

# **First Report on Decolonising the Curriculum (DtC) at DUBS:**

## **Designing the Student Questionnaire and Staff Consultation**

Seyi Omonitan, Laura Marsiliani and Mark Learmonth

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### **1. Background**

Mr Seyi Omonitan was appointed as Decolonising the Curriculum Faculty Student Intern on 01/09/2021; he has also been entrusted with the Co-Chair of the DUBS Decolonising the Curriculum Project Board together with the Associate Dean for Ethics, Responsibility and Sustainability (ERS), Professor Mark Learmonth.

A working group on Decolonising the Curriculum at DUBS was established with effect from 01/09/2021, comprising Professor Mark Learmonth (DUBS Associate Dean ERS), Dr Laura Marsiliani (Faculty EDI Lead for Race and Ethnicity), Mr Seyi Omonitan (Faculty Student Intern) and reporting to the DtC Project Board.

At the DtC Project Board meeting of 27 September 2021, it was agreed that a DtC student Questionnaire and Staff Consultation were to be deployed at DUBS ASAP.

Mr Seyi Omonitan undertook a literature survey on DtC during September 2021 (see attached Summary in Appendix 1), spearheaded by an initial reading list provided by Professor Mark Learmonth.

### **2. Designing the Student Questionnaire**

In September 2021, Mr Seyi Omonitan and Dr Laura Marsiliani started working on designing the Student Questionnaire. This involved:

- i) Familiarising themselves with Durham Universities guidelines on DtC, including aims and objectives;
- ii) Surveying existing students questionnaires in UK Universities (e.g. SOAS; University of Exeter);
- ii) Surveying relevant definitions adopted by other Universities in the UK (e.g. SOAS; Keele University, University of Exeter, University of Newcastle);
- iii) Defining DtC and associate concepts, targeting DUBS students on all programmes;
- iv) Defining the aims and objectives of the Student Questionnaire;
- v) Writing relevant questions in a sensitive language and so that statistical biases could be avoided;
- vi) Including questions capturing relevant characteristics of respondents (e.g. Programmes, gender, ethnicity, religion etc.);
- vi) Selecting appropriate software for the Student Questionnaire and becoming familiar with it;
- vii) Writing the Student Questionnaire in the selected software (Microsoft Forms), ensuring efficiency of design and respondents' anonymity.

For step iv) above we wish to thank Dr Martyn Griffin (Associate Professor in Management and Marketing and former Athena Swan Champion) and Mr Thomas Whitaker (Academic Support Office) for very helpful advice.

We are also grateful to Professor Toby Watson (Deputy Executive Dean Education) for very helpful comments that greatly improved the Questionnaire.

In late October 2021, Dr Laura Marsiliani applied for ethical clearance through the DUBS process. This was granted on 13 November. The ethical application form and approval are available on sharepoint, Application reference: *DUBS-2021-11-12T12:50:37-dec0lm*.

The final version of the DUBS DtC Student Questionnaire is attached to this report, see Appendix 2.

In early November 2021, Dr Marsiliani contacted the relevant PSS colleagues (Ms Erin Adams, UG Programmes and Ms Lorraine Rankin, PGT Programmes) to send the Questionnaire and relevant instructions to all students on taught Programmes at DUBS. The letter sent to students is attached to this Report, see Appendix 3.

The Questionnaire was available in the period 15-29 November 2021. Dr Marsiliani monitored responses and requested that several reminders were sent to students, especially those on programmes with low response rates.

### **3. Designing the Staff Consultation**

In November 2021, Dr Laura Marsiliani started the process of designing the academic staff consultation on DtC at DUBS. In late November she compiled a flyer to be distributed to participants. The flyer includes:

- i) Background on DtC at DUBS;
- ii) Aims and objectives of the staff consultations;
- iii) Definition of DtC at DUBS and relevant associated concepts (same as for Student Questionnaire);
- iii) Suggested questions to ask participants (consistent with the questions on the Student Questionnaire to gain information on the academic colleagues' attitudes in addition to the students');
- iv) Suggested organisation of the staff consultations (focus groups or individual interviews);
- v) Contact details of Dr Marsiliani for further information and queries.

The flyer was shared with Professor Mark Learmonth and Mr Seyi Omonitan who provided valuable feedback and for information to Professor Martyna Sliwa (Associate Dean for ERS from 01/01/2022), Professor Toby Watson, and the Directors of Education (Professor Michael Nicholson, Ms Pippa Matthews and Mr Michael Lucey). The flyer is contained in Appendix 4 below.

For the purpose of implementation, Dr Marsiliani will lead several staff consultations. She has also asked the Departmental EDI Leads to conduct appropriate consultations at Departmental level to gauge the opinions of colleagues from different departments in a safe and open environment. She will further discuss the implementation process with the Departmental EDI Leads at the Faculty EDI Committee Meeting, forthcoming 8 December 2021.

Staff consultation will be undertaken in the period December 2021-January 2022.

Dr Laura Marsiliani will present the results from the Student Questionnaire and Staff Consultations on DtC at a DUBS EDI Fora event in late January 2022, where she will also welcome further comments from colleagues.

A further Report on the results and their analysis will be compiled by Mr Sayi Omonitan and Dr Laura Marsiliani in early 2022. All reports are to be submitted to the DtC Project Board.

**Attached:**

**Appendix 1:** Summary of Literature Review on DtC

**Appendix 2:** Student Questionnaire (Microsoft Forms version)

**Appendix 3:** Letter to DUBS students on DtC Questionnaire

**Appendix 4:** Staff Consultation Flyer

# Summary- my reading

## My thoughts

- By perpetuating the idea of Western education as the gold standard we cause developing world nations to reject their own teachings and knowledge.
- The most prestigious individuals in the developing world are ill-equipped because they have been taught to seek Western education as a priority.
- This is why leaders of the developing world are often ill-prepared to help solve the economic issues of the countries they run.
- Durham can help fix this problem by embedding the knowledge of the Global South in its curriculum.
- The hope is if we can get students to receive decolonialised education they will go on to produce research on matters of the Global South and economics associated with colonialisation that are under-researched.
- If students can see themselves in what they are taught they will engage more, eg. Muslim girl of a MENA or South Asian heritage will understand how prejudice could cause people of her background to have a lower income, career progression etc, etc, despite producing same work as white, male counterparts and having same educational prospects, and can work to rectify this.
- I believe other departments have a Decolonialising Durham- style grant, we could use this to promote decolonial research for undergraduate or PhD students in the Business School
- Maybe a Decolonialising Durham competition for the best research project on a decolonising topic.

## Reading

### What decolonising economics means for someone who read economics in India?- Roy

- Japan's economic growth questioned European growth theories.  
They also can't explain modern-day emerging economies well.
- The author studied in India- theory studied with American textbooks, rest with Indian government reports.
- Therefore, there was a mismatch, making it hard to envision solving the economies' problems.
- Doesn't consider the environment
- India's tropical monsoon climatic zone: weak monsoon means 'extreme aridity' and strong monsoon means floods

- Differing teaching of theory creates 'caste system'.
- Good theory teaching means good use of optimization tools, allows people to Western, often American PhDs.
- The rest do PhDs in India lacking the prestige of their international counterparts.
- Centre for Development Studies in Kerala tried to fix this by introducing more theory types in their pre-PhD economics coursework.
- Author thinks CDS failed in the fact it illustrated bite-sized overviews of different theories instead of showing detailed ones.

## **What does it mean to decolonise the economics curriculum?- Birdi, Guizzo**

- Decolonialisation seen as 'inclusivity, diversity, and pluralism', the aim is 'reparative racial justice'.
- Author believes views have been removed by Western higher education and colonialisation.
- Only '5%' of 'prestigious' journal articles come from outside the US. Awkward for
- instructors to speak for 'scholars in the Global South'
- Seeing different views does not equal decolonialisation.
- We need students to be 'constantly critical of what they learn'
- In Economics, we can ask what happens when we utilise theories in contexts they weren't originally planned for.
- Where do you need to decolonialise? What courses and topics need it?
- Are we explaining non-western concepts correctly?
- For example, non-Western countries often have 'informal or non-waged labour sector' at the same time.
- Give examples from the Global South
- In Economics, 'Anglo-American curricular frameworks' are seen as a model to be followed
- John Stuart Mill, 'political economist' sees western economic theories are 'laws of nature'.
- Economic law isn't 'settled facts'.
- Paul Samuelson, 'Nobel laureate' recognises '1948 Principles of Economics textbook' limited to 'problems of American civilization' in the 20th century.
- Decolonialisation is not diversity, 'diversification of reading lists' is also not enough.
- We need 'critical engagement' to separate diversity from decolonialisation.
- We must explore 'profits and slavery, international flows of humans and resources, racial bias, colonial exploitation'.

- But economics research behind this is 'thin'.
  - Less than '2% a year' economic articles were on race matters, poor compared to sociology and political science.
  - Economics can use econometrics to show 'statistical bias' but doesn't try and answer what can be done about racial bias.
  - Can students see themselves in what they are taught?
  - There is no how-to do for decolonialisation.
  - We must critically engage with colonialisation's effects, eg. Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution, 'Trinidadian historian CLR James'- believes colonialism did not hurt the 'coloniser as much as colonised'.
- Anti-racism strategies in institutions, street name changes, decolonising curriculums, statue removals have not changed the fact the POC communities 'lived experience' is the same.
- Sewell report 'selective evidence' to say 'racial bias is not a significant problem in education'.
  - It didn't use 'documented experiences and data'.

## **Does economics need to be 'decolonised'? - Alves, Kvangraven**

- US black economists struggle in 'American Economic Association' early as '1969'.
- Latin American academics have attempted to 'decolonialise the social sciences in the 1970s'.
- Said's 'Orientalism (1978) opened up the discourse too.
- Capitalism's development is seen as an increase in 'rationality'.
- Adam Smith has been assigned to ideas from 'Arab historian Ibn Khaldoun' for examples like 'central role of the division of labour in stimulating growth'.
- Idea that Global South developing nations can 'seamlessly follow the path of the West' with progress, not considering the effect of colonialisation.
- Farwa Sial's work shows how public and private spheres are not separated in the Global South in the same way as the developed world.
- Decolonised economics acknowledges capitalism is founded on 'colonial and racist' principles
- Keston Perry remarks racial courses 'non-existent' in the UK universities.
- Carolina Alves- we must teach 'alternative economist'.
- 'over 70% of academics agree that decolonisation of the curriculum is important.
- '1/3' said George Floyd's killing changed their view on this issue.
- 'Mainstream economists'...'highly unlikely to teach about racial inequalities and colonialism'.

Imran Rasul found 'between 2000 and 2020, only 1.4% of economic papers were on race-related issues, compared with 9% in sociology and 4% in political science'.

- Economics is where 'sociology was in the 1980s' and 'political science was in the 1990s'.
- Outside mainstream economics: Rhonda Vonshay Sharpe talks about 'The Review of Black Political economy', where they publish papers about 'race-related economics'.
- Quality can't explain why 'academic work focused on the United States' is more likely to be 'published in a top-five economics journal'.
- '10% of papers in development economics had an author or co-author from the Global South in 2018.'
- This shows that the Global North sets the discourse on economic theory for the Global South.
- Economics is seen as the 'most hierarchical and least interdisciplinary of the social sciences'.

## **Appendix 2: Student Questionnaire (Microsoft Forms version)**



# Decolonising the Curriculum at DUBS Questionnaire

We would like to hear your opinion on Decolonising the Curriculum at DUBS. This is a university-wide project and is being undertaken in collaboration with Durham Students' Union. Funding has been provided to employ student interns to work closely with academic staff in decolonising our curriculum.

Our aim at the Business School is that by 2022/23, no student will be able to complete a degree without significant exposure to the issues and debates that are directly relevant to the decolonisation of the curriculum.

<https://www.dur.ac.uk/business/news-and-events/news/article/?id=45091>

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For the Business school this means understanding how the predominant focus on the Global North has impacted the way we view systems of accounting, economics, finance, management and marketing and therefore working towards critically analysing norms from the Global North and creating degree programs more inclusive of knowledge and practices from the Global South.

Please find below a questionnaire that will greatly help us with this project and inform future curriculum developments at DUBS. We expect this will not take more than 15 minutes. All respondents are anonymous and therefore cannot be linked with any of the data they chose to provide. By filling this survey you will automatically give your consent for your responses to be used for the purpose of the Decolonising the Curriculum at DUBS Project.

Data will be shared with relevant faculty members only. We will feed back on our findings and developments in due time.

## Key concepts

**Decolonising the curriculum**- Creating spaces and resources for a dialogue among all members of the university on how to imagine and envision all cultures and knowledge systems in the curriculum, with respect to what is being taught and how it frames the world.

**Global North**- the richest and most industrialized countries, which are mainly in the northern part of the world.

**Global South**- the poorest and least industrialized countries, which are mainly in the southern part of the world.

**Curriculum**- The knowledge and skills students are expected to learn, learning objectives, modules and lessons, assignments and projects, books, materials, videos and presentations, readings, assessments and other evaluations of student learning, across a specific degree course.

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**Micro aggression**- A statement, action or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalised society or group such as an ethnic

\* Required

1. How far do you agree with the following: \*

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
I understand what decolonising the curriculum means	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am happy with the way my curriculum covers race/ethnicity and Global South issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
All modules at DUBS should cover race/ethnicity and Global South issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Only some modules at DUBS should cover race/ethnicity and Global South issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
All modules at DUBS should include references from ethnic minority and Global South researchers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Only some modules at DUBS should include references from ethnic minority and Global South researchers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am interested in undertaking research projects on race/ethnicity and Global South issues as part of my degree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I do not feel detached from my curriculum because of my race/ethnic/cultural background	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Staff treat all students with respect, regardless of their race/ethnic/cultural background	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Staff are aware of students' race/ethnic/cultural diversity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am not aware of instances of micro aggression within teaching and learning activities at DUBS	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

2. Please let us know of any examples/instances you want to raise in relation to the questions above:

3. Please let us know if you have any ideas for Decolonising the Curriculum at Durham University Business School:

4. Which degree type are you currently taking? \*

- ☐ Undergraduate
- ☐ Postgraduate

5. If an undergraduate, what year of study are you currently in? \*

- ☐ Year 1
- ☐ Year 2
- ☐ Year 3
- ☐ Year 4 (Placement year)

6. What is the name of your bachelors' degree? \*

- ☐ Accounting
- ☐ Accounting and Finance
- ☐ Accounting and Management
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Business and Management
- ☐ Marketing and Management
- ☐ Economics
- ☐ Economics with Management
- ☐ Economics with French
- ☐ Economics and Politics
- ☐ Philosophy, Politics and Economics

☐ 

Other

7. What is the name of your master's degree? \*

- ☐ Accounting
- ☐ Economics (including all routes)
- ☐ Finance (including all routes)
- ☐ Management (including all routes)
- ☐ Marketing
- ☐ MBA (OMBA, FT, MBA, EMBA)
- ☐ Business Analytics

☐ 

Other

8. Which ethnicity do you identify with? \*

- ☐ White English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Ireland or British
- ☐ White Irish
- ☐ White Irish Traveller
- ☐ Any other White background
- ☐ Asian or Asian British- Indian
- ☐ Asian or Asian British- Pakistani
- ☐ Asian or Asian British- Bangladeshi
- ☐ Asian or Asian British- Chinese
- ☐ Any other Asian Background
- ☐ Arab or Arab British
- ☐ Black or Black British- African
- ☐ Black or Black British- Caribbean
- ☐ Any other Black, African or Caribbean background
- ☐ Mixed- White and Asian
- ☐ Mixed- White and Black African
- ☐ Mixed- White and Black Caribbean
- ☐ Any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background
- ☐ Any other ethnic group
- ☐ Prefer not to say

9. If other, please specify which ethnicity/ethnicities you identify with:

10. Which gender do you identify with? \*

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ Non-binary

☐ Prefer not to say

☐

Other

11. Do you identify with the same gender that you were assigned at birth? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Prefer not to say

12. Which sexual orientation do you identify with? \*

☐ Heterosexual

☐ Homosexual

☐ Bisexual

☐ Prefer not to say

☐

Other



13. What religion/beliefs do you follow? \*

☐ No religion

☐ Christian

☐ Buddhist

☐ Hindu

☐ Jewish

☐ Muslim

☐ Sikh

☐ Prefer not to say

☐

Other

14. Do you have a disability? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Prefer not to say

15. If you have a disability, could you disclose the nature of said disability (leave blank if you prefer not to disclose)?

16. Let us know of any specific problems you have had with this survey:

17. Thank you very much for your time and input! Let us know how you found our survey:



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### **Appendix 3: Letter to DUBS students on DtC Questionnaire**

Dear DUBS Students,

We hope your first weeks of the new academic year are going well. We are writing to you as we would like to hear your opinion on Decolonising the Curriculum at DUBS. This is a university-wide project and is being undertaken in collaboration with Durham Students' Union. Funding has been provided to employ student interns to work closely with academic staff. For us, this essentially means to work towards designing a curriculum which is culturally inclusive.

Please find below a link to a student questionnaire that will greatly help us with this project and inform future curriculum developments. You will also find some key concepts and information that will help you understand how Decolonising the Curriculum may be implemented at Durham University Business School.

The survey will be available until 29 November. We expect this will not take more than 10-15 minutes. All respondents are anonymous and therefore cannot be linked with any of the data they chose to provide. The anonymised data will be shared with relevant faculty members only. We will feed back on our findings and developments in due time.

Link here: <https://forms.office.com/r/swgjv1GcXv>

If you have any questions, feel free to contact our Student Lead Seyi Omonitan at [gabriel.omonitan@durham.ac.uk](mailto:gabriel.omonitan@durham.ac.uk)

Thank you very much and best wishes!

Seyi Omonitan (Faculty Student Lead on Decolonising the Curriculum at DUBS)  
Laura Marsiliani, PhD (Faculty EDI Lead for Race and Ethnicity)

## Appendix 4: Staff Consultation Flyer

### **Decolonising the Curriculum (DtC) at DUBS - Staff Consultation**

Thank you very much for considering/volunteering to be part of this staff consultation on the Decolonising the Curriculum at DUBS. Faculty has asked each Department to organise consultations with academic staff to inform the DUBS DtC project. To hear your opinion and attitudes would be very valuable for our project!

### **Background and Aims of the DtC at DUBS Project and this Consultation**

Decolonising the Curriculum is a university-wide project and is being undertaken in collaboration with Durham Students' Union. Funding has been provided to employ student interns to work closely with academic staff in decolonising our curriculum. We currently have in post a Faculty Student Intern, Mr Seyi Omonitan (BA Economics, 2<sup>nd</sup> year) who is working with the Associate Dean ERS, Professor Mark Learmonth, and the Faculty EDI Lead for Race and Ethnicity, Dr Laura Marsiliani. We are in the process of appointing three student interns, one per Department at DUBS, who will work closely with the Departmental EDI Leads and the Decolonising the Curriculum Pilot Module Leaders and report to Mr Omonitan. We expect the Departmental Student Interns to be in post by early-mid 2022.

We have surveyed all UG and PGT students at DUBS on their attitudes toward DtC via an online questionnaire in November 2021. We now would like to hear from staff involved with Teaching and Learning. Next step is to report results from the student Questionnaire and staff consultations to the DtC Project Board; this Board in turn will advise the executive team on DtC at DUBS. We will also feedback on all our findings to students and staff.

Our aim at the Business School is that by 2022/23, no student will be able to complete a degree without significant exposure to the issues and debates that are directly relevant to the decolonisation of the curriculum.

**For the Business school this means understanding how the predominant focus on the Global North has impacted the way we view systems of accounting, economics, finance, management and marketing and therefore working towards critically analysing norms from the Global North and creating degree programmes more inclusive of knowledge and practices from the Global South.**

It would therefore be very important for us to gauge the attitudes of staff on DtC at DUBS by the means of this consultation. We would like to start the consultation by asking a few questions and reflect upon issues we think are important for the DtC process. Please feel free at any stage to raise alternative/further questions and discussion points. At the end of the consultation, we will leave plenty of time for a free-style floor discussion.

Your participation will be fully anonymised. The report of this consultation will only be shared with colleagues involved with the Decolonising the Curriculum Project. By participating in this consultation, you give your consent for your anonymised responses to be used for the purpose of the Decolonising the Curriculum Project. We will feed back on our findings and developments in due time.

### **Key concepts**

**Decolonising the curriculum-** Creating spaces and resources for a dialogue among all members of the university on how to imagine and envision all cultures and knowledge systems in the curriculum, with respect to what is being taught and how it frames the world.

**Global North**- the richest and most industrialized countries, which are mainly in the northern part of the world.

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**Curriculum**- The knowledge and skills students are expected to learn, learning objectives, modules and lessons, assignments and projects, books, materials, videos and presentations, readings, assessments and other evaluations of student learning, across a specific degree course.

**Micro aggression**- A statement, action or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalised society or group such as an ethnic minority.

## Questions to start the staff consultation

1. Do you understand what decolonising the curriculum means?
2. Are you happy with the qualifier of DtC at DUBS provided in this document (and in the Student Questionnaire)? That is:  
  
“For the Business school this means understanding how the predominant focus on the Global North has impacted the way we view systems of accounting, economics, finance, management and marketing and therefore working towards critically analysing norms from the Global North and creating degree programs more inclusive of knowledge and practices from the Global South”.
3. How well do you think our current curriculum align with the qualifier given above?
4. If we can do more, do you think that **all modules** at DUBS should cover **race/ethnicity/cultural and Global South issues** or **only some modules** should do so (perhaps the more applied ones)?
5. If we can do more, do you think that **all modules** at DUBS should include **references from ethnic minority and Global South researchers** or **only some modules** should do so (perhaps the more applied ones)?
6. Do you think our students would be interested if we were to include more of the above issues and references in the curriculum? Why?
7. If asked to include more of the above issues and references in your module(s), which support would you need from your Department and Faculty?
8. Do you think an Open Module on DtC (like the one we have on Sustainability at DUBS) would be an adequate alternative?
9. Do you feel you are well aware of our students and staff race/ethnic/cultural differences?
10. Do you think that micro-aggression within teaching and learning activities at DUBS is a problem? If so, what solutions do you propose?
11. Let us know if you have any problems with the format etc. of this consultation.

**Free-style discussion to follow**, any contributions/ideas are really appreciated.

Thank you very much for your participation!

For any questions/comments on this document, consultation and DtC at DUBS Project, feel free to contact Dr Laura Marsiliani (Faculty of Business EDI Lead on Race and Ethnicity) at [laura.marsiliani@durham.ac.uk](mailto:laura.marsiliani@durham.ac.uk)

END