

Q&As

1. Why do we need targeted programs and supports for Black students?

Targeted programs and support programs are common across Canada, because it is **well researched and documented** that Black peoples are among the groups in Canada who, for reasons of profound bias and inequities in society, have not had equal opportunity to access employment, education and other social determinants of economic prosperity and social mobility. Many qualified and competitive prospective Black learners and student-athletes are less able to access higher education – not because they are not capable or competitive but because they may not have the financial means due to circumstances of systemic inequities. As well, student services and academic units recognize the need to broaden the diversity of advisors and mentors and to improve their understanding of social and cultural realities of Black students, including the experiences of racism and how those affect personal health and well-being as well as academic opportunities and success.

2. What about programs and supports for non-Black students?

Targeted programs and supports for Black students do not take away from the many other existing programs and supports that are available to a diversity of students.

3. Aren't targeted programs and supports for Black students and scholars a form of reverse racism?

The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Human Rights Act have long clearly stated that programs or supports put in place to ameliorate/remediate the effects of inequities for particular social groups **are not discriminatory**¹. Racism refers to the adverse effects of inequities which have been systemically imbedded in our social institutions and which lead to unequal access and opportunity to groups of peoples).

4. What is systemic racism?

While explicit racial prejudice and bigotry exist, frequently discrimination happens unintentionally through micro-aggressions – everyday behaviours that individuals do not realize are harmful, but which inadvertently communicate indignities and slights that accumulate to create an unwelcoming culture and poisoned environment. These micro-aggressive behaviours result from unconscious biases and stereotypes people hold, having been socialized with misinformation about racialized communities. When racial biases inform and become imbedded in institutional policies and practices, organizational structures, and the culture, they create systems that are inequitable – this is systemic racism.

¹ The Ontario Human Rights Commission has published a guidebook entitled: [Special Programs and the Ontario Human Rights Code](#) (2010/2013), which describes what and how permissible “special programs” may be developed by organizations. Specifically, under Section 14 of the Code, “it is not discrimination to put in place a program if it is designed to: relieve hardship or economic disadvantage; help disadvantaged people achieve, or try to achieve, equal opportunity, or help eliminate discrimination” (OHRC, 2013, p. 3).

5. What resources are available if I experience retaliation for speaking about anti-Black racism?

Anti-Black racism is a community problem that requires community education and a reminder to adhere to University policies (Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities as well as the Discrimination and Harassment Policy) and the laws of the land (Human Rights Code and Criminal Code of Canada), which prohibit harassment, discrimination, and violence. It is the responsibility of the University to ensure that Black students, scholars and staff have supports and that efforts to address racism are not met with retaliation. Community members are encouraged to contact the Equity and Inclusion Office (equity@mcmaster.ca) to consult on or disclose any retaliation they experience or become aware of in person or online.

6. I'm nervous about causing more harm because I'm not Black and need to learn more. What should I do?

Self-education is essential. It is important for non-racialized persons to show humility – to appreciate the limitations of not knowing what it feels like to experience racism and to be open to learning new perspectives and information that has not been part of their awareness and education to date. It is important to lead with empathy and compassion when asking questions or responding to situations. McMaster expects respect for human rights and dignity for all members of the community.

7. What do I tell prospective students who may have questions about the climate at McMaster?

McMaster is committed to supporting fostering a culture of respect and responsibility. The University will continue to undertake reviews and climate studies to better understand the experiences of the diverse campus community and to improve on our policies and programs. We will ask difficult questions and be bold in our approaches to solutions. This is an opportune time to join McMaster, to help shape a future for the University that embraces inclusive excellence – a future that recognizes that our diversity is essential to our excellence.

8. Who should I contact if I require support, education or more information?

African and Caribbean Faculty Association of McMaster (ACFAM) – support and mentorship – acfam@mcmaster.ca

- **Juliet Daniel**, Co-Chair & Professor Biology
 - **Bonny Ibhawoh**, Co-Chair & Professor History
 - **Jamal Deen**, Hon. Co-Chair, & Distinguished Professor Engineering
 - **Daniel Coleman**, Hon. Co-Chair & Professor English & Cultural Studies
 - **Lydia Kapiriri**, Lead, Black Student Mentorship Program & Associate Professor Health, Aging & Society
- Please also refer to the [African & African Diaspora Studies website](#) for a list of additional ACFAM members*

Student Affairs – student access, career support, academic success

- Senior Advisor Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism, **Clare Warner**, avpstudents@mcmaster.ca
- Student Success, Diversity Employment Coordinator, **Katherine Hesson-Bolton**, careeraccess@mcmaster.ca
- Student Wellness, Counsellor, **Carla Glanville**, wellness@mcmaster.ca
- Registrar's Office, Student Services Team Lead, **Faith Ogunkoya**, uyinmwef@mcmaster.ca

Equity and Inclusion Office – consultation, education, disclosure, support, complaint intake) equity@mcmaster.ca

- Senior Human Rights Officer, **Marla Brown**,
 - discrimination and harassment consultation, disclosure support, and complaint intake
- Manager, Inclusion and Anti-Racism Education Program, **Khadijeh Rakie**,
 - education, training, discussion groups

Human Resources Services

- Employment Equity Specialist, **May-Marie Duwai-Sowa**, hr.empequity@mcmaster.ca