

University condemns Vision article

By [Anjli Raval](#)

Thursday 13 March 2008

The University Equal Opportunities Office and YUSU Racial Equality Officers have criticised campus tabloid York Vision for a “highly sensationalist” and “misinformed” article on minority students at the University.

Ishmael Norris and Michael Batula, whose term as Racial Equality Officers ends on Friday March 14, criticised the front page article: ‘It’s official: York Uni failing its minority students’, of the Tuesday, February 5 edition of Vision, written by former editor Adam Thorn.

In a statement endorsed by the University’s Equal Opportunitites Office, Norris said: “We found Thorn’s article highly sensationalist, misinformed, insensitive, and a weak attempt to stir scandal via the use of flippant language, such as, ‘It’s official’. Poor journalism along with statistics being taken out of context made a mockery of a sensitive issue.”

Norris said that “incoherent and inaccurately substantiated articles like Thorn’s serve little purpose in addressing the problems foreign and BME [Black and Minority Ethnic] students may encounter in university education”.

When contacted, the Equal Opportunitites Office responded to the article saying simply that as an organisation it is “committed to equality of opportunity for all students. To achieve that goal, policy and practice are continually reviewed in the light of any patterns of disadvantage or inequality”.

The article, which stated that “Foreign students at York are underachieving in their subjects compared to white undergraduates” failed to make a distinction between foreign students and students of an ethnic minority. Phrases such as “...which are similar amongst both white and foreign students” were used, causing confusion and offence.

Vision have since apologised in print for the ambiguity of their article admitting that certain phrases such as “foreign students aren’t performing as well as their white counterparts” was “lax and inaccurate” and said that such statements “should not have passed through our or YUSU’s editorial process”.

Whilst believing that a positive step had been taken on Vision’s behalf, Norris felt that “more foresight should be taken, particularly during the editorial process to prevent fallacious journalism going to print.

“As Vision is the recipient of numerous national awards for quality journalism, we would like to see the paper live up to its elevated reputation,” he continued

Vision Editors Tom Sheldrick and Alex Richman stated in response: “We do not agree that our coverage of the story was sensationalist. The reports made a number of serious points including that ‘being from a minority ethnic group was... found to have a statistically significant and negative effect on degree attainment’ which merited a position on our front page.”

Nouse understands that Thorn was unhappy with the way in which the article was presented and was disappointed by the decisions taken by the editorial team to put it on the front page. He is also understood to have cut ties with the paper as a result. The article also commented on the University’s poor attempt to encourage students from ethnic minority backgrounds to apply to York, saying that “the percentage of foreign students that apply to York is also incredibly low”. It quotes from an Equal Opportunities report released by the University which shows that 7.6% of York students come from ethnic

minority backgrounds, compared to the total national figure of 18.75%. The report also claimed that “being from a minority ethnic group was still found to have a statistically significant and negative effect on degree attainment.”

The Equal Opportunity Office responded by saying that the University is “committed to increasing the representation of under-represented groups through its Widening Participation Strategy”. In this strategy, the University admits that “despite energetic and targeted efforts in many sections of the University, we have not yet been successful in increasing the proportion of our students who are from certain socio-economic groups.” Newly elected Racial Equality Officers, Nadia Aziz and John Apea, have pledged to continue trying to “strengthen relationships between all students at York, regardless of race.”



2 comments

lynn

17 Mar '08 at 9:43 pm

I remember reading this article thinking ‘hmm, I’m white, so why is it I need that visa in my passport again?’ It was pretty shoddy work indeed and left an overall bad impression.

[Report](#)

[Matthew Pallas](#)

5 Apr '08 at 3:29 pm

Vision shouldn’t rely on YUSU to edit their articles for them. YUSU is there to check for libel and stuff that will impact on students’ welfare, not accuracy.

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