racism is deeply rooted in Australian society, including here at the [University]. Subtle racism is everywhere, in conversations, how student halls are segregated (indirectly), etc. Reforms must start inductively. Racism interventions should not be "tick the box," it should be mandatory! Cultural training and induction are essential for all students and staff.
		Discriminatory treatment in residential services	Student accommodations like [redacted] and [redacted] are persistently racist. They try to rip off international students by charging more hidden fees. Additionally, their reception and staff have different attitudes towards white and Asian students when both students face the same issues.
		Racism in clinical placements	The most significant incidents of racial discrimination I experienced and witnessed occurred during one of my clinical placements and were perpetrated by a staff member at that healthcare facility. I did not feel safe reporting the incidents to the facility due to the power imbalance and fear that it might negatively affect my clinical appraisal. I was also hesitant to report to the university because I was unaware of the appropriate person or office to report to safely and uncertain about what actions the university would take upon receiving a report, including whether it could impact my placement arrangements. I think it would be beneficial if the university could provide clear instructions for reporting discrimination during placements and explicitly communicate the procedures and actions that follow a report. Ideally, students should also have the option to report anonymously if they wish.

			<p>During my mentor placement, not in [University], I observed several inappropriate behaviours from my mentor. He made racist remarks, such as asking me to cover my screen so that “people from Beijing” would not see what he was doing, and stereotyping my hometown by saying it is known for severe smog. He frequently mocked different accents (American, Australian, etc.) while claiming his own accent was superior. He also made sexist comments, for example, saying about a pregnant classmate who could not join a competition, “Unless you can get pregnant, you still have to go.” In addition, he often boasted about having girlfriends around the world and spoke about going to clubs in a sexually suggestive way.</p>
		Pressure to conform to dominant culture	<p>There is an undercurrent of racism that is not very explicit but the every day micro-aggressions and lack of respectful acknowledgement in comparison to European presenting colleagues that affects me. There is also a general lack of diversity or education to different cultural groups and celebrations and the expectation is that the non-white staff members assimilate and conform to European traditions such as Australia Day, Easter, Christmas in July, Christmas etc. While I acknowledge [University name] is a Catholic university, there is a lack of recognition or safe space for peoples of all cultures to express their practices and beliefs. This is erasure.</p>
<b>Structural racism</b>	Policies	Poor anti-racism policies	<p>The University frequently highlights its commitment to addressing psychosocial hazards, including racism in the workplace, yet in practice these principles are inconsistently applied and, at times, weaponised. Allegations are amplified selectively, while staff who share factual information or perspectives outside the dominant narrative are silenced or terminated. This unequal application of standards undermines the University’s stated values and creates an environment of mistrust. The irony is not lost on staff and students who have witnessed executives backpedal on policies once challenged. The number of individuals unfairly treated or removed for exercising their right to advocate for justice has only deepened distrust toward leadership. In a climate of financial strain and job insecurity, many now feel compelled to suppress their views to avoid repercussions - proof that the psychosocial hazards the University claims to guard against are being imposed by executive decisions themselves. For many, the University no longer feels like a safe or open space. Staff and students alike describe environments that are volatile, unsafe, and silencing. International students in particular face entrenched biases: they are too often marginalised for their presence on campus or their efforts to communicate in English, with little empathy or institutional support. Compounding this, elements of tall poppy syndrome among some domestic students and staff exacerbate a culture of exclusion. While the University outwardly promotes values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, these efforts often appear performative. Anti-racism messages are preached but not consistently upheld, with few educators from those cultures leading conversations or shaping policies. Instead, box-ticking exercises dominate, reducing inclusion to optics rather than meaningful practice. Executives proclaim “zero tolerance” for racism, yet their selective application of principles and outcomes reveals thinly veiled racism in decision-making processes. Leadership has further undermined its credibility by outsourcing policy design to external third parties, rather than engaging transparently with the diverse staff and student body. This practice allows executives or their stakeholders to impose views indirectly while avoiding accountability - a tactic that is both spineless and deeply corrosive to trust. The University is not inherently a hateful institution - in fact, I have thoroughly observed high levels of dignity, respect and compassion across the student and staff bodies. However, its structures, practices, and leadership decisions enable forms of direct and indirect racism, particularly against marginalised groups. For an institution that prides itself on benchmarking and sector leadership, these realities reveal a decline in moral and academic integrity. To move forward, the University must replace performative gestures and selective enforcement with genuine dialogue, accountability, and policies developed alongside the very communities they affect. My psychosocial health and safety have been significantly impacted by the very microaggressions embedded subtly within the University’s policies on addressing psychosocial hazards. The irony is that a framework intended to ensure safety and respect has instead contributed to harm. While it is expected that not all decisions will satisfy everyone,</p>

			<p>executive leadership must apply their principles consistently, and not selectively, to avoid crossing into discriminatory or racist practices.</p> <p>Action on racism is only swift when the allegations are made by Indigenous staff. There are entire units of people dedicated to supporting Indigenous staff and students, including strategies that I believe are wildly inequitable. E.g. Indigenous staff can request an Indigenous person to be on their promotion panel, but no other staff (e.g. queer, disability, CALD) cannot do the same. Where is the same effort for people experiencing racism who are non-Indigenous? Our complaints are not taken seriously, are downplayed, "I was only joking" and there is nowhere near the same effort in response even though people from culturally and linguistically diverse groups make up a far larger proportion of the staff and student body. It feels very political. The anti-racism strategy on campus isn't truly an anti-racism strategy for all. It benefits some and not others. I am not asking for the resources to support Indigenous staff and students to be reduced, I am asking for equity and fairness so that everyone who experiences racism gets the same fair treatment. People in Faculty leadership positions also don't seem to understand what racism is. E.g. my Head of School thinks that we are a diverse school because we have many people who are from other countries. Except these 'other countries' are New Zealand and UK and these are people who are of Anglo origin. It's very hard to make an argument for more diverse hiring practices when the leadership believes hiring from other white English-speaking nations counts as 'diverse'.</p>
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**Table 3.1. Collective Lived Experiences and Patterns Across the Whole Qualitative Dataset**

Theme	Sub-theme	Examples	Illustrative Quotes
<p><b>“Casual racism”</b></p>	<p>Prevalence of casual racism</p>		<p>Horrible experience at residential college w racism at anu - casual racism reallyy tore down my self-esteem and confidence as where I attended I was one of 3 diverse people out of nearly 250 / 300 students.</p> <p>I think there is a certain level of casual racism that exists on our campus. I think that views of white supremacy are held by a lot of the white settler staff - although perhaps not consciously. I have at least two First Nations colleagues at work who have often felt uncomfortable on campus. I have stopped coming to campus as I don't feel that a queer person belongs in the campus culture. It is a triggering, unsafe place at times.</p> <p>Casual racism is something that I commonly overhear on campus and have experienced personally. When targeted at Aboriginal people most of it is low-grade, "everyday" racism that I feel very accustomed to and feel comfortable to directly challenge. In general, my professors have all been well-informed, and in the one instance where I felt my professor clearly was inexperienced with teaching ATSI [Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander] students or engaging in ATSI [Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander] topics she had not directly said anything racist but had allowed highly racist comments to go unchallenged in class whilst not allowed time and space for other students to themselves oppose the racist comments. In this instance, I stayed behind and spoke to my professor about what I felt had gone wrong in the consultation, she was very apologetic and agreed she had made a mistake. I don't believe it is the responsibility of the University to exclude people with racist opinions from free expression within higher education. Generally, training in academic thought leads to people developing more liberal attitudes; this development requires free and open expression. It is my expectation that when entering any arena including [University] that at times I will feel uncomfortable and challenged. I do not believe that this is something that is inherently bad, bears changing or can be reasonably.</p> <p>I'm sick and tired of casual racism at universities driven by cultural stereotypes and ignorance. Universities must do more to ensure staff are aware of their responsibilities as representatives of the university. No mandatory cultural or intercultural training, or attention to cultural sensitivities, has left it up to individual staff or under resourced EDI teams to pick up the slack with regard to addressing behaviours and expectations of others in the workplace. Do better and do it now. Don't delay changes or commission yet another investigation or report. Everyone deserves a safe workplace, and for students, a safe study environment.</p> <p>It is the casual racism hidden behind a joke or to help the person they are attacking or that they do not understand someone's accent etc.</p> <p>I'm not entirely sure but something should be done about the casual racism disguised as humour.</p> <p>It is the casual racism hidden behind a joke or to help the person they are attacking or that they do not understand someone's accent etc.</p>

			<p>It's easy to encounter casual racism on the streets or on campus, such as being told to 'go back to your country,' even though I am an Australian citizen myself.</p> <p>A basic step but often overlooked one is to learn how to pronounce people's names correctly. Supporting the #mynameis campaign can help reduce casual racism: <a href="https://raceequalitymatters.com/my-name-is/">https://raceequalitymatters.com/my-name-is/</a></p> <p>Lots of casual racism towards international students. Things like making fun of peoples' names or laughing at them for making understandable mistakes...</p> <p>More education on casual racism - although this is rare at [University]. Examples I have personally experienced: 1) oh I can imagine you would enjoy eating that (assumption that the food was from my cultural heritage) 2) where are you from? Example witnessed: a white person imitating a subordinate's accent and knowing they would not have done it in front of the person (therefore confirming they knew it was inappropriate).</p> <p>Mainly witnessed casual racism where someone will criticise a person's behaviour or skills and behave differently towards them based on their cultural background. I haven't witnessed racism spoken directly at anyone, rather that it is obvious that people from certain backgrounds are treated differently compared to Australian-born students. I have only seen it towards students.</p>
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<p><b>Microaggressions</b></p>	<p>Prevalence of microaggressions</p>	<p>I have spent almost my entire adult life connected to [University]..., and working professionally at [University] for more than seven years. Throughout this time, there has never been a period when I did not encounter the quiet violence of racism. While I grew up experiencing overt racism in X, what I have found most insidious in Australia are the subtle, persistent microaggressions. They chip away at confidence, cause you to second-guess yourself, and leave you feeling that your contributions are never fully valid. There have been many occasions where I suggested an idea, only to see it dismissed—then later accepted when voiced by colleagues who are more “European-passing.” This repeated pattern forced me into survival strategies that, while effective in navigating the system, have ultimately proven unsustainable. I have reached the point where these coping mechanisms have taken too great a toll on my mental health, and I have decided to resign from my current role. I am under no illusion that these issues are unique to [University]. .... What troubles me most, however, is the institution’s lack of understanding of how racism manifests in its many subtle, systemic, and structural forms. Unless this is addressed, recognised, and acknowledged, the university risks alienating the very communities that will define its future. People of colour and those from CALD backgrounds already represent a significant part of the student body. They are the future of this university, and continuing to ignore that reality is to do so at [University] own peril. I would not have had the courage or will to write this if I still hoped to continue within the system. But I feel compelled to name these truths in the hope that they may be heard. ...</p> <p>The passive and persistent microaggressions of administrative staff takes a toll. They have been allowed to carry on this way and it’s made easier with the distance online communication offers. When you keep getting talked down to you start wanting to retreat from communication altogether. Taking a moment to respond to a human being like a human being and not a hateful AI robot goes a long way. I’m so grateful for the faculty of my course for their continuous kindness and generosity. If it wasn’t for them I would never return or recommend this uni to anyone I know</p> <p>Racism is a very broad phenomenon. It doesn't always happen because of your skin colour, but cultural differences and English language skills create a good chance of being out of preference for people. I'm not sure if there is enough discussion going on to bring this into focus.</p> <p>Racism is often hidden. People may comment or behave where the receiver feels racism, but one cannot point it out and it is easy to deny it. This creates plausible deniability - racist behaviour is expressed through ambiguous comments, looks, or actions that can be explained away. The perpetrator can always claim "that's not what I meant" or "you're being too sensitive." Much of what I have experienced are microaggressions - small, everyday slights that accumulate over time, like assumptions about my capabilities, comments about how "articulate" I am, or coded language that communicates prejudiced ideas whilst maintaining deniability. This subtlety creates a gaslighting effect where victims question their own perceptions. The constant wondering "was that racist or am I overthinking it?" becomes exhausting. Beyond individual interactions, racism is also embedded in policies and practices that appear neutral but disproportionately affect certain groups. What makes this particularly challenging is that calling out subtle racism puts the burden of proof on the victim and often leads to being dismissed as "playing the race card," which actually protects and perpetuates racist behaviour.</p> <p>Is it racism when an Australian white colleague—who has never engaged with a particular body of work or a region—dismisses and shuts down dialogue initiated by a colleague of colour with recognised expertise in</p>
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			<p>other work while the session ran in the background. At times she even left the room during the session. To see such disrespect from a recently recruited employee towards not only the presenter but the content of the session itself reflects to me that values such as racism are not assessed by the university in their recruitment processes. This same colleague, who moved to Australia from the UK 2 years ago, then proceeded to lecture me about the difference between a Welcome to Country and an Acknowledgement of Country as if it was something I wouldn't know - there was no interest in exploring what my background experience was. This lecturing to me reflects an attitude of superiority. I can only imagine the impact and additional load dealing with these kinds of attitudes within the workplace has on people from culturally and linguistically diverse background. It is not part of my identity being challenged but as a person who views all humans as equal, this is a real challenge in the workplace.</p>
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	Dismissal or trivialisation of racism		<p>Racial discrimination against Jewish people now days is somewhat trivialised in Australian society - often coming from a vast range of demographic and ideological groups unfortunately. At [University], the most racially targeted, albeit somewhat ambiguous, comments I receive is often in the form of a perceived political stance based on cultural identify as a Jew. Often this means, that I don't wish to discuss this identity beyond my inner circles - which is a shame, because I do enjoy the conversations surrounding it. However, [University] has been a blessing coming from [University]. At [University], almost every day I felt insecure and felt genuine targeted racism by many people who I thought were of similar nature to me. Coming to [University], and there not being any political stances/ societies etc. has enabled me to really focus on my studies- which certainly would have not been possible if I were still at [University]. So I wanted to say Thank You for keeping the campus (comparatively) apolitical.</p> <p>Most racism I have encountered at [University] has been the display of casual racism and microaggressions, rather than serious harassment. While I will occasionally raise this with senior staff members, the impression I get from them is that even though what was said is not great it's also not something serious enough to escalate. Another issue that has been raised with me is that the international postgraduate students often feel lesser than domestic students - they have less support available, lower flexibility in work loading (between full and part time) and also feel their country of origin is unfairly judged when admission is taken into consideration.</p> <p>I don't think [University] does enough to address racism and racist stereotypes, especially when a large part of their student cohort is made up of international students. There is a bi-directional flow of tension between domestic students and international students based upon these racist stereotypes that is largely swept under the rug. If the University wants to welcome such a large group of international students for financial reasons, then it has a responsibility to ensure that racist microaggressions are not tolerated and that the entire student body is sufficiently well integrated into an academic culture that rises above such racism.</p> <p>Micro-aggressions are often overlooked in the evidence of being harassed due to race. They are not picked up on or dismissed because the person you are complaining to has white privilege and/or does not understand what the problem is. Sometimes the perpetrator themselves doesn't know they have been inappropriate. I have been a victim of this and the process has let me down, despite documenting the times I have been the victim of ongoing microaggressions from my team leader. I genuinely believe she had no idea that her comments and behaviour was racist and inappropriate. More training on 'subtle' and ingrained racist behaviour should be provided to inform people how inappropriate and hurtful this is.</p>
<b>Interrelated forms of racism interpersonal, structural and institutional</b>	Hiring and promotion bias		<p>I have recently lost my permanent role at the university due to no other reason than the manager of the department wants to employ people she knows rather than Aboriginal staff. The university has a strategy to retain Aboriginal staff but HR backed the redundancy rather than offering me redeployment. No one at the university is prepared to acknowledge that it was racially motivated decision. I was in an identified position also. In two previous roles at the same university, I have been racially bullied to quit my role after the death of my husband caused my health to deteriorate even with medical certificate's I was still questioned about my health and ability to wok. I was made homeless during the pandemic and was hounded to return to work when I had no support from the university to assist me to find housing. Directly opposite to the support offered to students. I was made redundant after [death in family] in an identified position which was replaced by a non-indigenous student but still the area took the funding allocated for an identified role. I was bullied</p>

			<p>to return to work whilst on sick leave after [deaths in family]. I have been overlooked for professional development and promotion due to being Aboriginal whilst having to train and mentor professional Aboriginal staff who have been given promotion above me... As a professional staff member the university does not value or support those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent. I have complained and documented my experiences and supported those staff also affected. Non-Indigenous staff get away with racism and teaching inappropriate content in first nations subjects in health. The university has policies so they tick boxes to show anti racism, discrimination and indigenous strategy but they are for public face of the university's persona only in real situations the university, union and HR do not support staff at all. They would rather you quit than they deal with issues or change - it's disgraceful. I am currently classed as redeployable but cannot find a job to secure my livelihood and NO ONE at the university is supporting me. It has led to health issues, hospitalisation and mental health and wellbeing concerns...</p> <p>Firstly, leadership needs to stop with tokenistic approaches and assess everyone based on merits rather than having shared backgrounds. Performance in the specific job should be the main criteria when it comes to professional promotions/filling a role. Throughout my years at the University, I have seen increasing circumstances (similarly faced by colleagues of non-European backgrounds whose career pathways are stagnant in the University) where promotions are given to less competent Caucasian counterparts sharing the same cultural background as management/higher leadership. This has happened across two Faculties I have worked at in the past decade. These individuals many times have less experience and constantly unable to perform in their portfolios. They resort to relying on longer serving professional staff kept at lower pay scales to do the work due to their existing expertise whilst taking the credit for managing teams. Mostly all talk and no walk. Secondly, the University should not forcefully place certain minority groups into positions of power just by virtue of their backgrounds. Every case should be assessed for its merit.</p> <p>I think questions need to be asked about why five women of colour were denied promotion during the last round held in the [redact name], where all successful promotions were of white faculty. This is an incredibly offensive and dispiriting (and corrupt) outcome that may have been unduly influenced by the actions of one interim Dean but the lack of response to this has dampened the morale across the faculty. In general, I work in a very socially progressive and identity-aware area of the university where I feel very safe and supported by colleagues in addressing and calling out issues of racism. This is in distinction to the very white executive leadership team at the university which is where most of my conflict arises. However, I do think that some of the faculty camaraderie on campus is based on a very white working-class notion of rallying together, which I can find very alienating at times. I do sometimes suspect that I get a 'cool' response from people because of my racial background but that's hard to put a finger on. I don't think that my good and well-meaning colleagues - unless they identify as queer in some way and have done the work to unpack and really grapple with identity politics - really understand or care to acknowledge the extent of their white privilege. If I'm being honest, the optics of this project being led by a white person are jarring to me.</p> <p>When applying for promotion to Level E, I had been proud of my career-to-date accomplishments and spent a great deal of effort preparing the application documents. My Head of School's letter of support basically said that the most impressive thing about me was that I am mixed race; I felt like all my academic achievements had been trivialised and I felt infantilised. The application could not go forward without the HoS's [Head of School's] support, so I could not complain.</p>
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			I was denied promotion without any justifiable reason, which makes me think it is my ethnicity!
	Lack of support for career progression or leadership pathways		<p>The University could provide more systematic mentorship for academic staff of non-white and non-indigenous backgrounds especially for leadership roles.</p> <p>At the University, I have observed that it can be particularly difficult for staff from culturally diverse backgrounds to be heard at senior levels or to progress into leadership positions. While people from different backgrounds are often included as contributors and valued for “doing the work,” they are less often recognised or promoted as leaders. A significant barrier is the way communication styles and accents are perceived. Often, greater value is placed on those who speak in a manner that aligns more closely with what is considered “appealing” or “Australian,” rather than on the depth of expertise, contribution, and execution capability. This creates an environment where individuals who are highly skilled and effective in strategy and delivery may be overlooked in favour of those who are better at “selling” themselves. To build a truly inclusive culture, it is important that senior leaders actively acknowledge and challenge these biases, create opportunities for people from all backgrounds to showcase their expertise, and broaden the definition of what strong leadership looks and sounds like. By doing so, the University could fully harness the potential of its diverse staff and reflect the values it aspires to.</p>
	Cultural load and/or burden		<p>Aside from it impacting me on a personal level, it impacts me on a professional level. This then filters down and impacts how I engage with students and my capacity to deliver teaching. The untold and unpaid hours spent on developing, analysing, and provisioning ways to avert experiencing racism, the deliberations and measures that are undertaken when faced with a cohort of students that direct racist remarks either in person, within feedback or within their assessments is time consuming and impacts on my wellbeing. Hours spent preparing how to deliver content in a way that students may find acceptable hearing from an Aboriginal academic, hours spent balancing how to do this that doesn't diminish my cultural authenticity and that of Indigenous students within the classes. Sometimes time spent with Indigenous students post class debriefing on the racism they felt they experienced, it seems to never end, and is exhausting. I would love to just be able to do my job without worrying about whether or not I'm about to be faced with racism, and spending a good deal of my own time before and after classes and terms, reflecting on every word I said and overloading my brain with ways I can do it better next time so that I avoid the racism or address it in better ways so that I can cause some kind of impact that will make people stop and think about what they are circulating within the confines of [University redacted] and beyond. I'd love to be able to not think I have to work harder and achieve more than non-Indigenous colleagues to validate my existence in academia. Much is spoken about Aboriginal Peoples experiencing cultural load, however, the greatest burden is bearing the load of a culture of racism. Wading through hours of teaching and grading filled with racist remarks ideologies, and attitudes was not entirely expected, and not appreciated. That said, I do not believe this is entirely an [University] issue, it is a societal issue that hopefully through collective efforts of attempting to meaningfully and ethically engage with people will make some small contribution to addressing this. Do I feel that there is support to do this aside from my Aboriginal colleagues, no, and sadly that does not surprise me. Fortunately, we are used to this, unfortunately we have become used to it through a lifetime external to [University redacted] where we have endured countless platforms of experiencing racism.</p> <p>University should consider the cultural load and practical work experience of academics whose first language is other than English as non-native English speakers take 10-15 times more time to write something in English in powerful way.</p>

			<p>I think the University says a lot of the right things about racism. But I am not convinced it actually takes action always when it needs to. Overt racism may be addressed, but more subtle injustices aren't always. For example, not recognising the cultural load of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics and staff and accounting for this in workload.</p> <p>Discrimination occurs in terms of Aboriginal staff being expected to carry burden/load that is beyond their capacity Employment of teams of Aboriginal staff is essential to ensure that these staff are supported and are not isolated and that collectively they can influence broader policies and structures with ally's.....</p> <p>Senior leadership seem a bit clueless of how to recognise/respect cultural diversity because they are worried of doing or saying the wrong thing which makes some interactions uncomfortable. There is an expectation that indigenous staff will bear the cultural load.</p>
	Contract precarity	Differential treatment	<p>Well, I have no job security - I am on a fixed term contract. People with European origin (whites) have permanent jobs) - they go on holidays, they have more money - they have security - they live in their own houses. Should I say more?</p>
	Unequal standards or scrutiny		<p>I was discriminated against at another university as a result of a job interview, an interviewer thought they were being politically correct and tried to correct me post interview. They did not understand my background/culture and that, in my culture, I am required to answer certain things in a certain way to uphold respect. If I answer any other way, as a female, indigenous woman, I am showing great disrespect. I did not get the job but I did cry for three days after being given the feedback. It hurt that I had answered respectfully but as a result of lack of understanding, I was shamed.</p>
	Everyday racism in employment settings		<p>My experiences of racism are systemic and structural daily occurrences that reaffirms who is included, who is excluded, who's knowledge is valued and who's is not. It stems from a lack of indigenous governance structures that prevent Indigenous leadership true decision making power, resources and budget to intact real change. There is also a lack of racial literacy throughout the academy. These factors contribute to higher burdens being placed on Indigenous staff and these normalised racial discourses impacts staff under the guise of "burn out". This then redirects accountability from the system to individual responsibility.</p>
		Not being invited to meetings	<p>I have been shouted at and openly abused because of my race and probably because I am female and small in physical stature. Bullied by white male and female colleagues who are in leadership positions and excluded from information or meetings that I should be at to perform my work effectively.</p> <p>Exclusion from meetings and invites are rampant in the University. If you are not part of the in group, you're considered an outsider. As managers lead their teams, this permeates down the chain until, these silos do not share what they know, hear and decided upon. Is this seclusion racist? Ask my staff of Asian and indigenous descent?</p>

	Career & promotion impacts	Effects on CV, promotion, tenure due to racism	<p>I do feel that there is a 'bamboo ceiling' affecting my career development at [University redacted]. This is my eighth year teaching here. Despite having 30 years of industry experience and an outstanding PhD outcome, several full-time academic positions within my school have been awarded to candidates with Anglo-European cultural backgrounds—some of whom are less qualified than I am. Currently, I am employed at only 0.6 capacity. Recently, I was assigned a significant service role, yet my employment fraction remains at 0.6, even though my predecessor in the same role held a full-time senior lecturer position. I have raised the issue of the severe lack of cultural diversity (exclusion of people from Non-European cultural background) among the academic staff cohort with senior management multiple times. This lack of representation does not reflect either our student body or the broader society. The response I typically receive cites budget constraints. My most recent conversation with management regarding this issue has caused me considerable mental stress, and I have had to seek counselling support as a result.</p> <p>Student evaluations (SELT) are fundamentally biased against dark-skinned people as [shown by] numerous studies published in education journals in the US and Canada. Nevertheless the university and my department tend to equate the higher SELT scores with teaching quality (and in turn affecting your chance of getting promoted).</p> <p>Promotion requirements on non-Aussies/European are much higher. Promotion reports drafted by senior colleagues for me and another colleague of the same ethnicity as me are both very negative, while those for non-Asians are positive and encouraging.</p> <p>I can see that some management levels only prefer white during recruitment/ promotion. There is no opportunity for training to a higher level - they always have their preference under the table - but on the table, it looks fair and equitable, while they advertise the position.</p> <p>It's harder being ethnic and female! Forget about career progression (I don't know why I bother doing a Performance Review) or being given any of the opportunities a male in the same job gets.</p>
	Curriculum-centred racism		<p>My teachers often use my country as a negative example, which makes me feel somewhat embarrassed. I usually don't want to raise any objections, but this situation makes me feel uncomfortable. I think it's fine to use real-world examples, but some negative examples are stereotypes about my country.</p>

	Penalising (marked down in assessment)		<p>I spoke about a Muslim student being intentionally marked down, the best course of action from my perspective was to fight it, to bring our evidence to the unit coordinator and have our friend moved to a tute group with another teacher. but she (the student) asked us not to. I was very confused and asked why. She told me she feared more racism from the faculty, or that she would not be believed and told that she was making a very serious accusation for ""no reason"". She told me other Muslim girls and other international students had experienced racism in this form as well. I wonder if there was a specified person within every faculty that we could report racist (or other intolerant) behaviour to, if my friend would have felt empowered to speak up. this role in the faculty would be ideally; private and hidden from the other students and tutors, a place where evidence can be presented and next steps of escalation discussed so that the student can feel supported, and protected from retaliation - be that from other students or a staff member If this position already exists (yay!) then I am sorry that I am unaware of it and have wasted your time with this essay. If it does exist, perhaps force it into prominent view more?</p>
	Student evaluations		<p>Here is a racist comment in student evaluation targeting me last year: "First half of the lectures were good but after the mid sem[ester] when professor got changed she doesn't know what she is delivering the content and slides are so difficult to understand and there is a language barrier between the students who don't understand Chinese or Korean as well as she can't explain the slides properly which I'm literally worried about this semester and the exam. So, I hope [University] should make some changes in this subject for the upcoming students so that they don't get this kind of faculty who doesn't know what they are teaching to us". I speak only English with all of my students. This is clearly racist and also sexist (my senior colleague, who co-taught, is male), as the person doesn't know my ethnicity except that I am East Asian. There is no way for me to prevent the university from admitting racist students, but I think the university should invalidate this kind of student evaluation, as it is clearly racist.</p> <p>Students' evaluation and comments can be racist. It is not always clear and usually it is hidden but when you read carefully the reports, you can tell that some students don't like you for your English or background or colour or culture. This matter is rarely spoken about, and it should be investigated further not only at [redacted] but Australian universities.</p> <p>Students should be taught how to show respect to non-white educators. At times, we get the sense (of course, not from everyone—perhaps 2 out of 10 students) that there are subtle attitudes related to accent or race.</p>
	Pedagogical skills		<p>PLEASE educate your older staff that not all Aboriginal people have black skin. Ensure that they are knowledgeable on the effects of the Stolen Generations, that they are updating previous knowledge and checking their biases. I go to share insights on related content and then I get shunned because I am a white passing Aboriginal woman. On the other hand, if I do not get shunned, I become the spokesperson for ALL Aboriginal people from all lands. I am not even from the land [name redacted] sits on, but I am expected to know about it. I'm too white to be Aboriginal, but too Blak to be treated the same as everyone else.</p> <p>I had this one tutor [redacted] who would make the most insensitive jokes under the guise of playing devil's advocate would spout the most ridiculous comments about race during one of his classes that is specifically tailored at engaging Australia in the Asia pacific. This was one of the classes that was supposed to be around building cultural sensitivity and understanding about business in the area, he had made it a rage baited one-way conversation.</p>

	Racialised bias of teaching staff		<p>While studying at [University], I experienced a moment in class that felt overtly racist and left a lasting emotional impact on me. During a lecture, I shared my ideas. The lecturer looked at me and said, “You are a person with a foreign name in Australia. You think you will be successful?” This comment was made in front of the entire class. I was shocked, humiliated, and deeply hurt. As an international student already trying to navigate a different system and culture, hearing that from an educator made me question not just my place in the university, but my future in this country. It reinforced the very barriers I had come here to overcome. I didn’t feel safe or supported enough at the time to report it. But these kinds of experiences stay with you. They can seriously damage a student’s confidence, self-worth and engagement with their studies. To improve equity and address racism, I believe [University] should: Provide compulsory cultural awareness and anti-racism training for all staff, including academic and professional staff. Create safe and confidential reporting pathways where students can share incidents without fear of academic repercussions. Appoint trained diversity officers within each faculty to handle complaints with care and understanding. Increase the visibility and voice of students from diverse backgrounds in decision-making roles and public campaigns. Actively challenge deficit-based thinking that assumes international or culturally diverse students are less capable. Racism does not always show up in extreme or violent ways. Sometimes it’s a single sentence that tells a student they don’t belong. I hope [University] continues to listen and create safer, more inclusive spaces where all students are treated with respect and dignity.</p> <p>In tutorial classes, tutors (usually Western tutors) tend to give more attention to domestic students, whether through small talk, assignment guidance, or general interaction.</p> <p>These experiences of subtle but consistent exclusion have significantly impacted my sense of belonging at the University. Being ignored during the pre-class interactions or informal chats/social moments creates a clear message about who is welcomed into the university community. This type of microaggression creates an environment where international students, particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds, feel like outsiders in their own learning spaces. This affects not just social comfort, but academic confidence: when you feel unseen by your instructors, it becomes harder to participate actively or seek help when needed. The university’s commitment to diversity needs to extend beyond enrolment numbers to genuine inclusive practices in everyday classroom interactions.</p> <p>the tutors always appreciate and give more attention to the Aussies or other people. Maybe they think that we are not good looking or something and never try to make eye contact with us. And do not value our decision as well.</p> <p>In one of my university tutorials, I often felt ignored. Except for me and my sister, most of the students in the class were white. During tutorial, I noticed that the tutor usually paid more attention to the answers and solutions written by the white students and responded to their questions first. In tutorials, my sister and I often had to walk over to the tutor if we wanted help, rather than having the tutor come to us. By contrast, the tutor would frequently approach the white students on their own to check their work or answer their questions. This unequal interaction made us feel overlooked and less supported in the classroom</p>
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	Lack of knowledge and understanding of complexity of racialisation		<p>There is a lot of racism at the [redact name] that is perpetrated by both staff and students. I have had lecturers tell the whole class that they think doing an acknowledgement of country is useless. I have had a lecturer make a 'petrol sniffing' comment about Aboriginal people in my very first semester at [redact name] in 2023. I have had students tell me I am getting it easy as I receive an Indigenous scholarship. It feels as if sometimes the university and the whole of Australia celebrates multiculturalism but won't celebrate its Indigenous peoples. Don't get me wrong it's not an entirely bad the whole time but when it does happen the experiences feel terrible and I'm not sure if there is much I can do or I am too scared to speak out.</p>
	Student group work		<p>I have no issue with the university; it's just I had an encounter with a student where I felt she was racist. We had a group assessment, and she always talked to me rudely, during the project is tried to ruin my part of the work, always made faces looking at me and then after doing a lot of work she asked other group members to give me low marking in peer review, and I lost marks due to that.</p> <p>I had joined a group for a group assignment, and they chose to not work with me or communicate with me about the assignment. They treated me as if I was inhumane.</p> <p>I constantly feel excluded and left out in smaller classrooms and I don't think it's because I'm quiet. This is usually paired with bring the only person from my area in my class or the only POC making it feel like this is because I'm not white.</p> <p>I transferred campuses due to racism at the [redact name] campus. The behaviour was in class after following a directive from a teacher to join a group of young female students for a group activity. The two young female students snatched their handbags and moved seats when I was forced to sit in their group, then ignored me when I spoke to them, pulling faces like they were sucking on lemons. I work as an endorsed enrolled nurse I'm AHPRA registered for 10 yrs, a current practicing nurse and never could I imagine this kind of behaviour from an aspiring student RNs. I have mentored and trained nurses in my workplaces/facilities and never have they ever behaved like this. I was pretty shocked. My handbag and perfume are designer, my laptop is brand new, and I drive in my own very nice car, am professionally dressed and wear nice jewellery. I'm put together pretty nicely I've been told! But all they saw was a brown person, and they reacted as they have been raised, taught and accepted by society, I'm in awe at the brashness of their racism, wish I was so confident, I could never do anything like that because I would make my insides crawl. Is this what they call "white privilege" did I experience it? Wow, the ability to behave and act like an ignorant bigot without reprimand is scary powerful. Is that why they do it? for the feeling and visual power display? Odd behaviour for aspiring nurse's, eh? I really believed that these kinds of people were weeded out at some point, but it looks like they are getting through. The convenors of my program had noticed that I didn't associate much with other students. I have work after class; I'm 43 and appear a bit younger than my biological age I've been told. They devised a group activity, and it backfired terribly. I don't think the lecturer knew what to do when she observed the behaviour, she seemed shocked and then avoidant. I believe that she felt bad for a minute, but her racism was observed by not saying anything to the students, reporting the behaviour or checking in on me after class. Poor form/professionalism, maybe teaching faculty need a course on how to respond when they observe this kind of behaviour. She did seem shocked for a minute or two, then scared, unsure of what to do so she just ignored it. But that gives these behaviours acceptance and permission to continue. A young man was so shocked he tried to befriend me, he is on the spectrum and younger than</p>

		<p>my sons! I felt absolutely mortified and decided that I would either leave Uni completely or transfer; after talking to my adult sons and my partner of 28 yrs we decided It was best for me to transfer to a different campus- the [redact name] campus- so far, I haven't been forced to communicate or work with a group of young female racists aspiring to become nurses, so things are looking up so far.</p> <p>I see racist attitudes amongst our students in the classroom. Often it is excluding students of other cultures in groupwork i.e.: sitting next to a student but working with students across the table and ignoring the student next to them. I also hear racist attitudes amongst students towards lecturing staff who are from a NESB background. Comments like I can't understand her accent despite the lecturer having very clear English just not an Australian accent. When I confront these students, they often ignore me or brush this off. Having a module students complete on culture and identity would be useful. Some of these students don't see any issues with their behaviour. Our classes are very diverse, both students and staff, and we want to facilitate a classroom which is safe and where everyone feels that they belong.</p> <p>So, first thing that happens every time in the class is that I tried to sit with the Aussie people or other ethnicity people, but they think we are not capable of anything. We can't do anything by ourselves. They always try to let our voice down during group conversations and neither value our decision in a group. So, I personally stopped collaborating with such people as this was affecting my mental health. And next the tutors always appreciate and give more attention to the Aussie or other people. Maybe they think that we are not good looking or something and never try to make eye contact with us. And do not value our decision as well. So, these things remain forever and I don't see this as a good academic area. Next the security guard as well in the [redacted] campus often seems to be discriminating.</p>
	Deliberate racist comments by teaching staff	<p>Very disappointed with how teaching staff can get away with being racist towards students and not stopping conversations where making racist remarks and topics aren't being shut down but entertained. I've had racial experiences with two teaching staff in particular, seen and heard other students having bad experiences with the same teaching staff as myself.</p>
<b>Racism in internships and clinical placements</b>		<p>I was on a placement in my second year of vet science, where I was forced to listen to the farmer say really violent things about Muslims for a week straight. They kept interrogating me about my ethnicity, I had to lie because they were convinced I was Afghan when I wasn't, but I couldn't say I was Uyghur either because I was scared that would give them ammunition to say that I was an Islamic terrorist. When I told the uni about it, nothing came of it. It was so bad it activated PTSD (it was the onset of my symptoms) and bipolar (traumatic situations can express the genes for it) to the point where I had to take time off. I think the uni should start with taking complaints more seriously. The placement site wasn't removed. It was only 'removed' when they stopped accepting students. Or they could have at least warned me that they were racist instead of asking me why every other student had a great time at that placement (most of the vet students back then were white).</p> <p>A significant portion of racism that I have experienced comes from patients at placement. I don't think that is something that the university can do anything about really, but I would have appreciated an explicit heads-up that I might experience such a thing. It's not something that I didn't expect but I suspect not everyone considers such things. So maybe education for students about potential racism they may experience during placements.</p>

			<p>A classmate experienced racism on a student placement (external placement supervisor commenting on their accent, saying they hope the people they work with will be able to understand them with their accent, and commenting on their clothing not being professional). I was offered a placement with the same supervisor, which was the best option in terms of experience to be gained through creative arts therapist, but I declined this option as didn't want to learn from someone or a workplace with these racist views. I took the other placement option available which doesn't have any creative arts therapy supervisors, so in a way is a less rich experience for me and my classmate who experienced the racism, but I'm glad we have placements without racist supervisors and this is more important to me than having a placement supervisor with more experience in my field. I feel concerned about all the children that this creative arts therapy company are working with, and the racism or lack of cultural competency that they are experiencing. I feel this is particularly pertinent because the area that the practice is located has many children from diverse cultural backgrounds.</p> <p>I had a racist Clinical Facilitator at my Uni placements. We were total 8 students, 4 out of us were Indians, and rest were Aussie. Among 4 of us, 3 were placed on CLP in the first week for very silly reasons, we were monitored and assessed nearly double the times compared to other students. She ended up terminating placements of two of us, and other two passed on a CLP with only satisfactory grades.</p> <p>I don't know if it counted as racism or was just how it was. One of my colleagues faced constant criticism over a 5-week clinical placement and even had panic attacks and anxiety to such extent that he woke up at around 2/3 midnight on a Saturday thinking he was late for clinics. The similar form of aggressive approach of education was taking place. It's not just this year, this same incident has taken place last year where the student did not want to raise further concerns but this time it has happened on several occasions to a minimum of 4 students, all coming from the same country. I don't know for sure if there was a discrimination here but whatever it was needs to be called out and seen and be made aware of. It was outright academic malpractice where the clinical educator thinks he is to be feared of and only his opinion is the right one. It was not educational for those 4 students for the 5 weeks there it was a traumatic experience and very disturbing for which they paid over 5000 AUD which for some people is an entire year's salary in some countries. Something like this should be looked at with much more detail and investigated because [University] and is an attraction for students globally.</p> <p>Throughout my nursing program, I experienced multiple forms of racially discriminatory treatment that were targeted at my surname, accent, and appearance. These incidents occurred across both academic and clinical placement settings, creating a sustained hostile environment that undermined my dignity, wellbeing, and academic progression. Academic Discrimination From the outset, my surname [redacted] was used as a basis for unequal treatment. Despite receiving positive written feedback on assignments, my grades were consistently and unjustifiably suppressed. When I attempted to seek clarification, I was effectively discouraged from questioning the discrepancies. The dissonance between positive feedback and low grades illustrates that my academic work was not judged on merit, but on bias tied to my identity. Peer behaviour further reinforced this discrimination. Students repeatedly demanded answers from me, treating me not as an equal but as someone obligated to provide them assistance. On one occasion, students displayed overt hostility by deliberately placing their feet on the seat I was occupying. During nursing unit introductions, a student named [redact] repeatedly interrupted the lecturer to such an extent that the lecturer had to firmly instruct her to "be quiet and let me speak." These classroom experiences fostered a climate of disrespect and marginalisation, where my contributions and presence were undermined. Placement Discrimination</p>
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			<p>intensified during clinical placements. Debrief Hours: During placement debrief sessions, I was subjected to mocking of my accent. Other students openly laughed at the way I spoke, yet no intervention was made by the placement director, who allowed the harassment to continue unchecked. This silence from a person in authority compounded the humiliation, signalling tolerance of racially motivated bullying. [redact name] Hospital: While on placement at [redact name], I was directly targeted and told I looked “scary.” This demeaning comment reduced me to a racialised stereotype, with no acknowledgement from supervisors or staff to correct or address the discriminatory behaviour. [redact name] Hospital: At [redact name], staff members singled me out inappropriately, rolling their eyes at me when I spoke or participated. These gestures were not isolated but repeated, signalling a pattern of exclusion and disrespect rooted in bias against my cultural background and presence. Institutional Failures These behaviours are not trivial; they amount to racially discriminatory conduct in breach of the Anti-Discrimination Act, the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 (Cth), and the University’s Equity and Diversity Framework. Importantly, the failure of staff and placement supervisors to intervene — particularly the placement director during debriefs — reflects a systemic institutional failure to uphold a safe and inclusive learning environment. Both the [redact name] Code of Conduct and the University’s duty of care mandate zero tolerance for racial harassment. By permitting this behaviour to continue, the institution contributed to a hostile environment that left me vulnerable, demeaned, and professionally undermined. Conclusion The combination of unfair grading linked to my surname, peer harassment, mocking of my accent, derogatory comments labelling me as “scary,” and staff members’ eye-rolling at [redact name] reflect a pattern of racial discrimination across both academic and clinical settings. These experiences are not isolated incidents but part of a broader systemic issue in which my identity as a woman with the surname [redact name], a visible accent, and cultural background became the target of sustained prejudice. I escalated complaints to the University because such treatment not only contravenes legal protections but directly violates the principles of equity, inclusion, and respect that the University and clinical partners are obliged to uphold</p>
	Systemic racism in policies and practices		<p>The racism I experience at [University] is systemic. This shows up in processes, policies and unconscious biases of the context and the people. For example, promotions and academic development are very individualistic and based on Western values of exceptionalism and merit rather than a collectivist, collegial approach that values service, reciprocity and mutuality. I also teach and coordinate a unit that relates to Indigenous content - the process of hiring, retaining and developing First Nations staff has lacked organisational support or structures. I very much had to seek out the appropriate individuals, connections and learning to ensure I was fulfilling my job description in a way that prioritises cultural safety.</p> <p>I feel that the racism I have seen and feel around my discipline is covert. No-one explicitly says anything rude about the different races, but the way some of the staff members discuss international students make it feel like even if they recognise cultural differences as a reason for the differences in how they behave in their education and interactions with the lecturers/staff members, that it’s not 'good enough' and they need to become more like the typical 'white stereotype' in order to be successful. Similarly, in academic, there seems to be a certain way that you need to show and express yourself to get recognition amongst colleagues, but this favours those whose cultural backgrounds are inclined this way, and others who have cultural values who are opposite, may feel like they need to work harder or do more in order to be recognised</p>
<b>Diversity and Inclusion</b>		Lack of diversity in university leadership	<p>At the [University], racism lies just under the surface of polite, civil, and nice politically correct language. Yes, we’ve got laws and rules against loud and brash racism, but it exists in a subtle tone. Colleagues of colour or race will have a certain glass ceiling for their career progression. If you look at all the senior leadership</p>

			<p>group of the faculties and [redacted] you will see one general race and background. This group looks after each other. The rest of us are just background characters in their world. But all people of colour are used to this and just get on with their day because nothing will ever change. This survey will not do anything. It will scratch the surface and be done with it. tick box done!</p> <p>Culture is the invisible glue of an organisation; unseen, but strongly felt in how people interact and what becomes “normal.” At [University], this glue often seems to hold most strongly around Australian and English-speaking backgrounds. While diversity and inclusion are valued at a policy level, the lived experience can feel more centred on Anglo-Australian norms of communication and behaviour. This can leave staff and students from other cultural and linguistic backgrounds feeling like they must adapt, rather than belonging naturally. To improve inclusivity and equity, [University] could: 1. Widen representation – ensure culturally diverse voices are present in leadership and decision-making. 2. Embed cultural competence – provide ongoing training that moves beyond awareness into daily inclusive practice. 3. Review communication norms – make space for varied communication styles, not only those of native English speakers. 4. Meaningful celebration of diversity – integrate multicultural perspectives into curriculum, staff development, and recognition practices. 5. Safe spaces and reporting – create trusted, confidential avenues for raising concerns about exclusion or discrimination. By broadening the cultural glue that binds us, [University] can ensure it reflects and values the richness of its entire community.</p> <p>I also am saddened by the fact that I don't see people of diverse and cultural backgrounds in leadership positions. From my experience, I see a majority of white Australians in leadership positions, and they themselves may be perpetrators of racist behaviours, which makes it ever so hard to report. Especially, when staff have been at the university for so long, it is hard to hold people to be accountable for their actions. I hope the university can strive to be more inclusive and equal by having other cultural and diverse backgrounds in leadership positions.</p>
		Performative diversity & tokenism	<p>The way the university leadership has handled access to the Muslim prayer space has, at best, left the Muslim community feeling uncomfortable, and at worst, left many feeling discriminated against on the basis of their religion. The approach taken has seemed high-handed, displaying a lack of empathy for students, and little genuine understanding of either their needs or of the religion itself. Blocking access to the prayer space in the middle of Ramadan, a time of heightened spiritual importance, and during exam periods has been especially disruptive. For some students, spirituality may not play a major role, but for others it is central to their well-being and ability to succeed. The decision-makers involved appeared to have little to no awareness of just how significant and damaging such disruptions can be. In addition, requiring students to show ID specifically to access the Muslim prayer space, when access to most other areas of the university does not require this, gave the impression that the university was singling out Muslim students and discriminating against them.</p>
<b>Policy and Policy-making</b>		Lack of engagement/diversity in institutional policy-making	<p>We see active and passive racism regularly on campus, and systemic racism is rife. Policy and procedures are managed by a small close-knit group that do not seek expertise or review from outside the group. They argue that they are fair because of policy, but it is the application and interpretation from a closed group that is a major issue. They also argue they are extensively experienced with the subjected group which allows them to provide sound decisions, and I fundamentally disagree with this.</p>

		Need for better policies	Policy development: Introduce clear policies that protect staff as well as students from racist behaviour, including racist remarks in student evaluations and bullying disguised as academic feedback. At present, protections appear one-sided, leaving staff vulnerable.
		Imposing and prioritising white research standards and norms.	Most racism I have experienced is based on imposing normative white standards on our mob. Not understanding affirmation action - or not supporting it due to meritocratic beliefs. Being told it is not the rule, but the 'convention' is a cover for unconscious bias or even worse - gross negligence. My junior colleague was excluded from a grant application by our ADR because she thought he should not be applying - even though he was eligible. I was roped in to tell him he was not eligible, but when I read the rules I could see that he was. I recommended that he be supported and I was overruled. It made me feel very ineffective as Associate Dean Indigenous. Sometimes my colleagues do not understand what self-determination means and think they know what is best for us. We are not children. But ADR insists it was 'their call'. So frustrating.
		Disconnect between policy and practice	<p>Though I won't note the countless times I have experienced racism as both a student and staff member, I wish to recognise that when talking about race, equality and equity are two completely separate components of being culturally competent. The university needs to follow better practices and standards are set and met to ensure all in the [University] community are compliant.</p> <p>[University] says they listen, learn, and take action on racism at university. This is false and misleading. On a range of measures and indicators, [University] leadership (and some staff) does not promote anti-racism. Institutional policies on anti-racism are non-specific and designed to provide a veneer of action only. Very very few PoC good leadership roles and positions at [University]. White feminism is a scourge at [redact university name]. Academics - male and female - who claim to be allies research, write, and publish on racism, anti-racism, and decoloniality, but their actions reinforce racist practices and racialisation of peoples...</p> <p>Just the fact that this particular staff member has been rude and racist in the past and nothing has happened to them. The University is good at making policies and training for racism. Everyone knows what racism is. But these policies are not implemented equally.</p>
<b>Complaints and handling of incidents of racism (complaints, reporting and redress experiences).</b>		Complaints process	<p>I complained about inappropriate racist, sexual and bullying behaviour of a Caucasian white male senior colleague. The complaint process was lengthy, passive and demanded time, emotional and policy interpretation responsibility. My complaint was about two male colleagues. One of them had been harassing female colleagues for years. He has been suspended. But the other has been promoted (without advertisement and competitive process). A number of female colleagues in his team have also complained about his behaviour. It seems [redact name] either turns a blind eye or promotes bad behaviour.</p> <p>I have personally experienced racial discrimination at [University], both online and in-person on campus multiple times over the past two years. I have complained countless times but there has been little to know meaningful action taken in response to these complaints; which generally take several months to address. I have been ignored, misinterpreted, gaslit, and dismissed. I have since withdrawn from teaching responsibilities and moved to complete my studies remotely as [University] refuses to create a safe environment for me on campus - specifically by enforcing existing policies in a uniform way.</p> <p>Very common and deeply frustrating experience with workplace discrimination at [University]. The Problem: Experiencing discrimination from supervisor and feels that HR was unable to act due to a lack of</p>

		<p>"sufficient evidence." This points to a critical failure in the system. Power Imbalance: A supervisor has significant power over an employee's career, workload, and evaluations. This makes reporting them incredibly difficult and risky. Burden of Proof: The requirement for "sufficient evidence" often falls entirely on the victim. Discrimination is rarely overt (e.g., a racist slur); it's often subtle (e.g., being passed over for opportunities, micromanagement, exclusion from meetings, unfair criticism). This creates a "he said, she said" dynamic that is hard to prove. Perceived Inefficacy of HR: The feeling that "HR can't do anything" erodes trust in the entire reporting system, making others less likely to come forward. It can make victims feel isolated and powerless. My suggestion for [redact name] in the survey: Overhaul how discrimination complaints against powerful staff (like supervisors) are handled. My own experience shows the current system is broken. When I reported my supervisor's discriminatory behaviour to HR, I was told there was 'insufficient evidence' and nothing could be done. This protects the perpetrator and punishes the victim. [redact name] needs to: Believe victims and shift the burden of investigation away from the complainant. HR should be proactively investigating patterns of behaviour, not waiting for a single piece of undeniable proof. Provide truly independent advocates for staff and students who are not part of the HR department that may be focused on protecting the university from liability. Offer anonymous reporting channels that track repeated complaints against the same individual, so a pattern can be established even if no single person feels safe enough to make a formal case. Train HR staff to understand that a lack of direct evidence does not mean discrimination did not occur, and to look for other corroborating signs. Until the power imbalance is addressed, people will continue to suffer in silence.</p> <p>Fairness, diversity, and equality are all part of the university's regulations. However, unconscious bias and unfair practices are still widespread. It is nearly impossible to raise complaints about such cases, as there is often no clear evidence.</p> <p>I have not reported these experiences because racism at [University] operates at both structural and interpersonal levels. It will be never-ending. The responsibility to act is often placed on the person experiencing or witnessing racism, which makes reporting feel futile and burdensome. Until the onus is shifted onto the institution to recognise and address racism proactively, reporting will remain ineffective. My complaints, which went as high as the vice chancellor, were outright ignored, and racism was supported and fostered rather than addressed.</p> <p>I am very dissatisfied and disappointed how I was treated at [University]. I lodged a university complaint but did not receive a fair resolution. I have also complained to the National Student Ombudsman, and the complaint review is ongoing. I would not recommend this university to anyone.</p> <p>The process of dealing with complaint and issues raised should be dealt with seriously. Having been in an experience where the outcome was predicted (sweep under carpet and pressured to quit) is highly unacceptable for the complainant- especially when evidence was provided and the complainant was forced to continue to work under the abuser for the sake to keep a job. No repercussion of the abuser whatsoever.</p>
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<p>Reasons for not complaining (Accounts of why individuals who experience racism in university settings refrain from making formal or informal complaints, highlighting barriers, fears, and institutional shortcomings).</p>	<p>Expressions of fear of retaliation, victim-blaming, or being penalised.</p>	<p>When I overhear people being racist, or when they say something racist to me, I'm very unlikely to address it directly. I definitely would not be the type of person to try to raise a complaint. I remember it, I try to stay away from them, but I feel very threatened by the possibility of push back or consequences that would affect my studies. I would rather leave it to a person with more privilege to call it out, but in my experience, they do not do that. Most recently, some students in a lab were making racist remarks about Romani people, and the tutor was present, but he did not say anything.</p> <p>Some of the clinical tutors are racist &amp; shown discrimination towards students from different cultural background. We know we can report them but we are in fear of retaliation &amp; we do not believe we will be protected by university and our names might be disclosed to the tutors we reported. We do not think that university will do something about it rather than protect their staff.</p> <p>Due to fear of retaliation, I am unable to reveal the name of the academic racially abusing me. However, I have raised this issue with admins and school/faculty leadership, but they are so keen to just support their own academics (since they bring funding to [University]) that they completely disregard my complaints. It is well-known how [University] has suppressed even gross research misconduct issues about their academics who bring high funding.</p>	
		<p>Not knowing how to make a complaint</p>	<p>Make it more known how to make complaints to staff and faculty; how to make complaints ABOUT staff and faculty.</p> <p>I think providing a module on how to submit complaints will be helpful as I have no idea on what to do after being put in an uncomfortable situation.</p>
		<p>Complaints process is onerous for the person making the complaint or results in negative repercussions for the individual making the complaint (backlash)</p>	<p>Complaints are not made for fear of reprisal.</p> <p>The HR processes for making complaints are not dealt with appropriately. There is little cultural safety for people making complaints. The process values the perpetrator more than the person making the complaint. Acts of racism happen frequently but there is little calling it out, accountability or repercussions for the perpetrators.</p>
		<p>Lack of consequences for university or areas</p>	<p>We need ways of making complaints where action is taken and not swept under the rug, such as external resources, not supports hired by the university. The university doesn't take some reports seriously because there is no backlash for ignoring it.</p> <p>Discrimination of any kind at this institution is not taken seriously. Incidents go unreported because there is no confidence in the complaints process or P&amp;C to take action when issues are raised. EDI initiatives to date have been tokenistic or undervalued. [University] is only concerned with rankings and awards/accreditation, not about making a real difference for staff and students who have been impacted by racism. The culture at [University] is rotten through and through and until we have leadership who live the values [University] promotes it won't change. If we keep employing privileged white guys in our executive roles we won't see meaningful change. I am ashamed of [University].</p>

			NO point in filing a complaint, goes nowhere and in the end it is the person who reported the issue identified as a problem.
		Lack of consequences for person reported or incidence not taken seriously	<p>I feel the person I reported for racism didn't face strong enough consequences as he became a repeat offender, no matter how many times the class told him his behaviour was unacceptable. Many 'jokes' are made which are racially insensitive, and extremely normalised in Australian culture.</p> <p>I made a complaint about extremely inappropriate racist jokes made at university in front of the whole cohort last year, and the only staff member who had my back was Professor [name redacted]. He was the only person who openly called it 'racism' and sternly opposed the behaviour.</p> <p>Because the staff member is/was senior and attracts grants no action was taken and the student was discouraged from making a complaint.</p> <p>Strengthen the response to complaints - I know of complaints that included written proof of racist bullying and harassment that did not result in any action, as they were against a senior leader in the [redact faculty name], and the previous Dean declined to take action.</p>
		Burden of proof	Asking vulnerable people to make complaints without having built trust and demonstrated trustworthiness is too risky for the complainant. From bullying and harassment training, the burden of proof is very high and those that are accustomed to abusing power will manipulate those structures and play the victim, despite holding multiple levels of power/authority. I believe that [redacted] is rebuilding this, however the fiscal constraints is not making this easier.
		Not taken seriously	<p>Complaints of racism need to be taken seriously and when actions are promised these need to be followed up on. It is not appropriate for HR to promise to address racist behaviour and then do nothing.</p> <p>When students raise complaints about staff behaviour, these should be taken seriously and addressed regardless of the staff member's position, experience, or length of service at the university.</p>
		Disbelieved	Believe the person who reports a complaint about racism. Often the person is not believed as it may be too hard to bring an action against a senior staff member. The complainant must be given space to be taken seriously without having to go through many HR hurdles to prove the racism.
		Impossible to address because of subtle nature of racism	Racism and related discrimination are so delicately embedded in Australian society that those who experience it—particularly in university workplaces—often find it almost impossible to address. The evidences is subtle, intangible, and therefore difficult to make visible in ways that authorities tasked with handling complaints can act upon. When I reached the section of this questionnaire that asked about “complaining,” I could not help but laugh. The reality is that the forms of racism and discrimination many of us encounter are so carefully hidden and normalised that bringing them to official notice feels futile. Some of our colleagues don't even know that they are inflicting racism, as fish don't know they live in water. Yet, their impact is not delicate at all. Racism and discrimination silently and profoundly erode productivity, well-being, and the sense of belonging. Even when invisible on the surface, they exact a significant cost on individuals and institutions alike. I never expect a complete elimination of racism, as we can't get into the brain and heart of everybody, but we should do everything at our disposal to reduce it as much as possible. Thank you.



**Table 4.1. Consequences of racism at Australian universities**

Theme	Sub-theme	Examples	Illustrative quotes
<b>Effects</b>	Feeling unsafe		I have been subject to racism during my time at [redact name]. These experiences — whether through direct comments, exclusion, or subtle biases — have affected my sense of safety and belonging on campus. While some incidents may seem “minor” to others, the cumulative impact is deeply isolating and exhausting. There needs to be a stronger, more visible commitment from the university to address racism, not just through policies but through action. Students and staff need to know that reports will be taken seriously and followed up on appropriately, without fear of retaliation or dismissal.
	Feeling unwelcome		I have at times felt excluded due to my cultural background, including situations where assumptions or stereotypes were made about me. While not always intentional, these moments affect confidence and sense of belonging. What would help is more visible encouragement of diversity, open conversations about unconscious bias, and consistent action when issues are reported. As an example a colleague of mine who seems bit racist towards staffs from other ethnic backgrounds. We are both in a team with similar position where people reports to us. He like to only hire people from Australian heritage and mostly locals while I look for talent and equality of merits. Recently a staff member asked about the hiring process and application sorting while we all went for a team lunch and his reply was that he don’t even look for CVs from those who are on some visas or sound like a foreign name to him. He rejects them instantly. Some recent example also included of him engaging in promoting only those staffs who he favours and not staffs who deserve and specifically from other ethnic cultures. It seems like he doesn’t like people from south Asian countries and tries to demean me in meetings and other forums. I believe [University] should continue to lead by example through ongoing education on unconscious bias, celebrating cultural diversity, and ensuring that all staff and students feel safe and valued.
	Lack of safe/respectful conversations		The double standards are the main problem with the university choosing when to enforce their rules. Universities should be a place of respectful debate, research and truth. Universities should be a place where whatever a political opinion or background all students should feel safe. Also universities should not be allowed to force students to pay SSAF funds to causes that they do not believe in and believe are racist. The fact any body that takes these funds making any kind of political statement alienating students is appalling particularly when the statements are factually false and could terrorise parts of the student population. Even worse than this at [University] even the [redacted] students' association which is meant to be for all student are making these statements while claiming they are lobbying for all students. At [University] 11% of my mandatory SSAF payment go to the [redacted] students' association which I believe advocate against my values and beliefs however just due to the fact I go to university I am required to provide funding for them as they Islander my people.

	Mental health & wellbeing effects	Stress, anxiety, or health effects due to racism	<p>It made my life horrible. I used to hate going to that lab and work under the supervision of that person. I got mentally so upset and traumatised that I used to get sick a lot. I used to get panic attacks as well. I was very passionate about my PhD, still I am but that guy tried his best to degrade my confidence. I used to work for long hours, but that person kept repeatedly saying I am not like Chinese people who can work super hard all day long. I felt like my hard work was not acknowledged. I was afraid to report but scared that [University] will side with the postdoctoral fellow to save the TEAM from judgement and save the GROUP LEADER's prestige/reputation. I am happy I am not working under his supervision anymore and happy that I am working in a new lab (under a new Group Leader) where I am respected and treated well.</p> <p>I think generally, there is a surface level of acceptance at the university. I do not feel threatened on a day to day basis, but often will experience microaggressions that over a period of time have impacted my wellbeing and sense of belonging at this university.</p>
	Physical health effects resulting from the stress of racism		<p>My personal experiences with racism and racial discrimination have profoundly shaped both my career and overall wellbeing. Repeated exposure to unfair treatment and exclusion has left me feeling uncertain about my future and disconnected from my professional path. These experiences have not only hindered my career growth but also taken a toll on my mental health, leading to ongoing stress and distress. Over time, the cumulative weight of these struggles has also contributed to a noticeable decline in my physical health.</p>
	Loss of confidence		<p>I started second guessing myself a lot more after the incident and feel that I need to work harder than my white Australian counterparts to prove myself.</p> <p>These experiences of subtle but consistent exclusion have significantly impacted my sense of belonging at the University. Being ignored during the pre-class interactions or informal chats/social moments creates a clear message about who is welcomed into the university community. This type of microaggression creates an environment where international students, particularly those from non-English speaking backgrounds, feel like outsiders in their own learning spaces. This affects not just social comfort, but academic confidence: when you feel unseen by your instructors, it becomes harder to participate actively or seek help when needed. The university's commitment to diversity needs to extend beyond enrolment numbers to genuine inclusive practices in everyday classroom interactions.</p> <p>It took away my confidence to apply for jobs, I questioned if I was good enough and every time I went to work, I wanted to quit.</p>
	Emotional pain/Feeling hurt		<p>I do not enjoy giving such negative feedback as this is not my culture, but as a research student and purely for the benefit of future students like me, I decided to do it. Otherwise, I do not see international students winning this situation, but we are only seeking emotional support while away from home. We all need happiness and good health at the end, regardless of caste and colour. No one loves suffering in daily life. I only request that you put yourself in my shoes, "Would you imagine being in my shoes?" or are you willing to reflect for a while on these issues faced by international students? We all pay huge fees and taxes too, yet we are treated like pests in the bus, tea rooms, and parks. Can you imagine you or your own loved ones facing this pain in daily life?</p>

		Feeling small, humiliated, ashamed (Accounts of students/staff experiencing diminished self-worth, humiliation, or shame as a result of racism, identity invalidation, exclusion, or hostile classroom dynamics. Focuses on the emotional toll of racist encounters).	Horrible experience at residential college with racism at [university redacted] - casual racism really tore down my self-esteem and confidence as where I attended I was one of 3 diverse people out of nearly 250 / 300 students.
		Isolation & distrust (Experiences where racism, exclusion, or delegitimisation cause students or staff to feel socially isolated, lonely, disconnected from peers, or distrustful of the university, its staff, or broader campus community).	<p>It made me feel excluded, isolated. I know it's wrong but at the same time I also know that I am in a different country with different culture and customs and the people here might find me different/weird. I love being in Australia and I want to adapt and be part of this beautiful country but my ethnicity is something that cannot be changed and I feel uncertain at times.</p> <p>There's no social life because if you don't fit into the cliques of race/ethnicity or you don't look like them no one really wants to be friends with you</p> <p>Being a minority is extremely isolating. I spend most of time alone on campus, everyone is too busy, I do not sit in my lab space as I feel I don't belong. I prefer to study at home or online and only go in when I really need to.</p> <p>I have experienced very direct racism on a few occasions from diverse age groups. I have experienced social isolation, a lack of kindness in social interaction, and use of alienating/dehumanising language that is technically correct but morally ambiguous/plausibly deniable. Finding belongingness for me is more difficult. My mental (and perhaps physical) health, personality, moral/sociological beliefs, lifestyles, (arguably) career development, and (dare I say it) romantic experiences have worsened (directly or otherwise) mainly through long-term alienation and rejections (as mentioned above), each incident is small in individual effect but adds up in number. It mentally costs me more to attend and adequately participate in social, networking, and career development events due to social alienation and declining mental health and personality. The few incidents of direct racism did not seem to have long term effects and only cause short-term emotional distress. To put it vaguely, those who discriminated against me tend to belong to highly socially accepted demographics (though exceptions exist), likely because it is difficult for people to treat everyone equally well in a subjective abundance of social connections and so they discriminate against those who they deem (but not necessarily are) less valuable and therefore this issue is fundamentally unfixable nor is there motivation to fully fix it.</p>
		Withdrawing from social or academic spaces to avoid discrimination.	It has made me reflect on the values of the organisation and question if I want to be working here anymore. It has created a toxic environment whereby I am going to avoid going in to the office.
<b>Academic impact</b>	Loss of pleasure and interest in studies		I felt broken and out of place. I never liked going to my classes because I often felt out of place and I hated it. I would cry sometimes when I got home.

	Lower grades		<p>Racism is subtle, it can be hidden and be under surface. It reveals itself in marking of presentations and tutorials. People of diverse backgrounds are judged before they even start speaking.</p> <p>In academic settings I always feel scared to submit my assignment with my African name displayed as I fear my work will be marked with racial discrimination. This is because I have in the past experienced racial discrimination in academic and work settings. Unfortunately, many people have an unconscious bias towards people that look like them. With most lecturers being people that do not look like me, it leaves me feeling vulnerable of being discriminated against and not being given equal opportunities.</p>
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**Table 5.1. Suggestions for improving universities**

Theme	Sub-theme	Illustrative quotes
<b>Anti-racism Education &amp; Awareness</b>	Training or workshops addressing microaggressions, unconscious bias, or systemic racism	I think the university should take more initiative in educating about microaggressions. A course at the start of enrolment, similar to the consent modules, would be beneficial. I think an important element of this should also be directed towards students who may come from ethnically homogenous areas, rural students, and international students, for example, who are not as familiar with what comments are culturally acceptable in multicultural contexts. There should also be a significant focus on residential communities on campus, especially catered halls where close-quarter living is inevitable.  ...embedding anti-racism and unconscious bias training into staff and student development...
	Diversifying curriculum (e.g. Curriculum content that explicitly teaches about racism and its impacts)	diversifying curricula to reflect Indigenous and multicultural perspectives;
<b>Anti-racism strategies and inclusive practices</b>		fostering inclusive campus culture through mentoring, visible recognition of cultural communities, and open dialogue forums
	Co-design solutions with people affected by racism	Programs to address racism at university need to be co-designed.  Co-design and consult with people with lived / living experience.  Implementing meaningful commitments to co-designed programs and policies for the multicultural communities that the University includes. Create and sustain identified roles that promote cultural inclusion and commit central funding to creating and maintaining these initiatives.  Partnerships with multicultural communities to co-design programs and events. Celebration of cultural diversity through festivals, talks and exhibitions that highlight different cultures and identities.  Move beyond tokenism and slogans. The university uses a lot of Aboriginal language, gestures towards inclusivity, and marketing around being "the university of choice". Yet none of the programs/slogans are ever backed up with action. The action, if it does happen, is not done in co-design with the people it alleges to "help". Having an Aboriginal name for a university is a good step, but, for AU and [University] it is only cladding – shallow, tokenistic, and utterly meaningless, which ultimately harms our communities.
	Storytelling	Provide opportunity for people to tell their stories and for others to listen.
	Events inviting everyone to celebrate each other's culture	Cultural Events on campus, online cultural celebration meetups etc. [City] Cultural/Meetup Campus events for Online students  Have inter-cultural lunches highlighting different countries and their culture bi-weekly. This will provide an opportunity for people from different cultures to participate in activities of other cultures.

	Encourage social activities where people from different backgrounds can interact	<p>Universities as a key institutional pillar of society, who nature and shape the next, one way we could bring down barriers is to increase the amount of physical and virtual engagements within student cohorts outside the academic work/group work. Creating structures to increase the feeling of fellowship is needed. While Fraternities of the exclusive kind are maligned for the right reasons, we still need to foster alternative social structures that will encourage diverse people to forge friendships, build a sense of camaraderie and support. Overtime (thing over a decade or two), the wider societal effects of such initiatives would be immense, esp at leadership levels. Further, many of us have moved away from organised religions. However, our urge to belong is deeply rooted in our evolutionary history. So new social structures at University levels needs to be actively fostered/encouraged.</p> <p>Student jam session</p> <p>I haven't experienced any racial discrimination at my university. However, student get divide by cultural or ethnic groups, be it for events or academic activities. I am the only one from my country at the university and sometimes I am isolated as I face difficulties to look for groups for these events and activities. Therefore, if there could be some system and management structure that could actually mixed all students with different cultural backgrounds, that would be a great help.</p>
	Student onboarding	I think some kind of onboarding experience for students who do live on campus to assist in them understanding that sharing living spaces with a diverse range of cultures and origins needs to be welcomed with an open mind. It may help break the ice between cohorts of students who will only congregate with other students of their origin and perhaps learn to reach out to other students from differing backgrounds.
	Promoting racism support and encourage reporting	Perhaps advertise the racism support available and intolerance for it through posters, that way students and/or staff members can feel more encouraged to report racism at [redact name] should they face or observe anyone else facing it.
	Improve Equity & Inclusion	[University] could improve inclusivity and equity by: Providing more culturally competent training for all staff and students, with a focus on recognizing and interrupting microaggressions and unconscious bias. Strengthening reporting systems so people feel safe coming forward. Increasing representation of racially diverse voices in leadership, curriculum design, and student support roles. Actively listening to students who have experienced racism, and involving them in shaping solutions. Racism – in any form – should never be normalised or minimised. [University] has the opportunity to lead by example in fostering a truly inclusive and equitable environment.
	Structured intercultural dialogue	[University] could address racism and improve inclusivity by creating more open dialogue spaces where students from diverse backgrounds feel safe to share their experiences. This could include regular cultural awareness workshops, student-led cultural exchange events, and stronger support systems for international students.
	Staffing suggestions	Remunerate Indigenous staff for the cultural load; have campaigns about what racism is and what can be done about it; review the training,
		More representation of First Nations elders and mentors teaching content relating to our culture and how this is best embedded in clinical care. I am lucky to have only had one experience of racism which was addressed by the uni, however, I know of other students who have had worse experiences and have not been supported. At the time of the incident I was exposed to, the tutor did not handle the situation safely and therefore, staff would benefit from more cultural safety training and emersion in our cultural experiences to build strong connection and understanding. Furthermore, the student responsible for racism in my situation, in further reflection after the event, I do not believe was appropriately addressed to ensure no further actions of racism, as I then experienced further exposure to the student's

		<p>racist uneducated and harmful comments, this student clearly showed no remorse (and wasn't able to grow from the situation through learning and understanding) and I fear the damage they will create in the health industry for First Nations Peoples. At the time I did not follow up the racists comments after the situation occurred and was attended to by [redacted name of university] staff, as I didn't want to appear as the angry black woman who is never happy with what is given. I have healed from this situation with the help from uni staff who were very supportive of my mental health which I am grateful for (staff were both Indigenous and non-Indigenous).</p>
	<p>Ways to address lateral violence</p>	<p>There is a need for staff coaching, training, and education on lateral violence within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff cohorts, including clear and accessible pathways for reporting this behaviour. At present, some staff and students feel unsafe to speak out about experiences of lateral violence, as those who have raised concerns in the past have experienced negative repercussions. It would be highly beneficial to establish a confidential, "off-the-record" contact point (for example, through HR) where individuals could share what has occurred without fear of professional or personal consequences, including risks to employment. Importantly, this role should be separate from the Indigenous Employment Manager position, given potential conflicts of interest.</p> <p>Hold Aboriginal leadership accountable for lateral violence and the abusive behaviours of their Aboriginal staff. There is no accountability for the numerous breaches of the code of conduct that occur on a daily basis with staff who 'identity police' and challenge Aboriginal identity of other Aboriginal staff... the social exclusion, the negative behaviours, the confrontational abusive language and discourse and the way that Aboriginal staff who show these behaviours are favoured, and are 'overlooked' is why the university can't recruit and keep their Aboriginal staff!!! There is a toxic culture where Aboriginal males are promoted and given every opportunity while there is still no genuine Indigenous female leadership. I constantly received negative feedback from white Australian students who disagree with my culture and cultural knowledges and practices and this feedback is something I am supposed to use in my 'promotion' to show what a great teacher I am! I would like to see every staff member have to map out their achievements against the Cultural Standards like I am always being mapped out against their Western Standards! The cultural load I have to do is never counted for. An external, independent review of lateral violence, missed opportunities and a foundation of abusive behaviour from Aboriginal staff should be undertaken and not swept under the carpet again and again!!</p> <p>Address lateral violence as well as racism and accountability. Additionally, to truly accept Indigenous cultures then all Indigenous cultures should be considered, one voice cannot speak for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and also cannot make decisions about them. To move forward and embrace Indigeneity within institutions, they need to stop expecting to have Indigenous executive positions that make the decisions but rather a Community of Indigenous voices that's safe. I have witnessed senior leadership who is Indigenous shut other Indigenous voices, and because they outrank those voices and often other people in the room it's not challenged or addressed, which promotes it coming from one perspective and not all.</p>

	<p>Cultural sensitivity and competency</p>	<p>Mandatory trauma-informed education onboarding modules for all students.</p> <p>I would like the university to provide more resources, training, and support to staff to ensure fair processes are in place and that we are better equipped to foster inclusivity and equity. This training should start from the onboarding process.</p> <p>Include cultural competencies and short learnings into the onboarding and make them an annual or biannual mandatory training</p> <p>At a university that prides itself on a diverse student body and staff, promoting awareness around issues of racism and discrimination, along with ensuring a clear and accessible reporting process, is essential. One practical approach could be to invite all [University] staff and students to complete an ad hoc course on cultural competency and inclusion as part of their onboarding or commencement. Thank you to the executive management for their continued dedication to supporting the university community. At the same time, it is important to ensure that empathy and support are extended equally to all in times of crisis. For example, when messages of empathy are shared in response to any type of disaster in certain regions, but similar support is not offered during other tragedies in other areas, it can create a perception of selective compassion. Few colleagues went through difficult times, especially those whose extended families are affected by unrest or man-made disruptions, should receive same support, ensuring that all forms of hardship are recognized.</p> <p>I think more training during onboarding and refresher training for staff needs to be implemented, especially for staff who may be culturally insensitive.</p> <p>Onboarding schedule for all new starters with in-person, meaningful and mandatory training on matters such as unconscious bias, and training such as Beyond Black &amp; White, etc. before the workload starts to take over and these optional courses fall by the wayside.</p> <p>The university's attitude and broadly the attitudes of staff members from either Australia or first-world countries/the colony towards an acknowledgment of country is not appropriate and should be treated with respect and understanding. It should be part of the onboarding process for new staff members no matter their seniority. There should be clear training and processes for this. I have seen many staff members pay little to no attention to this. Additionally, the university should have made VERY clear its position on the referendum and voted YES for the voice to parliament.</p>
		<p>Ensure that people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds are represented in senior leadership and at all levels of decision making in the organisation; form an Advisory Group made of people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds to advise on university diversity initiatives and inform planning; leverage expertise of people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds to lead diversification initiatives in teaching and/or research.; develop workforce targets relating to staff contribution to and leadership within School/Faculty and university-level initiatives; diversify cultural awareness training beyond First Nations to cover a broader range of diversity groups and embed this cultural awareness training into supervisor development and onboarding processes; develop specific mentoring tracks to support professional growth and retention of people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds and include staff of different racial/ethnic backgrounds as mentors including within reverse mentoring programs.</p> <p>Ensuring diverse representation in leadership and decision-making;</p>

	Employment suggestions	Don't hire racist staff. Observe teaching sessions. Support international students with language services. Have a culturally diverse leadership team.
	Academic promotion suggestions	Academic promotion info sessions should include people (who reflect on their promotion strategies) from diverse backgrounds, not just white European academics.
	Teaching & Learning suggestions	They could make group formation for the assignments random and by system or teacher. This way there will be more inclusion, and this will stop the exclusion of minority. Also, teachers may try to keep students changing tables between activities or classes so they will connect more. The situation now is that every race group will stay together and work together leaving behind minority groups and if anyone by chance joined their group, they exclude them and annoy them. I now hate attending my classes and prefer to study at home.
<b>Pedagogical practices for equity and inclusion</b>	Classroom practices that promote inclusion and social integration	I would recommend introducing mandatory study groups within each degree program, where students are placed into groups selected by the teacher. This would give them the chance to study together, get to know each other better, and learn about one another's backgrounds and cultures. If making study groups compulsory isn't feasible, an alternative could be offering them as an optional activity for those who wish to participate; however, encouraging everyone to participate might help reduce the likelihood of racism or racial discrimination going unnoticed.
<b>Education and training</b>		<p>Racial literacy training for all staff.</p> <p>Racial literacy education—especially that stresses the difference between culture, ethnicity, nationality and race. Australian institutions have a massive issue of conflating these issues, in part because of the overuse of CALD as a catch all term. It is possible to be racially discriminated against, and to NOT be culturally divergent from the Australian mainstream, for example. As third and soon fourth generation migrants grow up, they're going to be more and more impacted by straight up racism based on their appearance, rather than their ability to integrate into Australian society because of differing culture, language, etc. I grew up with a white Australian mum and while I have some ties to my father's culture, for all intents and purposes, I am culturally Australian. However, I am not seen as such by other white Australians because of my appearance. It is this experience which has shaped my difference through political consciousness, not an inherent cultural difference. I had a shocking experience in one of my social work units where a unit coordinator and lecturer did not know the difference between race and ethnicity. This should be common knowledge for social workers who come into contact with so many different populations. It is coddling white Australians into a belief that they don't have to think deeply about their OWN racial and ethnic identities. Being white is not the same as being European. I am not white, but there are many places where I could be treated as such, because power is contextual. Similarly, they can adopt "cultural competence" and paint "CALD" communities with a broad brush and call it a day. It is not a coherent category in the slightest. Racial literacy also enables solidarity between people of non-white migrant backgrounds and First Nations people—even if needs according to culture and history differ, it's fundamentally the same settler colonial, racial capitalist system that is oppressing us.</p> <p>More training on cultural diversity that includes direct and indirect racism, putting yourself in someone's else shoes, etc.</p> <p>More education especially on how to identify indirect racism and what to do when facing or witnessing racism or racial discrimination</p>

		<p>Education or more awareness around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It seems that lecturers are almost forced to include an acknowledgment of country in their lectures by how they say it. Students have been incredibly racist to me then attended activities at [redact name]. The school of health has no interest in changing anything or implementing ideas for Indigenous people. A massive change would be Indigenous [clinical examination] assessors for a more welcoming and comforting experience or practical assessments.</p>
	Education for all staff	<p>There needs to be education of non-indigenous academic staff about the fact that it is inappropriate for them to speak on behalf of Indigenous peoples.</p> <p>[Redact name] could continue to provide programs and workshops that promote cultural awareness and inclusivity. Regular training for staff and students on diversity and respectful communication would help ensure a safe and welcoming environment for everyone.</p> <p>Most of the racism or racial discrimination I've experienced has been covert and difficult to identify. Often, people aren't aware they're being racist or subconsciously racist. It is very important to provide cultural awareness and increase cultural competency among staff, not only because they work with diverse students, but also because the university's workforce is becoming increasingly diverse. It is important that staff understands the nuances and differences between cultures, especially how those differing in cultures affect the workplace.</p> <p>Spread positive awareness about all religions and races/ethnicities.</p> <p>Education about race ought to be embedded in university curriculum and made a compulsory unit for all students.</p>
	Training or education for staff	<p>Support staff earlier in their career with training to manage racism in the classroom (directed at them or within the class at other students). Also look at the impact of racism of things like student feedback, and ensure staff of diverse cultural backgrounds are not disadvantaged when applying for future positions because of racist views in their classroom that lead to more negative feedback.</p>
	Training for students	<p>I think more work should and resources should be put into anti racism work in the health care space. Specifically regarding racism and debunking misconceptions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. I personally don't think there is enough teaching on how we would encounter First Nation people respectfully in health care. I think a dedicated unit would be really helpful especially for people who want to work rurally, if anyone wanted to start that.</p> <p>Teach your teachers about educational codes. If they are not displaying respectful behaviour, how can one expect such from their students. Decide whether they are there to teach a trade or simply to speak a lot of words. The teacher I have at my new campus is a far higher standard for learning and is welcoming to approach. They are transparent and honest with a good hearted nature to instil both respect and humour with their students. I enjoy learning under them. Compared to my previous teacher who would disrespect me if I answered or questioned them. Learning should not be made out as competitive or fearful, especially when we are all here to improve ourselves and others. Maintain focus on the content. This would reduce opportunity for students to pick on others or the teacher to pick on students. Words to consider: decisions determine destiny. Choices. And ask Why? I was a teacher at one stage. The above is a slight scramble of thoughts as this was a long survey to complete which I am wanting to finish. Please take what works. Other suggestions I have are more in relation to assessment tasks as that is more recent to my experiences then the worst life experience I had before moving to this campus. Thank you</p>

		<p>Among peers, it is more about questions that arise from following stereotypes. Sometimes the questions are inappropriate, and the assumptions made point to a lack of awareness of how cultures can vary even within the same country. For instance, North and South India have very different cultures, traditions, practices, and languages. In most cases, peers are open to being corrected and learning about my culture, and when willing, to share their own cultures so I can learn from them too. However, these conversations happen 9 out of 10 times with peers of other Asian ethnicities and not students with European features. For instance, I have been asked multiple times how I speak English so fluently, considering my Indian ethnicity and education, and why I don't do the "Indian head bobbing thing," which is very irksome considering two factors: (a) it's just how we communicate, it's not a punchline, and (b) it has been turned into a punchline, which apparently is funny to White peers. I have also heard from a friend who, in her class, made conversation with Australian peers on the first day, and the group stopped talking to her as openly once she told them she was from India. While these aren't major instances of racism involving direct harm or violence, they still count as microaggressions, which sometimes have a more lasting effect because of how often they happen and how many times we have to explain things to people when Google is right there. I think there's a need for the university to teach people how to talk to students who aren't White or Australian, to educate them on how to ask questions respectfully. While curiosity is great and helps with cultural learning, White/European students are not entitled to demand cultural knowledge from international students, for multiple reasons: being from a different culture does not mean we are the face of that culture; being from a different culture does not make me their search engine for all things related to that culture; and sometimes, I just don't want to explain everything just because someone has a question, our time and schedule are important things we need to attend to. The University needs to make all students, both Australian and international, aware of appropriate intercultural communication practices. I think this can be included as part of [university redacted] mandatory respect module or as a separate one to not dilute the content, considering the high diversity in the student population.</p>
	University admissions	Create group upon admission of people form similar culture to have a sense of belonging rather than to let them find others on there own.

	Policies, plans & strategies	<p>Ensure Racism policies are strong, well known - publicly to all staff and students and not hard to go through if a complaint is made. Have racial representation in high ranking roles in the University. Ensure staff who have to do a lot of "cultural" lifting work outside of their job descriptions as "experts" with lived experience are compensated for this. It can be emotionally tiring to have to be the person who speaks for an entire culture, constantly.</p> <p>In universities, the biggest barrier is how success gets measured. Academic workload and promotion rules are built around publishing in white journals and chasing numbers, which sidelines community-connected Aboriginal academics who are working to make change for their people. Reports, community work, cultural mentoring, and policy impact should count the same as journal articles otherwise the system keeps pushing us to perform for someone else's standards. This is crucial for Aboriginal people who have always been strongly attached to their communities. They don't want to come to uni to be white academics. The cultural load and all input Aboriginal staff bring to their spaces is invisible in workload models. If the university is serious, it needs to make that work visible and measurable. Aboriginal voices should also sit at every decision-making table, not just in advisory groups. If schools want to 'Indigenise' curriculum etc, it has to move beyond asking Aboriginal academics for guest lectures, and if they wish to employ Aboriginal people it must be mandated that they have to employ at least 2 in similar roles. You can't have 1 out as they will just cop the shit off white people as per usual.</p> <p>A proper plan for promoting First Nations academic and professional staff beyond Level B is necessary. There are significant gaps between leadership and level B that have no succession plan or support strategy. It is not enough for a single First Nations person to be in senior management. This is isolating and leaves that person wide open to receiving huge cultural load and experiencing casual racism without respite. It is probably why universities do not retain First Nations leaders long term.</p>
	Employment	<p>Employ more Indigenous lecturers or teachers who have lived experience to educate others around them. Continue to celebrate and participate in cultural days and events</p> <p>Take Indigenous employment, safety and leadership seriously and with commitment</p>
	Curriculum	<p>Indigenise curriculums, decolonise university practices, etc.</p>
	Reporting	<p>Inform students about who they can speak to if they experience or witness racism, or something that looks like a student being singled out by staff. It has taken me a few weeks of ruminating on something that I witnessed because I wasn't sure if it warranted reporting or what would happen to my grades if I reported it, or even who to report it to. I have now decided to go to my very approachable unit coordinator (some are not so approachable). Unfortunately, I have forgotten details because I have waited too long! What I witnessed may have been naivety but seemed to be a staff member singling out a student due to culture, race and religion. Upon discussions with the student, I realised that this was not the first time. Thankfully, I urged the student to speak up and they did. This experience has impacted how comfortable I feel in the learning environment.</p> <p>More awareness on how to disclose if you witness this behaviour, and more encouragement to do so</p> <p>Increase the visibility and voice of students from diverse backgrounds in decision-making roles and public campaigns. Actively challenge deficit-based thinking that assumes international or culturally diverse students are less capable. Racism does not always show up in extreme or violent ways. Sometimes it's a single sentence that tells a student they</p>

		<p>don't belong. I hope [University] continues to listen and create safer, more inclusive spaces where all students are treated with respect and dignity.</p> <p>While studying at [University], I experienced a moment in class that felt overtly racist and left a lasting emotional impact on me. During a lecture, I shared my ideas. The lecturer looked at me and said, "You are a person with a foreign name in Australia. You think you will be successful?" This comment was made in front of the entire class. I was shocked, humiliated, and deeply hurt. As an international student already trying to navigate a different system and culture, hearing that from an educator made me question not just my place in the university, but my future in this country. It reinforced the very barriers I had come here to overcome. I didn't feel safe or supported enough at the time to report it. But these kinds of experiences stay with you. They can seriously damage a student's confidence, self-worth and engagement with their studies. To improve equity and address racism, I believe [University] should: Provide compulsory cultural awareness and anti-racism training for all staff, including academic and professional staff. Create safe and confidential reporting pathways where students can share incidents without fear of academic repercussions. Appoint trained diversity officers within each faculty to handle complaints with care and understanding.</p>
	Racism reporting website	<p>Have a racism report website setup so if there is any sort of racism on campus one could report it immediately and anonymously.</p> <p>At [University] specifically, I had a bad experience with one of the doctors at the medical centre and the only way I could figure out to complain was through Google review which seemed insufficient. I asked one of the staff at [University] and I was told that the issue had to be raised at the medical centre and not with [University]. They were an external centre and would resolve their own issues. I have tried counselling at [University] for different reasons and did not feel supported at all because they didn't seem to try to understand my issues and situation. I feel that international pay a ridiculous amount of money compared to the locals and are still made to feel excluded and not welcome and we are unable to raise issues that affect us in fear of it affecting further job and study prospects in the country.</p>

	<p>Improvements to complaints process</p>	<p>Act on complaints with impact, consequences. Demonstrate action behind the talk and policies. Compel leaders to take action. The institution says one thing very strongly, but the action does not follow. This "gas-lighting" is actually more damaging to the individual because when asked institutional questions (e.g. this survey), the institutional evidence and statements do not match the lived experience of staff. Do not keep protecting the "good person" / "good bloke" who is a serial offender of casual racism masked in humour and banter.</p> <p>Develop harsh consequences for people that are racist. Getting sat down by HR does nothing for racist white people because HR is white and Indigenous people are outnumbered so that doesn't work. Racists will still go back to being racist directly to your face and it will actually get worse, unless there are serious consequences because this affects people's mental health.</p> <p>The staff grievance procedure strongly encourages people to settle grievances directly with the person(s) concerned as a first step. This can feel quite confrontational, especially if the complainant does not know the person that well or if they are a senior member of the organisation. It also can be quite morally challenging as it may not seem like a big enough issue complainant, and so they may just choose to do nothing and to keep the peace. So as a first step, I think a service should be offered for informal confidential advice to talk it out, before a complainant confront the person(s) concerned.</p> <p>There should be transparent and independent process for evaluating and assessing complaints whether they are specific work related, bullying or racism. I have noticed personally that if you complain to HR, nothing happens and there appears to be a robotic, pre-made answers to complains.</p> <p>Make the complaints more accessible</p>
	<p>Reporting</p>	<p>In my time at [University], I have unfortunately experienced situations where I felt my ethnic and cultural background influenced how I was treated by my supervisor. This created an environment where I felt undervalued and at times excluded. Such experiences not only affected my confidence and wellbeing but also made me more aware of how subtle and systemic racism can manifest within academic settings. To address these issues, I suggest [University]: Provide clearer, safer, and more accessible pathways for students to report experiences of racism or racial discrimination, especially when the person involved holds a position of authority. Offer stronger oversight and accountability mechanisms for supervisors and senior staff to ensure fair and respectful treatment of all students, regardless of their background. Expand training programs for academic staff on cultural competency, unconscious bias, and anti-racism, with regular refreshers rather than one-off workshops. Foster more open dialogue and support networks for international students and culturally diverse researchers, so they feel less isolated and more empowered to raise concerns. I believe these steps would help create a more inclusive and equitable environment, where students from all backgrounds can thrive without fear of discrimination.</p> <p>There should be more accountability across staff as well as better more transparent and co-designed processes and frameworks to address and prevent, and ensure there are safe and supportive avenues for reporting that also involve representation rather than teams solely made up of white Australians making decisions on behalf of others.</p> <p>introducing confidential reporting and climate surveys to uncover hidden discrimination.</p>

		I think [University] is doing some great things already, however there are always a few issues and people who cause issues. Identify individual trouble-makers and provide a case-by-case assessment, intervention, on-going maintenance, and review of them.
	Punishment and rehabilitation of racist staff and students	<p>HoS need cultural training and to be fired if not supporting diverse staff.</p> <p>There are extremely racist administrative staff and students. [University] staff really need cultural sensitivity training because as a 'prestigious' university, this is completely unacceptable. There needs to be strict consequences for these individuals. Any racist jokes made by students in a tutorial should result in an immediate fail.</p> <p>There needs to be an invigilated exam about racism before any student can start studies which would understandably be hard to coordinate but needs to be done if we are see some change to racism at university level. More severe punishments should be handed out (with education about what they did wrong) for people who are racist.</p> <p>At policy level wise, have policies or program in place which encourage and support peaceful protests or demonstrations or events which support anti-racism / anti- discriminatory and celebrate multi racial or multi cultural views while actively banning, expelling, rehabilitating, or punishing people who hold hate/ white supremacists/ neo nazis/ racist/ extremist / far right views.</p> <p>Actively punish those who engage in racial discrimination, and create a diverse, mutually respectful and equal environment for the university.</p>
	Support	Having a non-white psychologist that students of diverse backgrounds can go to receive support about their experiences of racism and how to deal with it. Racism is always going to be a problem but having the support to deal with it will make a big difference in the lives of Black students
	Improve international student experience	They could improve the experience of international students, who often have to move without a strong safety net, by explaining the system more clearly. Providing better scholarships—or at least not cutting them off as soon as students submit their work while waiting for corrections—would help. Many cannot return home, still need to pay rent and bills, and find themselves in very precarious financial situations.

	Accountability	<p>Accountability must exist for staff or students who act in discriminatory ways.</p> <p>Support for international students – provide a dedicated channel for international students to report discrimination safely, with real accountability and follow-up.</p> <p>Addressing racism and strengthening inclusivity and equity requires a layered approach that is carefully managed at both the school and university leadership levels. This should not be treated as a short-term initiative but as part of a long-term plan supported by clear policies, accountability, and sustained investment. Effective strategies could include embedding inclusivity into recruitment, promotion, and leadership pathways; ensuring transparent processes so individuals are given opportunities based on their expertise and merit; and providing ongoing education and training to staff and students on unconscious bias and inclusive practices. Equally important is creating safe, accessible channels for reporting and addressing concerns, paired with visible follow-through and feedback so individuals feel heard and supported. Regular consultation with diverse staff and student groups can ensure that the strategy remains relevant and responsive to evolving needs. By combining policy, accountability, and cultural change, the university can move beyond symbolic gestures and ensure that inclusivity and equity are lived values across the institution.</p> <p>The [University] could address racism, particularly its latent or covert forms, by combining strong accountability with cultural change.</p> <p>One suggestion is to strengthen accountability and ensure that poor behaviour or bullying is not indirectly rewarded through generous exit arrangements. When staff who engage in unprofessional behaviour leave with attractive packages, it sends the wrong message to colleagues who work hard and uphold values of respect. Another area to improve is addressing bias—sometimes staff are judged more by their skin colour or language background rather than their skills and contributions. To foster true inclusivity, the University could not only implement ongoing training for managers and staff on recognising unconscious bias, but also putting in place fairer systems for assessing performance and contribution.</p>
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**Table 5.2. Challenges to anti-racism initiatives**

Theme	Sub-theme	Examples (description)	Illustrative quote
<b>Whiteness</b>	Reverse discrimination		<p>The typical way in which racism is experienced by me are the generalised statements that are commonly heard when referring to middle aged white males. There is frustration when trying to deal with these comments as any complaint of rebuke around this is met with dismissal. All too often people do not understand the disadvantage faced by individuals. In my case it is automatically assumed I have been exposed to advantage as a white male. However, I have mental illness, I come from an economically disadvantaged background etc. The racism that I experience is through the dismissal of my personal experience because I am white. I am automatically cast into a group of supremely advantaged rich white males born into privilege.</p> <p>As an older, heterosexual, white male, who was born in Australia I feel that I am representative of the benchmark to which all of people are compared when it comes to conversations about relative disadvantage. I find this offensive and</p>

			<p>inaccurate, as it is often accompanied by a pre-supposition that I had it easy compared to others. While I haven't experienced discrimination based on my ethnicity at [University] I have been racially vilified by people of different cultural backgrounds both in Australia and working overseas, even including when providing education and health services designed to help their communities, so racism is not limited as to who are its victims. ...But maybe it is me being oversensitive to the fact that they think others are inherently more deserving of opportunities and advancement than I am as that benchmark for comparison. Or because being older I'm not a long-term proposition. Whatever, your loss [University]. I do fully understand firsthand that for some people of diverse backgrounds have experienced racism, including my wife who was not born in Australia and for whom English is a second language, and my son-in-law who was a refugee displaced by religious persecution and war in [redacted], and my step-Grandfather who was born in Australia but of [redacted] ethnicity. I also think that what was done to our First Nation's peoples was appalling. But strategies that are devised to increase representation based on quotas rather than merit are not the answer and only play into the hands of those who are genuinely racist or otherwise intolerant of people of diverse backgrounds, whatever they may be.</p>
	Reverse racism		<p>Remember that there is reverse racism for white non-Indigenous staff that continually get put down for their white English heritage by Australian First Nations peoples.</p> <p>Furthermore, I have witnessed and been a target of racism against people who look European. The repeated use of rhetoric such as "all white people are racist" by some students from Asian, Indigenous, Middle Eastern, and African backgrounds is both disappointing and hurtful. As someone who is biracial, it is especially concerning to see this type of broad, racist generalisation go unchallenged by both students and staff.</p>
		Intersections between gender, age and racial discrimination	<p>1. A student from an [redact name] culture has discriminated against me, as an Australian female teacher. He was quite sure he was correct always and dismissive/belittling of my authority and conversation with him, on how to better work as a nursing student. In his eyes "He was always correct" a very challenging situation during clinical placement experience. 2. At times I feel that due to my age, 63years, I am discriminated against from staff. I have lots of experience in nursing and education and still fit and healthy. Some roles have been given to younger staff without experience that I have. Some years ago, a younger staff member (not at [University]) when I was in my mid 50s, said to me "you're old, when are you going to retire" 3. Discrimination is not only racial but very much age related</p> <p>As a new lecturer, my early employment experience was negatively impacted by racism I encountered in the workplace. On one occasion, a senior staff member, who is from a minority background, made a stereotypical and disrespectful comment about "white, blonde-haired students with high ponytails," accompanied by mocking gestures of flicking her ponytail, impersonating the students. While directed at students, this description also applied to me and others present in the meeting. I felt insulted, uncomfortable, and undermined by this remark. As a senior and experienced lecturer, this colleague should have been modelling professionalism and demonstrating respect for all staff and students, regardless of background.</p>
	Teaching whiteness studies and critical theory		<p>Lecturers should remember to take care when discussing issues relating to Whiteness theory and white privilege. Whilst critical discussion around these issues and theories is an important part of many Humanities units, the tone should always be professional and respectful. On a few occasions, I have witnessed lecturers slipping into more informal and aggressive language during their lectures which risks alienating students from European/White Australian backgrounds who may be new to these ideas and feel attacked and/or isolated. This is particularly true for pre-recorded lectures, which often lack additional context and nuance because students are not able to discuss the lecture in real-time.</p>

	White shame	Feeling ashamed to be white and/or Australian	I feel ashamed to be white and or Australian at [University] which is wrong.
	White privilege	People acknowledging their white privilege	<p>Asking Australian staff with European/Australian backgrounds if they have experienced racism is not appropriate and will skew your results. The privileges we enjoy from the systems and cultural and social structures designed for our benefit should be challenged for the benefit of those who the systems and structures disadvantage.</p> <p>Whilst not explicitly experiencing it myself; frankly, I cannot experience it given my ancestry and ethnicity as a white person, I think to not say or answer that there would still be some underlying, subtle or unintentional racism embedded in almost any institution in Australia, would be to be resting on your laurels and patting yourself on the back. Racism is pervasive and permeates throughout all facets of life, and often in places and ways we think it doesn't, which is how it festers. Whilst I appreciate the opportunity to be surveyed and whilst it is important to get the broad spectrum of results for comparisons of experience to support a greater push for erasing racism, my answers won't be the ones that paint the picture. Of course I, as a white, hetero male, feel safe, included, not threatened or watched or judged. I do however hope this survey informs a powerful body with great push and passion to end racism in all our institutions of education and beyond.</p> <p>As a white male I am very aware of my privilege.</p> <p>I realise I hold a position of privilege as a white educated woman. I am conscious of providing an inclusive learning environment for my diverse students and calling it out when I see colleagues using racial stereotypes. I have on occasion been treated rudely and disrespectfully by male international students, but I sense this is more related to gender than race. I have a hearing impairment so sometimes I struggle with strong accents, which I hope isn't interpreted racially by students. Overall, I think our uni works hard at being inclusive and does a good job of it.</p>
	Social Exclusion	A sense of social exclusion because of language spoken in groups	This is reverse racism where staff of Asian or Indian descent exclude Anglo Saxons in social occasions and talk in their own language around others who don't understand. Don't care if it's at lunchtime but not work!!!