



Anti-Racism Policy

2023-2027

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1. THE LIR ANTI-RACISM POLICY STATEMENT

This Anti-Racism Policy anchors The Lir National Academy of Dramatic Art's commitment to becoming an anti-racist organisation.

We recognise that racism is systemic in our society. To play our part in dismantling this, and to be fully responsible to our students and staff, it is essential that The Lir commit to positive action in this regard.

This Policy commits The Lir to the promotion of anti-racism, equity, and diversity across all our activities. We will identify and implement initiatives across the entire range of the Academy's activities: from staff and student recruitment, to reviewing and amending the content of our curricula; from production choices, and the composition of creative teams, to putting structures in place which will respond appropriately to racist incidents.

2. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

In June 2020 The Lir established a Black Lives Matter (BLM) Forum, with representation across The Lir community: including students, graduates, and teaching staff. The Forum was chaired by Board member Eleanor Methven, who also chairs The Lir's Gender & Equality Subcommittee. The BLM Forum was initiated in response to requests from students and graduates, following the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, that The Lir do more than issue a pro forma statement in support the Black Lives Matter Movement. The Forum's conviction was that, because racism is pervasive in Western society, and systemic to all institutions, however well-meaning educational organisations may be, lip-service was no longer sufficient. Racism must be formally named, confronted, and The Lir be proactive in becoming a truly anti-racist organisation. It was agreed from the outset that the Forum maintain a majority of Black and Global Majority members. This was achieved by extending an invitation to all graduates identifying as such. By way of acknowledgement, and thanks for their significant input to the development of this Policy, the membership of the BLM Forum is included in Appendix 1 below.

The forum first convened via Zoom, due to the pervading public health conditions, in June 2020. Over a series of subsequent meetings, the Forum members were most generous with their time, and invaluable testimony, as they shared their experiences of studying at The Lir. This opened a discussion about what we in The Lir could do to become a more welcoming place for Black and Global Majority students and staff. Four central pillars of this Policy were agreed, as outlined in detail below, and working groups were established to consider actions

that might be taken under each pillar. This information was then brought to the Forum for further discussion. Professional input was also received from consultant Dr Eburn Joseph from the Institute of Antiracism and Black Studies. The results of all this careful work are now manifest in this Policy.

3. KEY PRINCIPLES AND PILLARS

a) Statement of Intent

We believe that, as the National Academy of Dramatic Art, we have a responsibility to reflect the nation back at itself, in all its diversity.

We aim to be a school of international reputation, which welcomes and is attractive to a globally diverse student population.

We want The Lir to be somewhere potential applicants from every background can be confident of a safe, inclusive, nurturing environment; in which they can envisage themselves learning, thriving, and achieving their full potential.

We want to provide all our students with the opportunity to bring their full authentic selves to their training, and to see their own experiences and heritage reflected in the work that they do and make at The Lir.

We will endeavour to make our faculty as diverse as possible: that we will provide role models for our students, irrespective of their ethnicity and/or identity.

We will put processes and structures in place to reassure our students and staff that they will be heard and supported if they experience racism in word, deed, or attitude.

We will celebrate our considerable achievements in terms of diversity, equity, access and inclusion.

b) Key Policy Principles

This policy is designed to be:

Effective – so that it will have a positive impact on all students, staff, and visiting artists

Deliverable – so that we know we have the resources and capacity to make change a reality

Transparent – so that it is clear which actions we have committed to deliver

Measurable – so that we know our actions are making a difference against an agreed timeline

Enforceable – so that we can be held to account if this Policy is not implemented in full

c) Terminology

A decision was taken by the BLM Forum to adapt the positive, empowering, and accurate term “Black and Global Majority” throughout this Policy, and in all our work towards becoming an anti-racist organisation. Global Majority is a collective term that speaks to all people who identify as belonging to the Global Majority. It refers to people who are Black; Asian; Brown; of mixed-heritage; indigenous to the Global South, and/ or have been racialised as 'Ethnic Minorities'. This term includes Irish Travellers, whose ethnic minority status was publicly acknowledged by the Irish government in 2017.

d) “The Irish Context”

This Policy acknowledges the continued homogeneity of Irish society (wherein 93% of the population still identifies as ‘White Irish’), and the challenge this presents in terms of achieving meaningful diversity across our student population and faculty.

We are aware that the concept of ‘decolonising our curricula’ is complicated by the fact that Ireland itself was colonised. We are cognisant that our curricula draw heavily on structures, Playwrights and their texts (including Shakespeare, Chekhov etc) from countries where issues of colonialism, and particularly the historical legacy of enslavement, are yet to be fully deconstructed and historically revisioned.

We must encompass issues particular to contemporary Irish society, including the continuing racism directed towards Irish Travellers, and the injustices and significant inadequacies of the Direct Provision system.

e) Intersectionality

This Policy acknowledges the diverse and heterogeneous nature of the Black and Global Majority community, that individuals within that community may experience compound

discrimination and simultaneous intersecting forms of oppression, and therefore this policy should be viewed in the context of the other policies addressing equality, diversity and inclusion at The Lir including but not limited to the Gender Equality, Disability, and Dignity & Respect Policies. The Lir's existing Policies are outlined in Section 12 below.

f) The Four Pillars of our Anti-Racism Policy

We will enshrine a culture of active anti-racism across The Lir by focusing on four foundational pillars:

- We will act to further **diversify our student population** against transparent, measurable targets.
- We will take affirmative action to promote **diversity in our staff, including teaching staff.**
- We will engage in a facilitated process to review our current courses with a view to **decolonising our curricula.**
- We will put in place **supportive structures to respond to racist incidents:** including micro aggressions, language, and texts: **as well as new processes to drive genuine cultural change** across the Academy, as outlined in Section 7 below.

The actions to be taken under each of these four pillars are outlined in full below.

4. DIVERSIFYING THE STUDENT POPULATION

The Lir is committed to creating a diverse student population. Acknowledging the Irish context in which we are situated, we realise we must be proactive to achieve this. Accepting that our application process should remain meritocratic (in order to ensure the most talented applicants continue to be offered places on our courses), we will prioritise achieving greater diversity in our applicant pool. Thus, we must also acknowledge and address any existing barriers to entry, which may discourage potential applicants from diverse backgrounds. To achieve these ambitions, we will prioritise the following activities:

a) Access and Outreach Department

- The Lir will appoint a Director of Equality & Access in early 2023

- This new member of the senior management team will lead the establishment of an outreach department, to be tasked with achieving The Lir’s ambition to further diversify our student population
- The outreach department will work with the development department to fundraise for an ongoing programme of outreach and access activities, as outlined below

b) Programme of Outreach Activities

- The access and outreach department will deliver a programme of talks, workshops, open days, and other outreach activities; which will be specifically designed to remove barriers to access, and to engage young people from diverse backgrounds with the opportunities available to them in The Lir.
- In doing so, we will prioritise working in secondary schools with diverse student populations.
- We will prioritise working with schools which have a high proportion of Black and Global Majority students; and with those from socially deprived backgrounds, including DEIS schools.
- We will develop an outreach programme in partnership with community and youth groups working with Black and Global Majority young people.
- We will offer outreach programmes to young people in the Direct Provision system.
- We will offer outreach programmes to Irish Traveller youth groups.
- We will work with professional theatre and film organisations which already have outreach initiatives in place.
- We will expand our Diversity Ambassadors Programme in order to facilitate talks and outreach activities led by our Black and Global Majority graduates. In doing so, our Diversity Ambassadors become role models for future applicants – “if you can see it, you can be it.”

c) An Enhanced Welcome

- Whilst being mindful of avoiding tokenism, and the exploitation of people in order to merely virtue-signal, we will celebrate our growing diversity by featuring our Black and Global Majority students and graduates in our publicity materials. By doing so, we will send the message that The Lir welcomes applications from all racial and ethnic identities.
- We will make the information with regard to financial assistance more visible on our website and during our application process: we will also highlight our Application Fee Waiver Initiative.
- We will introduce Black and Global Majority applicants to current Black and Global Majority students, and to our Diversity Ambassadors, who can answer relevant questions or concerns about studying at The Lir.
- In acknowledgement that some of our students are studying in their second language, we will facilitate activities that celebrate the linguistic diversity of the

Academy: and we will ensure our seminar discussions and assessment processes acknowledge the extra effort that is required from some international students.

d) Encourage More International Applications

- We will provide assistance to international applicants with regard to Ireland's onerous visa application processes.
- We will target our marketing to attract international applications from as diverse an application pool as possible.
- In acknowledgement of the frequent intersection between racial and ethnic identity and social deprivation, we will extend the eligibility criteria of our Student Bursary Scheme to allow non-EU students to qualify for financial support from The Lir for the first time.
- We will fundraise towards an international scholarship for Black and Global Majority students.
- We will remove the need for Master of Fine Arts applicants to provide a financial plan with their application, which was identified by members of the BLM Forum as a barrier to application.
- We will schedule an online open day to facilitate international applicants: this will include separate sessions aimed at Black and Global Majority applicants, and at any low-income applicants.

e) Measure progress against concrete targets

- We will set measurable and achievable targets towards developing a more diverse application pool.
- We will use information available from the CSO's national census to help set these targets.
- To facilitate this process, we will utilise the ethnicity identifiers used by the CSO in our application processes, so that we can measure progress over time, and benchmark ourselves against national demographic statistics.
- We will devise ethnicity identifiers acceptable to international applicants, which facilitate the accurate expression of their racial identity.
- We will set ourselves targets for international applications against these identifiers.

5. DIVERSIFYING THE TEACHING AND ADMINISTRATION STAFF

The Lir firmly believes it is essential to achieve greater diversity among its staff. The Academy particularly recognises the positive educational and developmental benefits for Black and Global Majority students of having role models on the teaching staff. The initiatives outlined below acknowledge the relative homogeneity of the Irish theatre, TV, and film production sectors, and we aspire to mitigate against this.

To achieve further diversification of our teaching and administration staff, we will:

- Review the selection processes for all visiting Practitioners/Teachers, with a view to ensuring that racial diversity becomes an important consideration when appointing short-term teaching staff and creative teams.
- Complete a diversity audit of current full-time staff, to provide a base line against which we measure progress in the future.
- Devise a system for each individual course, which will gather data on the ethnicity of all visiting teacher staff and creative teams, with a view to quantifying progress over time.
- Take positive steps to encourage Black and Global Majority applications for all advertised teaching positions, including international applications, by stating our ambition to diversify our teaching staff in all job advertisements.
- Proactively identify, and meet with, Black and Global Majority professionals working in the Irish performing arts sector, to inform them of our ambition to further diversify our teaching staff: encouraging them to consider contributing to teaching at The Lir.
- Invite Black and Global Majority graduates to contribute to the teaching in the future.
- Utilise the opportunities presented by online learning to further diversify the pool of international artists and teachers available to teach at The Lir.
- Prioritise changes to the course timetables to facilitate such online teaching opportunities.

6. DECOLONISING OUR CURRICULA

We acknowledge that issues of decolonisation are complex, and that the process will require serious engagement over time. We will approach the process of decolonisation positively, acknowledging that we have much to gain by generating an appreciation and understanding of wider contexts; of contexts that fall outside the White Eurocentric theatrical canon's definitions of cultural value and legitimacy. We know from experience that some changes can be initiated quickly, and where possible we will initiate those changes without delay. We aim to realise our ambition of decolonising our curricula within two years by prioritising the following actions:

a) Formal review of existing curricula

- The Director of Equality & Access will lead the process when they are appointed in early 2023, in consultation with relevant teaching staff.
- We will engage with work already underway in Trinity College to re-examine the college's colonial legacy: including its connections to historic enslavement: and utilise the expertise and support available through the Trinity Inclusive Curriculum Project to help schools achieve a decolonisation of their curricula.
- We will draw on expertise and support available from international drama schools, especially RADA and the other schools in the UK, which have already begun this process.
- We will involve all Course Directors in the process of decolonisation, and provide support and training to Course Directors and Teachers to facilitate their engagement with the decolonisation process.
- We will devise a system, possibly utilising the existing BLM Forum or the proposed Student and Staff Council (as outlined in Section 7 below), to facilitate meaningful student engagement with the decolonisation process.
- We will implement a communications strategy around the process to ensure all stakeholders are kept informed at each stage.
- We will report annually on the process to the Equality & Diversity Committee (a sub-committee of the Board), as outlined in Section 8 below.
- We will implement changes immediately where possible, especially in response to strong proposals from staff and students.
- We will introduce more play scripts by Black and Global Majority Playwrights at all levels of our activities, including fully-produced graduate productions.
- We will continue the work begun by members of the BLM Forum to develop a database of texts by Black and Global Majority Playwrights, and those which include characters identified as Black and Global Majority.

b) Improved casting process

We will provide equity of opportunity for all Black and Global Majority acting students over the course of their training. To achieve this, we will:

- Provide all our acting students with the opportunity to utilise text, workshop, and improvisation to explore their authentic voice and culture throughout their training whilst acknowledging that the essence of a classically-trained actor is the ability to transform beyond themselves.
- We will create opportunities for our Black and Global Majority acting students to play full production roles within their own racial identity at least once in the final year of their training.

- We will create similar opportunities for Foundation Diploma, and 1st and 2nd year acting students, in projects and class work: including dialect classes, classical text classes, and the play-study project.
- To facilitate this process, we will invite all acting students to propose plays for consideration in advance of the texts being agreed: accepting there is no onus on the student to do so.
- We will draw on the database of plays by Black and Global Majority Playwrights, and featuring Black and Global Majority characters, referenced in Section 6 (a) above.
- We will promote the use of colour conscious casting¹.
- We will maximise the opportunities presented by colour-blind casting², particularly in classical text.
- We will never cast a White Actor in a part written to be played by a Black and Global Majority Actor.
- We will employ Black and Global Majority Dialect Coaches to work with acting students playing Black and Global Majority characters.
- We will employ Black and Global Majority hair and make-up designers to assist Black and Global Majority acting students.
- Black and Global Majority students will be given time to consider their casting offer before a play text is confirmed for production, if that choice of text proscribes their casting. For example, if there is only one role in the play written specifically for a South Asian Actor, and only one South Asian student in the class (thus constraining that person's options more than those of their fellow students); *in this instance alone*, that student may refuse the role on the grounds that they perceive the character's representation of their racial or ethnic identity as problematic.

7. RESPONDING TO RACIST INCIDENTS AND DRIVING REAL CHANGE

Their contributions to the BLM Forum made it a clear priority that our Black and Global Majority students have a trusted person to whom they can turn for support if they experience racist behaviours, attitudes or comments, including micro-aggression. Those providing this support should be cognisant of the difficulties faced by Black and Global Majority students, receive training on an ongoing basis, and be independent of the student's engagement with their course work. We will improve access to The Lir's existing Dignity & Respect processes, should a student decide to call-out racism.

¹ Colour Conscious Casting acknowledges the dimensions that Race can bring to a story, and in most cases, embraces them. In practice it means that, if Black and Global Majority Actors are cast in a role, then that Character is informed by the Actor's ethnicity. This differs from 'Colour-Blind Casting', which is the practice of Casting without considering the Actor's ethnicity or skin colour to be relevant to portrayal.

² is the practice of casting without considering the actor's ethnicity, skin colour, body shape, sex or gender.

We need to embed secure structures which will facilitate open debate; thus educating towards cultural change with regards to racism. We will do this with:

a) Better Support Structures

We will implement new structures to better support our Black and Global Majority students including:

- Our Director of Equality & Access will act as our Dignity & Respect Contact Person and may be approached by any student or staff member who has been the target of racist behaviour or language, including micro aggressions.
- The Director of Equality & Access will receive the diversity and inclusion training necessary to this role.
- We will also invite those of our Black and Global Majority graduates acting as Diversity Ambassadors to offer active support to current students.
- Working with the Student Counselling Service, we will devise a drop-in system which will give Black and Global Majority students direct access to an independent Counsellor, should they feel the need for additional support at any point during their training.

b) Improved Dignity & Respect Processes:

We will improve our Dignity & Respect processes to make it easier for students and staff to call out racism by:

- Completing a review of our Bullying & Harassment, and our Dignity & Respect Policies, in the context of this Anti-Racism Policy.
- Providing training for the Director of Equality & Access, in-house Counsellors and Diversity Ambassadors, around the implementation of our Bullying & Harassment and our Dignity & Respect Policies.
- Embedding dignity and respect workshops in all full-time curricula. These workshops will focus on how to utilise our Dignity and Respect and Bullying and Harassment Processes whilst studying in The Lir; and be so designed to, upon graduation, empower our students and graduates to become leaders and exemplars in terms of dignity and respect and anti-racist work practices, in their professional careers.
- Ensuring that all our policies and processes including Anti-Racism, Bullying & Harassment, and Dignity & Respect, are easily accessible on a newly dedicated student area on our website.

c) Formal Process for Facilitating Debate and Change

We want The Lir to be a place where open debate is encouraged, and progress is welcomed; and to initiate the cultural changes needed to become a genuinely anti-racist organisation. We will put a formal structure in place to facilitate this change as follows:

- Establish a Forum, which will improve dialogue across the Academy, and provide a platform for students and staff to formally raise issues or concerns.
- This Forum will provide a forum to discuss important issues including choice of texts, casting priorities, and how issues of identity and belonging can be better supported in the Academy.
- This Forum will be chaired by the Director of Equality & Access.

8. GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT

To ensure the effective delivery of this strategy The Lir will amend its formal governance structures and procedures as follows:

- We will appoint a Director of Equality & Access in early 2023. This new member of the senior management team will lead on the implementation of this policy and the delivery of the many initiatives outlined.
- The Lir is committed to further diversifying the composition of its Board by appointing at least one Black and Global Majority board member.
- Following Board approval of this policy document, The Lir will update its Strategic Plan, Code of Governance and other necessary documents to specifically reflect the goals outlined in this Policy.
- The Lir will change the name of its existing Gender and Diversity Committee to the Equality and Diversity (E&D) Committee. This will better represent the principles and objectives outlined in this policy, and our existing Gender Equality Policy.
- The E&D Committee, which is chaired by a member of the Board with an active interest and/or expertise in this area, will oversee the delivery of the targets and timelines set out in this Policy.
- To underline the priority afforded to the implementation of this policy, we will appoint a Black and Global Majority Chair of the E&D Committee.
- The Director of Equality & Access will present an annual report to the E&D Committee against the KPIs and timelines outlined Section 8 above.
- In turn, the E&D Committee will report formally to the Board on an annual basis on the implementation of this Policy.
- The E&D Committee will be comprised of key Board and staff members, and student representatives.

9. TOOLS AND SUPPORTS

We will prioritise ongoing training for staff and students to assure delivery of this Policy by:

- Delivering a workshop programme for all students and employees, examining issues of racism in the workplace and/or a school environment.
- Providing obligatory unconscious bias training for all teaching staff.
- Ensuring that all students and employees are aware of the statutory definition of bullying/harassment (including racist behaviour or language); that such behaviour is forbidden by law; that The Lir Academy has zero tolerance of the same; and has a formal Policy in place to address such behaviour.

10. INDUSTRY AND WIDER SECTORAL ISSUES

Given The Lir's position as the National Academy of Dramatic Art, and our desire to maximise the creative opportunities available to students post-graduation, we will cultivate collaboration with the professional sector to encourage greater diversity in theatre, film, and TV drama. The Lir will take initiative in this area in the following ways:

- Continue to advocate for improved opportunities for Black and Global Majority people working in the Irish theatre, film, and TV drama sectors.
- Continue to advocate through various means to ensure equality of opportunity or equal opportunities for Black and Global Majority people working in Irish theatre, film and TV drama.
- Instil in our graduates a passion for diversity and anti-racism, and an understanding of their ability to make change a reality.

11. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND TIMELINE

The commitments outlined in this Policy will be included in an implementation plan to be approved by the E&D Committee in February 2023. This implementation plan will itemise the actions to be taken to deliver each commitment and the agreed timeline for their delivery. The Director of Equality & Access will report to the committee against this timeline on an annual basis.

12. LINKS TO OTHER RELEVANT POLICIES

a) Harassment and Bullying Policy

The Lir already has a comprehensive Harassment and Bullying Policy in place, which is supported by Trinity College's Dignity and Respect Policy. Our Policy provides further protections to staff or students who experience harassment or bullying while working or studying at The Lir. Both policies confirm that harassment or bullying on the grounds of gender; marital status; race; ethnic origin; nationality; disability; religion; sexual orientation; age; or because a person has undergone or is undergoing gender reassignment; is not acceptable.

A copy of the Lir's Bullying and Harassment policy is available [here](#).

b) Gender Equality Policy

Following the #wakingthefeminists movement in 2016, The Lir published an ambitious Gender Equality Policy in June 2018. The implementation of this Policy has since been overseen by the Gender & Equality Committee, with reports against targets prepared on an annual basis. Our Gender Equality Policy served as a template for the development of this Anti-Racism Policy in terms of its structure and ambition, oversight and implementation.

Accepting how deeply rooted inequalities are, and acknowledging the intersectionality between gender bias and racism, it is important that our Anti-Racism and Gender Equality Policies are considered in tandem.

A copy of The Lir's Gender Equality policy is available [here](#).

c) Disability Policy

In our recently published Strategic Plan 2022-2026 we also committed to publishing a Disability Policy by June 2023. This will be an equal pillar in this suite of complementary policies, which is designed to ensure that all staff and students are treated with dignity and respect, and have equity of opportunity to achieve their full potential, whilst studying or working at The Lir.

d) Legislation and forthcoming National Action Plan Against Racism

This Policy is published in good faith in conformity with the requirements of the Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015, the Equal Status Acts 2000-2018, the Higher Education Authority Act 2022, and the Irish Human Rights Equality Commission (IHREC) Act 2014. The IHREC Act, in particular Section 42, requires public bodies to integrate a human rights and equality assessment into their strategic planning processes and outcomes and have a statutory duty under this Act to: eliminate discrimination, promote equality, and protect human rights of staff and service users. The Lir recognises that as at the publication date of this document (15 February 2023) the Criminal Justice (Incitement to Violence or Hatred and Hate Offences) Bill 2022 is currently before Dáil Eireann, a National Action Plan Against Racism is in development, and that this document may be subject to review.

13. APPENDIX 1: List of BLM Forum Members

Ebby O'Toole-Acheampong
Belleray Bertrand-Webb
Lian Coleman
Annabelle Comyn
Barry Conway
Thomas Conway
Loughlin Deegan
Vanessa Emme
LaurA Fajardo Castro
David Fawaz
Veronica Foo
Kwaku Fortune
Katie Halloran
David Horan
Sophie Lenglinger
Patrick Martins
Eleanor Methven (Chair)
Joy Nesbitt
Tierra Porter
Witt Tarantino
Michael Tient
Pai Treeratt

Administrative support: Ellen Murray