Frequently asked questions related to Sir John Cass

Background
On 9th June 2020, several media outlets reported the historic link of Sir John Cass to the slave trade.

City, University of London’s Business School was renamed the Sir John Cass Business School only 18 years ago (in 2002) following a donation from the Sir John Cass Foundation, an educational charity which provides financial support to several organisations.

On 10th June, City, University of London initiated a review of all its historic sources of funding to determine if there are any other links with slavery; and to make recommendations. The review is chaired by a member of City’s Council with a representative panel, including external expertise; and will report in August.

However, it was recognised that a decision on the name of the Business School could not be delayed until the conclusion of the more wide-ranging review.

Unlike other institutions with links to Sir John Cass which, in some cases, immediately announced a name change, City has a contract with the Foundation which includes use of the Cass name. On 17th June, the Sir John Cass Foundation announced that they themselves would stop using the Cass name.

Following discussions, a recommendation was submitted to City’s Council.

A meeting of the Council on Friday 3rd July agreed that the Business School would no longer carry the Cass name. The School will use a transition logo over the summer while consultations about a new name are set in motion and planning for a rebrand takes place.

The full announcement is available to read on City’s website

FAQs

The name of the Business School

Will you be changing the name of Cass Business School?
Yes. On 6th July, it was announced that our Business School will no longer be known as the Sir John Cass Business School. The decision was taken by City’s Council on Friday 3rd July, following a broad consultation about the fact that some of Sir John Cass’ wealth was obtained though his links to the slave trade. The unanimous decision to change the name was taken on the basis that continued use of the Cass name is incompatible with City’s values of diversity and inclusion; and the offence and hurt our use of the name has caused to members of our community and to many Black people.

What will the Business School be known as now?

For now, we will generally refer to the School as our Business School while consultations about a new name are set in motion and planning for a rebrand takes place. This renaming process will be overseen by our Council and further details will follow. Externally, we will use a temporary logo during the transition to indicate that the Cass name will be changing and to encourage participation in the consultation process.
Will the University reconsider the decision to change the name?

Continued use of the Cass name is incompatible with City’s values because of its direct links to Sir John Cass and his involvement in the transatlantic slave trade. We will be consulting our key stakeholders, including current students, alumni and staff on a new name for the School as part of the rebranding process. The consultation is yet to commence and further details will follow.

While the name will change, the quality of our Business School and its worldwide reputation, which is evidenced in part by its position in all major league tables, will remain. Our Business School will continue to deliver the world class education and research for which it is globally known and we are strongly committed to ensuring that it is an inclusive place to work and study.

How long will it take to change the name?

The process of removing the Cass name will be implemented quickly where this is possible. Full rebranding will follow the consultation process, which will be overseen by our Council and further details will follow.

Why is the Cass name still visible on the website or an advert I’ve seen etc?

We will be introducing a transition logo on our website homepage and on key external media to indicate that the Cass name will be changing and to encourage participation in the consultation process. In other places, the Cass transition logo will remain until a new name has been agreed and we are in a position to undertake a full rebrand of our Business School.

Why don’t you just return to City University Business School (CUBS)?

A return to the name of City University Business School will be considered alongside other options. Since this name was last used, City changed its name to ‘City, University of London’ when it joined the University of London in 2016, so there may be other alternatives.

Relationship with the Sir John Cass Foundation

Why has it taken City so long to make the change when other Universities dropped the name immediately?

Unlike other institutions with links to Sir John Cass which, in some cases, immediately announced a name change in the wake of media coverage on 9th June, City has a contract with the Foundation which includes use of the Cass name in perpetuity. City needed to consult with the Foundation as well as other stakeholders prior to bringing the matter to the next meeting of City’s Council.

The decision was taken by City’s Council on Friday 3rd July, following a broad consultation. The unanimous decision to change the name was taken on the basis that continued use of the Cass name is incompatible with City’s values of diversity and inclusion and the offence and hurt our use of the name has caused to members of our community and to many Black people.

Why announce now prior to securing contract release?
We have had constructive conversations with the Foundation which has also committed to changing its name.

The unanimous decision to change the name was taken on the basis that continued use of the Cass name is incompatible with City’s values of diversity and inclusion.

**Was due diligence on the Foundation and Sir John Cass done when the contract was signed?**

Due diligence was completed on the Foundation, as would be the case with all organisations who donate funds to City. However, the due diligence would not have extended to the historic sources of the Foundation’s funding.

We are seeking to ensure all our funding is compatible with our values of diversity and inclusion. On 10th June, we initiated a review of all historic sources of funding to determine if there are any other links with slavery; and to make recommendations. The review is chaired by Ms Hunada Nouss, a member of City’s Council. The composition is drawn from a diverse group of City staff and external independent expertise and is expected to report in August.

**Was City or the Business School aware of the Sir John Cass’ links to slavery?**

City and the Business School were not aware of the links before they were recently made public by the press.

We are now seeking to ensure all sources of funding are compatible with our values of diversity and inclusion. On 10th June, we initiated a review of all historic sources of funding to determine if there are any other links with slavery; and to make recommendations.

**How else is the Foundation financially linked to City?**

Following the initial donation in 2001, the Foundation has supported the School in several initiatives including the funding of student scholarships and the co-sponsoring of engagement programmes with primary and secondary schools in London.

**Will City be returning the money to the Foundation?**

City received the money from the Foundation in good faith and it has been used to support many students over the last 18 years. We are in discussions with the Foundation on a range of issues about our future relationship.

**Will you carry on working with the Sir John Cass Foundation?**

We will review our relationship with the Foundation but we will no longer use the Sir John Cass name. The Foundation has committed to changing its name and commissioned a review of Sir John Cass’ historical links to slavery in February this year. It has asked an independent academic to conduct the review with a full and transparent account to be published once complete.

The Cass Foundation has done important work with wealth left by Sir John Cass to create educational opportunities in many parts of London's poorest boroughs, but, like us, they have made the decision that to retain his name would be to commemorate a man they cannot condone and would be an endorsement of slavery.
Student and alumni FAQs

Will you consult students and alumni on a new name?

We will be consulting key stakeholders, including current students, alumni and staff on a new name for the School as part of the rebranding process. The consultation is yet to commence and further details will follow.

I am due to graduate from Cass - will the name change be on my degree certificate?

The degree certificate does not include the name of the School, the certificate is for a City, University of London degree as that is the awarding body. The accompanying transcript does include the School name and will be unchanged for this year’s graduates.

I graduated from Cass – will I be issued a new degree certificate?

No. The certificate is for a ‘City University London’ degree (before 2016) or a ‘City, University of London’ degree (since 2016) as City is the awarding body.

Will there be compensation for those who invested their money in the Cass brand and degree?

No. Continued use of the Cass name is incompatible with City’s values because of its direct links to Sir John Cass and his involvement in the transatlantic slave trade. Its continued use would devalue the Business School and the rebranding of the School is a positive move.

The strong brand of the name is paramount for alumni careers. How will you mitigate the damage caused?

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While the name will change, the quality of our Business School and its worldwide reputation, which is evidenced in part by its position in all major league tables, will remain. Our Business School will continue to deliver the world class education and research for which it is globally known and we are strongly committed to ensuring that it is an inclusive place to work and study.

When will my email address @cass.city.ac.uk be changed?

There will be no immediate changes to email addresses. Changes will be considered as part of the planning for renaming the School and will be implemented as part of the rebranding programme. We will continue to keep our stakeholders informed of our progress towards agreeing a new name for the Business School and the associated timescales.

Work around Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and addressing racial inequalities

What are City and Cass doing in relation to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and specifically addressing racial inequalities?

We are doing a significant amount of work to address racial inequality and to ensure City is an inclusive place to work and study, which will continue. We have listened to the concerns
of the City community about the naming of the Business School and we have also heard about their individual experiences of racism and inequality in today’s world.

On 10th June, we initiated a review of all historic sources of funding to determine if there are any other links with slavery; and to make recommendations. The review is chaired by Ms Hunada Nouss, a member of City’s Council. The composition is drawn from a diverse group of City staff and external independent expertise and is expected to report in August.

We know there is considerable work to do. This article, published on 7th July, outlines some of the work already underway at City and further actions we have committed to undertaking: How City, University of London is working to understand and address racial inequality.

**What will the senior team be doing to further the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion work and to address racial inequalities?**

The work on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion is championed and supported by senior leadership. The Executive Committee (ExCo) is committed to tackling racial inequalities through action.

To understand how people feel about race and how we can improve race equality at City, we launched a Race Equality Charter survey for students, which ran last year, and one for staff, which will run this month. They will be complemented by “Town Hall” events during July and other activities to ensure staff and student voices are heard.

Implementing the right training is crucial and we are reviewing material for Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, Active Bystander and Inclusive Leadership courses which are now mandatory for all our leaders and managers. We know there is still a long way to go, but this is an important start which allows conversations to be had and understanding to increase.

In June, we launched a review into historic sources of funding, chaired by a member of Council and including representatives from the BAME Staff Network, the Race Equality Charter Self-Assessment Team and the Equality Diversity & Inclusion Committee. The review has already recommended the recent renaming of the Business School and will provide further recommendations in August.