

Welcome to Week 4 of BHM 2023!

Black Female Professors in Higher Education



University of Kent Black Female Professor, Diamond Ashiagbor. Source: LinkedIn

As of December 1st, 2020, there were 224,530 academic staff members employed in UK higher education institutions, excluding atypical staff. Among the 22,855 professors, 6,510 (28%) were women, consistent with the previous year. Of the total academic staff, 17% were EU nationals, while 15% were non-UK nationals from non-EU countries. The majority of academic staff were White (89%), with 7% being Asian. In terms of **Black** representation, only 160 professors **(1%)** were Black, out of which **61** were **Black women**.

As we **commemorate** Black History – **‘Saluting our Sisters’**, it is crucial to address the underrepresentation of Blacks in academia, particularly Black women, and the resulting barriers to career advancement and **professorship**. The empirical evidence highlights the urgency in today’s world, to go beyond headlines, surface-level, and endless discussions and actively push for accelerating the implementation of diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education and other domains, with reference to quantitative metrics and qualitative narratives.

Category	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Source of basic salary					
Wholly general financed by the provider	158,375	163,010	169,790	174,265	174,940
All other sources of finance	48,495	48,970	47,275	49,260	49,590
Academic employment function					
Teaching only	56,130	61,050	66,355	72,540	72,970
Teaching and research	100,165	100,120	98,600	98,085	98,630
Research only	49,085	49,515	50,855	51,510	51,375
Neither teaching nor research	1,490	1,290	1,255	1,390	1,555
Contract level					
Professor	20,550	20,940	21,520	22,810	22,855
Other senior academic	6,050	6,175	6,185	6,115	6,220
Other contract level	180,270	184,860	189,360	194,600	195,455
Terms of employment					
Open-ended/permanent	137,025	141,035	144,315	148,945	151,920
Fixed-term contract	69,850	70,945	72,750	74,580	72,610
Total	206,870	211,980	217,065	223,525	224,530

Source: www.hesa.ac.uk

As universities experience an increasingly diverse student body, it becomes essential to have a teaching academics that reflects this [diversity](#). Creating a diverse staff is crucial for promoting inclusivity and creating a student-centered educational environment. This entails not only increasing the representation of Black [female](#) professors, but also other ethnic minorities. Representation is important. When students of colour see lecturers who resemble them with shared experiences, a sense of belonging and acceptance on campus is fostered. Consequently, this can positively impact Student Success and overall retention.

Black professors have a significant and positive impact on higher education. They bring their unique perspectives, experiences, and expertise to the classroom, enriching the learning experience for all students. Black professors also serve as role models and mentors to Black students, helping them to succeed academically and professionally. Black professors in higher education can have a significant and multifaceted impact on the academic community, students, and the broader society.

Here are some specific areas of the impact of Black professors in higher education:

- **Diverse Perspectives | Institutional Change**

They contribute to a more diverse and inclusive curriculum. Black professors are more likely to teach courses on race, ethnicity, and social justice, which are essential for all students to learn about.

- **Representation and Diversity | Mentorship | Student Success**

They also bring their own unique cultural perspectives to their teaching, which can help students develop a better understanding of the world around them. They improve academic outcomes for Black students. Research has shown that Black students who have Black professors are more likely to graduate from university and earn higher grades. This is likely due to a number of factors, including increased role modelling, mentoring, and cultural understanding.

- **Inspiring All Students | Role Models | Social Justice and Equity**

They create a more welcoming and inclusive campus climate. Black professors can help to create a more welcoming and inclusive campus climate for all students, regardless of their race or ethnicity. They can do this by serving as role models, mentors, and advocates for Black students, and by working to create a more equitable and just campus community.

- **Research and Scholarship | Global Perspective | Community Engagement**

In addition to these specific impacts, Black professors also play a vital role in advancing knowledge and scholarship. They conduct research on a wide range of topics, including race, ethnicity, social justice, and the Black diaspora. Their work helps to expand our understanding of the world and to promote social change.

While Black professors make significant impacts and many positive contributions to higher education, it is important to note that there are

still **challenges** and **disparities** in representation and support for the larger Black community. These include issues such as **underrepresentation**, pay gaps, and **barriers** to career advancement. Efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in **academia** require urgent action.

Black female lecturers are crucial to the academic success of all students in higher education. I'm optimistic! Look at that smile and pure joy on the face of one of our Kent students who graduated this July. I believe she is on her way to greatness, perhaps another Black female professor in the making...



University of Kent Graduation July 2023

I hope this **#KNOWLEDGESHIFT** about BHM 2023 has inspired you in some way and enhanced your understanding of Black culture and its people. The blog series has explored various topics such as **Black hair**, **African talking drums**, **Black cuisine**, and **Black female professors in higher education**. I invite you to make room for one another, every culture, and ethnicity – there are galaxies yet to be explored. It's the Human Race, not colour race.

Thank you!