



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SYDNEY

# Our commitment to anti-racism

Supplementary resources

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# Our commitment to anti-racism

## Supplementary resources

The Anti-Racism Statement supplements ongoing efforts by the University to promote a deeper understanding of racism and its harmful impacts. The Statement has been developed in collaboration with many students and staff, including the National Centre for Cultural Competence and representatives from the Mosaic Staff Network, the Sydney Law School, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, Diversity and Inclusion, the Student Representative Council, the Sydney University Chinese Students' Association, the Australasian Union of Jewish Students, the Sydney University Muslim Association among many others. The Statement was unanimously endorsed by the Academic Board, a decision affirmed by the University Senate on 28 July.

The Statement speaks to the University's aspiration to stand against racist ideas and practices within the University, but also our obligation to uphold the principle of freedom of speech and academic freedom. As an academic institution, we have a responsibility to be open to diverse views and opinions and to foster a greater understanding of these issues in the community. In addition to the Statement, some supplementary guides, developed by the Working Party drafting the Statement, offer a selection of relevant material and debates around specific forms of racism. These serve as pathways to understanding contemporary manifestations of racism and discrimination for those interested in further detail.

### The Australian context:

There are Federal laws to protect people from discrimination and from breaches of their human rights. [\*\*The Racial Discrimination Act 1975\*\*](#) promotes equality before the law for all people regardless of race, colour, or national or ethnic origin. It is unlawful to discriminate against people on the basis of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin. [\*\*The International Covenant on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination 1965\*\*](#) is the progenitor of Australia's Racial Discrimination Act. The [\*\*Australian Human Rights Commission\*\*](#) offers additional resources on understanding racism in Australia. The University of Sydney is a proud supporter of the Commission's campaign [\*\*Racism. It Stops With Me.\*\*](#)

Although racism is commonly framed by antagonism to people from different cultures, and ethnicities, in colonial contexts such as Australia, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand and the USA, racism has also been fundamental to the experience of First Nations peoples. The legacy of colonisation, dispossession and racist ideas and attitudes that underpinned these processes for Australia's First Nations peoples is still evident in high rates of chronic disease, imprisonment and many other indices of social disadvantage. Addressing contemporary racism in Australia has to involve an understanding of the factors that have shaped and continue to shape the lives of Indigenous Australians.

Racism is also evident in attitudes, practices and policies with respect to people from many other ethnicities and cultures. Racism can be amplified, masked, configured or displaced by intersections with other forms of discrimination such as those based on age, disability, religion, gender and sexuality and other grounds as outlined in the university's anti-racism statement. The [\*\*Anti-Discrimination Act 1977\*\*](#) (NSW)

protects people against these forms of discrimination in certain circumstances. It explicitly prohibits any public act that could incite hatred, serious contempt or severe ridicule towards people of a particular race or on the basis of their religious beliefs, affiliations or activities. The Australian Human Rights Commission offers further information on intersectionality in its [2022 National Anti-Racism Framework Scoping Report](#), as does the United Nations Network on Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, [Guidance Note on Intersectionality, Racial Discrimination and Protection of Minorities](#). More commonly, racism involves antagonism to people from 'foreign' cultures and ethnicities and some of the most prevalent forms of racism have been characterised as antisemitism, Islamophobia and xenophobia. These are contentious areas in contemporary culture. Below are some guides to some of these current definitions and debates. The University presents these for information and education purposes but does not endorse them.

## Antisemitism:

There are several definitions and debates which serve as valuable guides to understanding antisemitism. As with Islamophobia and xenophobia below, antisemitism is a form of racism that amalgamates all members of a community into one group and treats common social, cultural and religious differences as if they are innate.

One of the most widely used definitions of antisemitism is the non-legally binding working definition produced by the [International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance](#) (IHRA). The general definition is accompanied by illustrative examples of antisemitism.

The [European Commission](#) also offers useful commentary on antisemitism, drawing on the principles of the IHRA definition.

There is, however, debate about the IHRA definition, and the accompanying examples, despite the fact that it has been adopted by many universities in the United Kingdom, the European Commission, the Australian Government and a number of other Australian universities. There are a number of critics, including Jewish scholars and others working in Israeli institutions, who have argued that the IHRA definition and accompanying examples are unduly restrictive of academic freedom, particularly the right to criticise the state of Israel.

Although the IHRA rejects these criticisms as unfounded, arguing that there are adequate protections in the IHRA definition for academic freedom in their definition, in this context of principled debate two qualifying statements, [proposed by the UK Home Affairs Select Committee](#) have been adopted by a number of universities. These institutions consider these as useful supplements in relation to the IHRA definition to further safeguard academic freedom. These qualifications are:

- It is not antisemitic to criticise the government of Israel, without additional evidence to suggest antisemitic intent.
- It is not antisemitic to hold the government of Israel to the same standards as other liberal democracies, or to take a particular interest in the Israeli government's policies or actions, without additional evidence to suggest antisemitic intent.

Another useful resource for understanding antisemitism, developed by a number of critics of the IHRA definition and one focused more on protecting the freedom to criticise the state of Israel and the Israeli government, is the [Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism](#).

## Islamophobia:

In its report 'Sharing the Stories of Australian Muslims', the Australian Human Rights Commission provides a helpful guidance on Islamophobia in an Australian context. Islamophobia has been defined as a form of racism that 'amalgamates all Muslims into one group and treats characteristics associated with Muslims (violence, misogyny, political allegiance/disloyalty, incompatibility with Western values) as if they are innate'. The working definition of Islamophobia by the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on British Muslims states it 'is rooted in racism and is a type of racism that targets expression of Muslimness or perceived Muslimness'. This APPG working definition, has received widespread support and adoption from the Muslim community in the United Kingdom and overseas since its proposal. In providing that 'Islamophobia' is rooted in racism, the definition does not suggest that Muslims are a race. Instead, it suggests that Muslim communities often encounter anti-Muslim discrimination, vilification and hatred in ways that are akin to the experience of racism.

For another useful commentary on experiences of Islamophobia see this report: [https://researchoutput.csu.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/208330970/Islamophobia\\_Report\\_3\\_2022\\_LR\\_Spreads\\_RA.pdf](https://researchoutput.csu.edu.au/ws/portalfiles/portal/208330970/Islamophobia_Report_3_2022_LR_Spreads_RA.pdf)

## Anti-Asian:

Anti-Asian racism, is a particular form of xenophobia that has been prevalent in Australia, given the significant numbers of citizens, residents and students from Asian backgrounds in Australia. It refers to historical and ongoing discrimination, negative stereotyping, and injustice experienced by peoples of Asian origin, based on others' assumptions about their ethnicity and nationality. The Asian population is a diverse group that comprises individuals from multiple national origins and languages. Despite this diversity, Asian communities have reported a shared experience of discrimination. Peoples of Asian origin are subjected to specific overt and subtle racist tropes and stereotypes at individual and systemic levels, which lead to their ongoing social, economic, political, and cultural marginalisation, disadvantage, and unequal treatment.

Two recent papers exploring Anti-Asian racism can be found here: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ajs4.176>  
<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/11/5/227>

## Xenophobia:

There are many other forms of xenophobia, some of which we have seen in Australia in recent decades, especially with respect to people from African and Middle Eastern backgrounds, although it can operate with respect to anyone or any group seen to be foreign. As we know, many of those considered foreigners may be from families that have been in Australia for a number of generations. Xenophobia is characterised by a fear, prejudice, or hatred of people based on the perception that they are outsiders or foreigners within the community which include behaviours that seek to harass, vilify and discriminate. Another common manifestation of xenophobia is criticism of immigrants and immigration policies. Opposition to immigration can have legitimate

or non-racist justifications, such as a desire to safeguard national borders during a pandemic or because of concerns that the resource base of a country or region is unable to sustain an increase in population. Anti-immigrant attitudes, however, may be grounded in racist attitudes, which identify immigrants from particular countries, regions or ethnicities as undesirable.

See also <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1368430220983470>

## Reporting racial discrimination

If you need to report an incident of racial discrimination call our confidential helpline, [1800 SYD HLP \(1800 793 457\)](tel:1800793457).

If you're feeling unsafe on campus or you're concerned for the safety of others, call Campus Security on 02 9351 3333 24 hours a day. Security patrol officers can assist by escorting you from a building to your vehicle, to the local bus stop or to the local railway station.

Students can also access [Student Wellbeing](#) for support, and staff can contact [Employee Assistance Program](#) at any time.



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