



BLG AFFILIATED ORGANISATION
CASE STUDY SERIES 2024

CASE STUDY **JISC'S ANTI-RACISM MANIFESTO**



"My hope is that our anti-racism manifesto will help everyone at Jisc gain a better understanding of race, and through that understanding people will have the confidence to talk about race and challenge language or behaviours that don't match our principles.

We've achieved tremendous progress in shifting from a non-racist to an actively anti-racist organisation. Launching our anti-racism manifesto is another paramount milestone on our journey; one which fills me with great pride about what we have accomplished and excitement about what's to follow."

Heidi Fraser-Krauss, CEO, Jisc

Since becoming the first national organisation to affiliate with the Black Leadership Group, Jisc has achieved tremendous progress in shifting from a non-racist to an actively anti-racist organisation. We have acknowledged that mainstream equity, diversity and inclusion practices often fail to weave anti-racism within organisational cultures. Beyond striving to sift everything we do through an anti-racist lens, we deliver dedicated anti-racism initiatives, sponsored by our CEO, to ensure that we combat structural racism within the organisation and inspire our partners to do the same.

Since 2021, Jisc has taken a holistic approach to embedding anti-racism. Initially, we invested in building relationships and trust across our workforce in anticipation of having honest conversations about lived experiences within Jisc. Our Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Consultant and other senior leaders dedicated time to get to know people, actively listen to their experiences without judgement or providing quick 'fixes', and truly signal their commitment to creating an anti-racist culture within Jisc. Once those relationships were built, we invited external consultants to create a safe space for our colleagues of colour to discuss their lived experiences and help us identify the areas where Jisc could work to make a positive difference. Combined with feedback from our annual employee engagement survey, we were able to create 5 focus areas:

1. Enhance the diversity of our talent
2. Reinforce messaging on employee data to increase disclosure rate
3. Establish a cultural framework for Jisc which includes short and long-term goals
4. Advance conversations about race and inclusion
5. Empower management to take accountability for inclusion and equip them with the skills and confidence to handle conversations about race and inclusion

Since then, we have focussed our efforts on making progress in each of those areas:

- We have engaged with external experts to equip people across the organisation to take an anti-racist approach in their areas including our employee network co-chairs, mental health first aiders, executive leadership and members of our Board of Trustees. A series of pledges were made by our executive leadership and employee network co-chairs to embed anti-racism and inclusion.
- We revamped and launched our diversity and inclusion monitoring form with the support of our CEO, leading to a 30% increase in disclosure a year after launch.
- We organised a 'leading for anti-racism' masterclass for our internal leadership programme and partnered with external experts to deliver a conscious inclusion programme for Jisc's senior leaders.
- We launched our anti-racism and racial equality employee network which met with our CEO to

discuss the results of their engagement survey and agree actions.

- We have increased the representation of people of colour in our workforce and launched early careers opportunities for Black people through #10000BlackInterns.
- We developed and launched our anti-racism manifesto.

About our manifesto

Being an actively anti-racist organisation is the right thing to do – everyone should be able to bring all their skills, talent and experience to work without facing discrimination.

Our anti-racism manifesto is a demonstration of our efforts to eliminate systemic racism from Jisc. It is our beacon for commitment and action and hosts a whole lot of information – from defining common terms, experiences and barriers to addressing racism, to outlining our commitment, expectations and next steps to becoming an actively anti-racist organisation. The focal point of our manifesto is our underpinning anti-racism statement:

“It is expected that all individuals and agency workers adopt an anti-racist stance at Jisc. This refers to promoting racial equality and opposing racism in all its forms. Furthermore, it is expected that all individuals will identify areas in which systematic racism is present and contribute to its dismantling, with the support of HR, employee networks, and executive leaders.

Individuals co-chairing employee networks shall ensure all networks are operating in an anti-racist way.”

What we have learned

Conversations about racism are rarely easy or comfortable. In drafting our anti-racism manifesto, we were prepared that uncovering pockets of frustration or resistance. We also knew that these conversations would shine a light on our unknown unknowns which would challenge some of our assumptions about our culture and people's lived experience within the organisation.

What supported us to navigate this journey is, on paper, simple but often difficult to materialise. Leading with courage, empathy and active listening has provided the psychologically safe backdrop for us to not resist any discomfort or vulnerability, but instead embrace them. By engaging in a bottom-up and top-down approach simultaneously, we achieved a sense of security that enabled our staff to be honest and open, knowing that their experiences and views would be listened to and valued. In turn, our senior leadership put the effort to create time and space for those conversations to happen while their power, bias and assumptions.

Most importantly, our commitment has gone beyond words into tangible action. We never want to disillusion our workforce, and for something as important as anti-racism to sit on a shelf. We pride ourselves in our "you said, we did" culture. We have kept our communication channels with our colleagues across the business open. As we have shown above, when we identify challenges or opportunities, we work together to create solutions. We take risks and acknowledge that even when they don't pay off, they are still a worthwhile endeavour to learn, recalibrate, and try again.

Our advice to anyone reading is to be bold. Don't shy away from starting a conversation because you are scared of where it may lead. Once people feel genuinely listened to and involved, you will be surprised by the level of dedication and commitment which colleagues will bring forth to make a positive difference.

Going forward

Launching our anti-racism manifesto has been a tremendous achievement. However, it is only a springboard for us to take further action and stretch ourselves even further. We continue to remain curious, restless and proactive, and are constantly seeking ways to bring the manifesto to life across Jisc.

Our focus remains on diversifying and retaining great talent who represent the communities we serve. Despite greater diversity across our workforce, we continue to experience an underrepresentation of people of colour at senior leadership. We are taking an inward and outward approach to mitigate this. We are working towards identifying talent across the business with the aspiration and potential to lead so that we can unlock the right opportunities. We are leveraging opportunities to provide leadership development programmes for colleagues of colour, dedicated mentoring, and coaching to support their career aspirations. Externally, we are reviewing our recruitment practices, strategy and communications to ensure that we attract a diverse talent pool and we are well equipped to bring them on board.

Our anti-racism manifesto comes to life when it is engaged with and behaviours and understanding change. Over the next few months, our senior leaders, with the support of our D&I Consultant and Human Resources colleagues, will be working on contextualising the manifesto to their directorates and identify their own set of focus areas where positive differences towards anti-racism can be made.

We have set an ambitious set of targets (quantitative and cultural) and milestones to drive our future. We can confidently say that even if we don't always get it right, we have created and maintained significant momentum, and a strong sense of accountability which ensures that anti-racism never becomes a tick-box exercise in Jisc.



Contact Details

To affiliate or for further information,
please email exec@blackleadershipgroup.com