

Good Campus Relations
Lokahi University Research
Briefing Paper # 1

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1. Executive Summary

The Equality Act 2010 sets a clear expectation for universities and colleges to foster good relations between people from different groups

This briefing paper provides an update on a four-year Lokahi research project on campus relations. The Equality Act 2010 sets a clear expectation for universities and colleges to foster good relations between people from different groups, as noted in the 2011 Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) report on religion and belief; however, many institutions do not offer appropriate training or incorporate best practices, particularly in areas of religion and belief.

The Lokahi Foundation has completed the pilot year of a four-year action research project on good campus relations. The project offers customised support and training to key influencers in student societies and students' unions. Over a three-year cycle, our support equips them to make structural changes and to incorporate best practice into their institutions. The learning is being compiled into a best practice toolkit in campus relations for the benefit of the entire sector.

The campus relations research project addresses two questions:

- 1) What are the descriptors and indicators for good campus relations at higher education institutions (HEIs)?
- 2) What factors contribute to embedding lasting change in good campus relations?

Campus Relations Measurement Framework

During the pilot year, 50 semi-structured interviews were conducted at seven HEIs with student society representatives, students' union staff and officers, and chaplains. We began our work by creating a broad measurement framework based on the Equality and Human Rights Commission's good relations framework, tailored to the context of student societies. We then compiled these into three areas, each with its own set of broad indicators: positive interaction, proactive conflict management and access to resources.

Descriptors and indicators varied widely between HEIs, signalling the need for localised processes for improving campus relations.

Defining Good Campus Relations

Descriptors and indicators varied widely between HEIs, signalling the need for localised processes for improving campus relations. There were a few common descriptors of good campus relations that were mentioned by respondents from all seven institutions:

- > University offers support both for faith/belief identities and for inter faith activity;
- > Visible culture of collaboration between identity groups, where working together is viewed by student groups as part of the university experience;
- > Conflicts are mitigated by personal relationships of trust between representatives of student groups and frontline students' union staff and officers.

Best practice for positive interaction: Student societies

- > Collaborative events between societies become a standard part of the society calendar, supporting a sustainable character of working together.
- > Normalising perceptions of the campus as a collaborative space through high-profile student-led joint events.
- > 'Network weaving' by strengthening informal and formal connections between student societies.

Conflicts are most effectively resolved when there are prior relationships of trust. Structures for conflict management should aim to support relationship-building.

Best practice for positive interaction: students' unions and staff

- > An infrastructure to support deeper relations between societies and to nurture student-led initiatives is needed.
- > Institutional support for societies working together should be expanded beyond forums to deeper society engagement.

Best practice in proactive conflict management

- > Conflicts are most effectively resolved when there are prior relationships of trust. Structures for conflict management should aim to support relationship-building.
- > Procedures for conflict management (such as risk assessment and speaker request forms) should be clearly defined at the outset of each academic year for development of shared responsibility for good campus relations.

Best practice in resources for good campus relations

- > Chaplaincies are a vital but often under-utilised resource for faith societies.
- > Incoming students' union officers and staff could increase their capability through training that is specific to issues around faith and culture societies.
- > Representatives of societies of faith and belief would benefit from connections with societies on other campuses that are active in collaborative events and forums.
- > SU officers and staff would benefit from more connections with those in similar positions on other campuses who are supporting students of faith and belief.
- > Linking with national support structures such as the National Union of Students Inter Faith Programme pays dividends in increased collaborative activity.

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The Lokahi Foundation will continue to support the development of best practice in improving campus relations in the upcoming years. We will be sending out annual updates to our research with learning captured over the year as we work toward the publication of a best practice guide in improving campus relations for June 2014.

2. Lokahi University Programme

This briefing paper provides an update on a four-year Lokahi research project on campus relations. Since 2008, the Lokahi Foundation has been equipping students and staff to flourish in situations of religious and cultural diversity and work for positive social change in solidarity with people from different faiths and beliefs.

- Over 3,000 students and staff have attended our events – from our groundbreaking faith comedy show *Under:Stand:Up* to the biggest UK campus interfaith event in recent years - *Around the World in Eight Faiths*.
- 90 student leaders on 30 campuses have used our training events to generate instant constructive dialogue when critical issues arise.
- We've posted over 300 pages of resources on our website, with toolkits on communication, event organising, vlogging and problem-solving.

We launched the Campusalam Project in 2008 to support students and staff across 30 campuses with resources, skills and advice to address unique challenges faced by Muslim students.

In 2010, we expanded our work to improving campus relations by building stronger bridges between student societies and with university administration around issues of beliefs and values. The campus relations project offers customised support and training to key influencers in student societies and students' unions. Over a two-year cycle, this support enables them to make structural changes and to incorporate best practice into their institutions. This learning is compiled into a best practice toolkit in enhancing student experience for the benefit of the entire sector.

In 2010, we expanded our work to improving campus relations by building stronger bridges between student societies and with university administration around issues of beliefs and values.

After conducting a year of research and a successful pilot on three campuses, the campus relations project was officially launched in 2011. It has provided support for four universities to date. On all campuses we achieved measurable changes in bridge-building work and resulting improvements in campus relations.

3. Defining good campus relations

3.1 Past research on campus relations

The concept of good relations is relatively new with specific relevance to the UK. In its 2009 analysis of good relations, The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) identified five domains for a good relations measurement framework (GRMF): interaction, attitudes to others, participation and influence, personal security and sense of belonging.¹ The report recommended that framework measurement should take into account the individual and to some extent the group (especially regarding race and religion)², and incorporate both national and local contexts.³

Recent interventions to improve campus relations have made progress but mainly focus on responding to pressing concerns.

Increased attention over the past decade has been given to campus relations as a crucial context for UK society. The 2011 Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) report on religion and belief noted that the Equality Act 2010 sets a clear expectation for universities and colleges to foster good relations between people from different groups;⁴ however, many institutions do not offer appropriate training or incorporate best practices, particularly in areas of religion and belief.⁵

Recent interventions to improve campus relations have made progress but mainly focus on responding to pressing concerns. These issues – freedom of speech and external speakers⁶, hate crimes and discrimination⁷, and fostering interaction between faith and belief groups on campus⁸ – are important because they touch on all five domains of good relations.

The development of practical indicators to assess and monitor how these interventions impact campus relations⁹ would aid in the development of long-term solutions, as well as appropriate guidance for medium- and short- term responses as called for in the 2005 Universities UK report on campus relations.¹⁰

3.2 Aims of Lokahi University Research

Our research has identified student societies as a key area for intervention in campus relations due to:

- > their location as a source of tension in all five domains of good relations,¹¹
- > identified weakness in support of students' unions for student societies, particularly in areas of faith and belief,¹² and
- > the importance of staff confidence and expertise in fostering good campus relations.¹³

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3.3 Campus Relations Measurement Framework

We began our work by creating a broad measurement framework based on the EHRC good relations framework, tailored to the context of student societies. We conducted 19 interviews with key students and staff at seven Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in order to understand the major areas of concern in campus relations.

We then compiled these into three areas, each with its own set of broad indicators:

- > positive interaction, measured by both amount and quality of interaction between student societies and with their students' unions
- > proactive conflict management, measured by the consultative resolution of conflicts between groups, individuals and institutions.
- > resources for good campus relations, measured by networks of people and materials both at institutions and across institutions.

The campus-specific action plan includes a 3-5 year vision of good campus relations, 1-2 year aims, and specific activities that can be taken to reach the aims and vision. Indicators are then set and baseline data is collected in order to track and measure progress.

Using the framework as a starting point along with needs assessment interviews with students and staff, we have worked with each campus to develop a localised action plan for improving campus relations, with its own set of localised baseline data and indicators. In this way local initiatives can be joined together into a larger shared framework without imposing a generalised agenda.

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4. Initial Findings

During the pilot year (2010-11), 50 semi-structured interviews were conducted at seven HEIs with student society representatives, students' union staff and officers, and chaplains.

The research project addresses two questions:

- > Q1. What are the descriptors and indicators for good campus relations at higher education institutions (HEIs)?
- > Q2. What factors contribute to embedding lasting change in good campus relations?

4.1 Descriptor and Indicators for Good Campus Relations

Q1. What are the descriptors and indicators for good campus relations at higher education institutions (HEIs)?

Participating institutions represent the diversity within the higher education sector, with variety in terms of location, mission group, ethnic and religious composition of student body, and level of support offered by students' unions and staff.

As anticipated, descriptors and indicators of good campus relations varied widely between HEIs, signalling the need for localised processes for defining and improving campus relations. In order to address this challenge, we developed action plans for each institution with descriptors and indicators of good campus relations that can be used to track and measure change.

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There were a few common descriptors of good campus relations that were mentioned by respondents at all seven institutions:

- > University offers support both for faith/belief identities and for inter faith activity;
- > Visible culture of collaboration between identity groups, where working together is viewed by student groups as part of the university experience;
- > Conflicts are mitigated by personal relationships of trust between representatives of student groups and frontline students' union staff and officers.

4.2 Best Practice to Achieve Good Campus Relations

Q2. What factors contribute to embedding lasting change in good campus relations?

Through the development of shared activities with student societies and the learning over the pilot year of the project, initial findings of best practice to achieve good campus relations began to emerge.

These findings are organised according to the framework for good campus relations: positive interaction, proactive conflict management and resources.

Best practice for positive interaction: Student societies

- > Collaborative events between societies become a standard part of the society calendar, supporting a sustainable character of working together.
 - Collaborative activity often rises and falls on the initiative of visionary individuals rather than being seen as part of society life.
 - Structures that make collaboration part of society practice are more sustainable. Inter faith officers are becoming a standard committee position in some faith and belief societies, ensuring that inter faith activities become a more accepted part of society life.
- > Normalising perceptions of the campus as a collaborative space through high-profile student-led joint events.
 - Positive campus relations are often seen by society representatives as a good idea, but are lower in priority than other activities that are seen to directly benefit each society. Joint events between faith and belief societies are still viewed as an addition to the ‘normal’ activities rather than an expected part of the activity calendar.
 - Regular calendar slots for collaboration between societies create an expectation for working together that drives activity. Two key times are: Interfaith Week in mid-November, and an event slot in late-Feb/early March (this allows the necessary time for students to work together to make a collaborative event successful).

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Student-led joint events – Case Study: the president of a large faith society stated in 2010 that he could not envision a joint event with certain other large faith societies. The society was well-organised and a number of members were keen to run joint activities, so they made a list of societies they wanted to work with and began to build relationships with their committees. By the end of the year, his society had run two successful events with those societies attended by 460 students. He attributed this success to structured support for joint activities that was provided by Campusalam.

- > 'Network weaving' by strengthening informal and formal connections between student societies.
 - Network weaving refers to 'deliberately building relationships and supporting collaborations between people, and between people and organisations.'¹⁵
 - Faith and belief societies are highly diverse and offer a range of activities and events to their members. It is not uncommon for societies to hold 3-5 events per week in addition to other shared activities. These create strong bonding capital between members.
 - However, interaction between faith and belief societies is limited. Representatives do not usually know each other, and isolated shared events tend to have insufficient follow up. Society events tend to be exclusive and do not appeal to members of other societies or students more broadly.
 - Some societies are unaware altogether of the activities or membership of other faith groups. This leads to societies working completely independently, without the benefit of learning from other groups.
 - By joining the strong bonding capital of faith and belief societies with the bridging capital of interaction between key society members, the dynamics of campus relations can shift dramatically.

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Network Weaving – Case Study: A Christian student was inspired (by relationships that we facilitated with other faith groups and atheist students) to motivate reluctant members from his society to support an inter faith event. This society was known on campus as being suspicious of inter faith work. His approach of "friendly persistence" eventually led the society to cancel its regularly scheduled weekly meeting in order to encourage all members to attend the inter faith event. The successful event created even higher aspirations for making inter faith work an integral part of his society.

Best practice for positive interaction: students' unions and staff

- > An infrastructure to support deeper relations between societies and to nurture student-led initiatives is needed.
 - Many students' unions offer exemplary support for student societies that enable students to run effective events and provide services to their members.
 - When this is supplemented with sustained support for cross-society projects and meeting spaces, there is a dramatic increase in student-led initiatives.

- > Institutional support for societies working together should be expanded beyond forums to deeper society engagement.
 - Staff-supported inter faith forums require buy-in from student societies of faith and belief in order to be effective. There is a risk of creating parallel structures that do not incorporate society representatives and build upon the strengths of society structures.
 - Forums or associations that are made up of influential members from the societies are more representative and more effective in terms of scope and impact of joint work.

Institutional Support - Case Study: on one campus, a faith society that runs 15 successful events a year failed in organising two joint events with other societies. The president of the society attributed this failure to a lack of support in the students' union and difficulty in coordinating with other societies.

Best practice in proactive conflict management

- > Conflicts are most effectively resolved when there are prior relationships of trust. Structures for conflict management should support relationship-building.
 - On many campuses conflicts between societies are resolved using formalised procedures. This makes relationship building and tailored problem-solving difficult as the necessary structures are not in place to support a relational response.
- > Procedures for conflict management (such as risk assessment and speaker request forms) should be clearly defined at the outset of each academic year for development of shared responsibility for good campus relations.
 - Structures for regular consultation such as mini-forums help to build relationships and consult on issues before they build into larger conflicts.

Best practice in resources for good campus relations

- > Chaplaincies are a vital but often under-utilised resource for faith societies.
- > Incoming students' union officers and staff could increase their capability through training that is specific to issues around faith and culture societies.
- > Representatives of societies of faith and belief would benefit from connections with societies on other campuses that are active in collaborative events and forums.
- > SU officers and staff would benefit from more connections with those in similar positions on other campuses who are supporting students of faith and belief.

Procedures for conflict management (such as risk assessment and speaker request forms) should be clearly defined at the outset of each academic year for development of shared responsibility for good campus relations.

- > Linking with national support structures such as the National Union of Students Inter Faith Programme pays dividends in increased collaborative activity.

5. Next Steps

The Lokahi Foundation will continue to support the development of best practice in improving campus relations over the coming years.

We will be sending out annual updates to our research project with learning captured over the year as we work toward the publication of a best practice guide in improving campus relations for June 2014.

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About The Lokahi Foundation and Campusalam

Since 2008, Lokahi has been equipping students and staff to flourish in situations of religious diversity and work for positive social change in solidarity with people from different faiths and beliefs. We launched the **Campusalam Project** in 2008 to support students and staff across 30 campuses in addressing unique challenges faced by Muslim students. In 2010, we expanded our work into **Campus Lokahi**, improving campus relations by building stronger bridges between student societies and with university administration around issues of beliefs and values. Over 3,000 students and staff have attended our events – from our groundbreaking faith comedy show *Under:Stand:Up* to the biggest UK campus interfaith event in recent years - *Around the World in Eight Faiths*. 90 student leaders on 30 campuses have used our training to generate constructive dialogue when critical issues arise. We have posted over 300 pages of [resources](#) on our website, with toolkits on communication, event organising, vlogging and problem-solving.

The Lokahi Foundation is a non-profit, social impact charity that was founded in 2005 by Professor Gwen Griffith-Dickson in order to enrich society and enable it to embrace community and religious diversity with respect and understanding. The charity pioneers projects with measurable impact, and the result is lasting social change. Its rigorous research probes the foundations of faiths, beliefs and values, and the outcome is an informed and insightful public.

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Lokahi (loh-kah-hee) is a Hawaiian word which embodies our vision. It means creative and fruitful harmony that arises from diversity.



Notes

¹ Nick Johnson and John Tatam, 'Good Relations: a conceptual analysis', 2009, Equality and Human Rights Commission, <http://equalityhumanrights.com/key-projects/good-relations/>, p. 38.

² Ibid., p. 44.

³ Ibid., p. 45.

⁴ Equality Challenge Unit, "Religion and belief in HE: researching the experiences of staff and students", 2011, <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/religion-and-belief-staff-and-students-in-he>, p. 94.

⁵ Ibid., p. 95.

- ⁶ UUK published guidance on freedom of speech for universities in 2010 (<http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Pages/Freedomofspeechoncampus.aspx>). The National Union of Students (NUS) released guidance for students' unions in managing the risk of external speakers in 2011 (<http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/news/article/welfare/2418/>).
- ⁷ The NUS published a study on hate crimes in 2011 (<http://www.nus.org.uk/en/Campaigns/Welfare-and-Student-Rights/Hate-Crime/>) documenting widespread hate incidents with negative impacts in campus relations.
- ⁸ The Inter-Faith Network brought together key stakeholders of campus faith communities in 2007 in a consultation on "Building good relations on campus" (<http://www.interfaith.org.uk/campus.htm>) The NUS employs an Inter Faith Coordinator and published a toolkit in 2011 on Good Inter Faith Relations on campus (<http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/news/article/faith/1834/>).
- ⁹ Equality Challenge Unit, "Promoting good campus relations: update", 2007, <http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/promoting-good-campus-relations-update> , p. 22.
- ¹⁰ Universities UK, "Promoting good campus relations: dealing with hate crimes and intolerance", 2005, <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Pages/Publication-227.aspx> .
- ¹¹ UUK (2010) reported difficulty in relations between senior management and student societies on equality issues (p.27); the draft HEFCE Equality Scheme 2011-14 (p.13) mentions the need to promote cohesion between faith groups on campus. (http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2011/11_15/#exec); the ECU (2011) report highlights tensions between protected characteristics (p. 98).
- ¹² ECU (2011) found that 'a minority of students (34.5% of 3886 respondents) indicated that their students' union supports the religion or belief concerns and issues of students'. (p. 91).
- ¹³ Harris Beider and Rachel Briggs, "Promoting cohesion and preventing violent extremism in higher and further education" (Institute of Community Cohesion, 2010), http://www.cohesioninstitute.org.uk/live/images/cme_resources/Public/documents/Publications/promoting-community-cohesion.pdf , p. 23-24.
- ¹⁴ We coordinate our work and consult regularly with the NUS Inter Faith Coordinator and the Religious Literacy Leadership Programme.
- ¹⁵ Jonathan Rowson, Steve Broom and Alisdar Jones, "Connected Communities". (RSA, 2010), <http://www.thersa.org/projects/connected-communities/connected-communities-report> , p. 60.