



## Racism and Discrimination- WHAT CAN YOU DO?

**Note: This guidance is an evolving document and we value your feedback. We have created this to provide our students with a suggested framework on how to manage situations where they experience racism, witness racism or where they themselves may exhibit racist behaviour either through ignorance or unconscious bias.**

### The difference between Covert Racism and Overt Racism

“Whereas overt racism assumed blatant and insidious forms, covert racism hides behind the façade of ‘politeness’, political correctness and expediency. Racially coded words and calls for racial blindness obfuscate the reality of this subtle, subversive, and often hidden form of racism. Covert racism, just like its twin overt racism, is neither innocent nor harmless.”- *Coates, Covert Racism in the USA and Globally*

Put simply, covert racism is a form of racial discrimination that is often concealed in society, disguised and subtle in contrast to overt racism which is public and apparent. Standing up in the face of injustice and discrimination is something that should be championed, and we hope that you will find this guidance for both covert and overt racism useful throughout your time at ICSM and beyond.

### What to do if you **experience** either covert and overt racism or discrimination

#### 1. **Seek Support**

Speak to someone to help build clarity and confidence to deal with situation. This should be someone you trust, feel comfortable with and that actively and patiently listens to you. Such as:

- A friend

And then we recommend escalating to:

- Your Personal Tutor
- The Senior Tutor
- FEO Welfare Team
- ICSMSU Welfare Team

#### 2. **Keep a record**

Record the details of:

- When?
- Where?
- Who else was there?
- What happened?

### **3. Challenge behaviour (if possible)**

If you feel able to, challenge the behaviour in a calm and non-confrontational approach (this is to ensure your safety should the situation escalate).

Focus on addressing the behaviour rather than the person- this is to prevent immediate defensiveness and escalating the situation.

### **4. Report the behaviour**

With the help of your personal tutor or senior tutor you can take your report forward.

*Reference:*

*BMA Medical School Charter to Prevent and Address Racial Harassment*  
<https://www.bma.org.uk/media/2030/bma-med-school-charter-implementation.pdf>

## What to do if you unknowingly **participate** in racism or discrimination

Although we may believe that we are not racist, many of us are waking up to the reality of our inherent racism. Instead of denying and fighting this, it is important to accept it and take it as an opportunity to educate ourselves. We will find ourselves in situations where our unconscious bias has offended someone. Therefore, we need to learn to actively fight this and take responsibility for our actions. This is a guide to help you in such situations.

### **1. Apologise**

- Make sure to apologise as soon as possible and do it in person. It is important for the other person to see your regret, a message is the easy way out.
- Do not mumble your apology, say it with confidence, use an open body language and make eye-contact. You want to make sure that your apology is effective and sincere.

### **2. Take responsibility**

- It is important that you take full responsibility for your actions, you must include awareness of your behaviour and explain why it was wrong.
- Do NOT say “sorry I hurt you” - this is an attempt to validate your comment by implying that the other person is at fault for their reaction. Instead replace this with “I’m sorry that I made a hurtful comment”.

### **3. Don’t get defensive**

- You may feel instinctive feelings of anger, fear or guilt rising up, which can cause a stress response that makes you defensive. But learn to put this away in your mind and instead realise that this as an opportunity you can grow from. Prove yourself to the person you have offended.

### **4. Growth mindset**

- Reflect on what was happened and choose to focus on why it occurred rather than your guilty feelings.
- Ask yourself in an objective manner
  - “Why did I feel the need to make this remark?”
  - “How can I make sure this doesn’t happen again?”
  - “How can I further educate myself about why my comment was offensive?”
- Remember that your racist remark doesn’t automatically make you a bad person, it is your subsequent actions that determines this.

### **5. Educate yourself**

- One of the most effective ways you can stop this from happening again is by committing to educating yourself. You can do this in whatever format you like; books, documentaries, speaking to people, articles, the options are endless.

- In fact, you might find it appropriate to ask the person you offended if they would be willing to help you broaden your knowledge. Ask them if they can point out racism in your behaviour.

*References:*

*How to apologise if you said something at work that's racist, sexist or offensive- Premack:*

*<https://www.businessinsider.com/how-to-apologize-at-work-microaggression-2018-7?r=US&IR=T#instead-recognize-the-implicit-bias-in-your-remark-3>*

*How to say 'I'm Sorry', whether you've appeared in a racist photo, harassed women or just plain screwed up- Leopold:*

*<https://theconversation.com/how-to-say-im-sorry-whether-youve-appeared-in-a-racist-photo-harassed-women-or-just-plain-screwed-up-107678>*

*How to apologise- Mind Tools:*

*<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/how-to-apologize.htm>*

*"How to be an Antiracist" by Ibram X. Kendi*

## What to do if you *witness* racism or discrimination

We can all be bystanders. Every day events unfold around us. At some point, we will register someone in danger. When this happens, we will decide to do or say something (and become an active bystander), or to simply let it go (and remain a passive bystander).

When we intervene, we are signalling that this behaviour is unacceptable. If such messages are constantly reinforced within our community, we can shift the boundaries of what is considered acceptable and problem behaviour can be stopped.

Before stepping in, try the ABC approach:

- **Assess for safety:** If you see someone in trouble, ask yourself if you can help safely in any way. Remember, your personal safety is a priority – never put yourself in danger
- **Be in a group:** It is safer to call out behaviour or intervene in a group however if your safety is guaranteed and you feel confident to challenge this yourself then intervene
- **Care for the victim:** Support them and empower them to report the incident

When it comes to intervening safely, remember the four Ds – direct, distract, delegate, delay.

### **1. Direct action**

- Call out negative behaviour, tell the person to stop and support the victim
- Do this as a group if you can. Don't aggravate the situation. Make sure your safety is guaranteed

### **2. Distract**

- Interrupt, start a conversation with the perpetrator to allow their potential target to move away or have friends intervene
- Or come up with an idea to get the victim out of the situation – tell them they need to take a call, or you need to speak to them; any excuse to get them away to safety

### **3. Delegate**

- If you don't have the confidence to speak out or you don't feel safe to do so, get someone else to step in. Any decent workplace or venue has a zero tolerance policy on harassment, so the staff should be able to help.

### **4. Delay**

- If the situation is too dangerous to challenge there and then (such as there is the threat of violence or you are outnumbered) walk away and find help

- Wait for the situation to pass then ask the victim later if they are okay and need further support
- Report it when it's safe to do so; either empower the victim or do it yourself – it's never too late to act

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**▶ Direct action**  
Directly intervene, for example, by asking the person to stop. Immediately act or call out negative behaviour, explaining why it is not OK.

**▶ Delay**  
Wait for the situation to pass and check in with individual. Take action at a later stage when you have had time to consider. It's never too late to act.

**Active Bystander Zone**  
The 4D's  
Strategies for intervention

**▶ Distraction**  
Indirectly intervene, for example, de-escalating by interrupting or changing the subject or focus. Useful where the direct approach may be harmful to the target or bystander.

**▶ Delegation**  
Inform a more senior member of staff, for example, your Head of Department, Director or Manager. Use someone with the social power or authority to deal with it.

For further information please contact Su Nandy at [s.nandy@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:s.nandy@imperial.ac.uk) or visit the website [www.imperial.ac.uk/active-bystander](http://www.imperial.ac.uk/active-bystander)

*References:*

*Imperial College London- Training workshops:*  
<https://www.imperial.ac.uk/engineering/staff/human-resources/active-bystander/>

*The Active Bystander Training Company:*  
<http://www.activebystander.co.uk>