

Direct Email: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Our Ref: PBB/[REDACTED]/18076.1

24 September 2025

By Email:

[REDACTED]@timeshighereducation.com
[REDACTED]@timeshighereducation.com

The Editor
Times Higher Education
98 Theobalds Road
London
WC1X 8WB

Carter-Ruck

Not for Publication

Dear Sirs

Our client: Professor Jason Arday

We are instructed by Professor Arday.

We write in response to an email from Times Higher Education (“**THE**”) journalist, Jack Grove, sent directly to our client at 12:56 on 19 September 2025 entitled, ‘Formal request for comment - right of reply regarding plagiarism allegations’ (“**19 September Enquiry**”). We will address the specific allegations in due course below. Please note that this letter is marked ‘Not for Publication’ and refers to matter which are being provided to you off the record only. Where private information is referred to in this letter, it is explained accordingly.

While you have agreed to extend the deadline, it is important to note that the 19 September Enquiry initially provided our client with one working day to respond, to very serious allegations going back over a decade. In the circumstances, that is clearly not a fair opportunity to respond.

Professor Arday is a distinguished and highly respected scholar of race, inequality and education. His research explores, *inter alia*, race inequalities and the long-term impacts of racial discrimination within the education sector – topics that are closely tied with his personal pursuit to improve the representation of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic people in higher education. Our client’s contributions to this discipline have earned him numerous academic accolades and esteemed positions at leading universities within the UK, including being appointed as an Associate Professor in Sociology at Durham University, a Professor of Sociology of Education at the University of Glasgow, and more recently, a Professor of Sociology of Education at the University of Cambridge.

As a leading academic, Professor Arday’s professional reputation is of absolute importance to him – it underpins the credibility of his research, it is crucial to his progression in this field of study, and it instils confidence in those who he teaches and mentors. From a personal perspective, his career is extremely important to him: he is the breadwinner for his family and has been so for 20 years, and his children, family and friends rely upon him for financial support, including [REDACTED]. Our client and his family’s financial situation is clearly private information.

Carter-Ruck Solicitors

The Bureau
90 Fetter Lane
London EC4A 1EN

T +44 (0)20 7353 5005
www.carter-ruck.com

Authorised and regulated
by the Solicitors Regulation
Authority

SCRA No. 44769

Your Enquiries

The 19 September Enquiry is the latest in a sequence of enquiries that our client and the University of Cambridge, his employer, have received from your journalist which threatens to publish a “story” scrutinising his academic integrity, and makes very serious allegations in respect of his academic conduct. Those enquiries are set out below:

1. On 25 June 2025, our client received an email from you alleging that his “*journal papers, made in 2023 and 2024*” failed to acknowledge overlap from a previous paper he published in 2020, and were missing scholarly attributions, mainly for the work of researcher, Anjum Memon. You claimed that missing references also occurred in our client’s “*2018 Social Sciences paper*”. You also questioned whether ethics approval had been obtained by our client in respect of studies he had undertaken at various universities based on information provided by an anonymous “*academic who has contacted universities*” in relation to our client’s work (“**25 June Enquiry**”).

We are instructed that the Faculty Communications Officer at the University of Cambridge responded to your 25 June Enquiry. You were advised that (a) our client’s paper underwent two peer-review processes (including Research Excellence Framework) of which no concerns were raised, (b) the missing references were corrected immediately, and (c) accepted by the “*journals*”. We are instructed the University of Cambridge also wrote to the “*journals*” in support of our client. In relation to researcher, Anjum Memon, you were advised that our client has worked with him since on other studies.

We are instructed that you were provided with an explanation in relation to our client’s ethics approval process, and the University of Cambridge’s position is that your follow up queries relate to methodology rather than ethics.

2. On 27 June 2025, your journalist sent correspondence to the University of Cambridge which did not accept the explanation provided in relation to the ethics approval process. You were advised that the pursuit of this “story” was negatively impacting our client’s mental health. Notwithstanding, your journalist stated, “*I don’t think I can really drop the story based on what I have heard so far*”. Frankly, this is not an acceptable response in the circumstances. Your journalist ought to have set out his reasonings as to why this was a matter of sufficient public interest, particularly in light of the responses already provided by one of the leading universities in the country, to override our client’s health and wellbeing. You will already be aware, from publicly available sources, about our client’s neurodivergence and developmental difficulties.
3. On 11 July 2025, your journalist sent correspondence to the University of Cambridge raising questions about our client’s *curriculum vitae*, specifically, why prior employers were not mentioned in his biography. Questions were also raised about a book which Professor Arday authored, and his charity fundraising efforts (which we address below) – matters irrelevant to his role at the University of Cambridge or his published research work.
4. On 15 July 2025, your journalist sent an enquiry to the University of Cambridge in relation to a talk our client had given at University College London.
5. On 17 July 2025, your journalist sent correspondence to the University of Cambridge setting out questions that had already been raised (and responses provided) in relation to his 2018 paper, the ethical approval process, our client’s book, and his fundraising. The repetitive questioning by your journalist in relation to matters already the subject of prior correspondence, and other irrelevant and far-reaching matters, is indicative of a targeted campaign against our client.
6. On 21 July 2025, an enquiry was sent to our client by your journalist in relation to his charity fundraising efforts – a subject matter unrelated to his academic

research or teaching positions. You attempted to shoehorn this line of enquiry into an 'academic matter' by relying on the mere fact that our client has referred to his fundraising efforts in *"his biography for academic talks"* and that it has been mentioned on a number of his *"honorary degree citations"*. As you ought to be aware, it is not uncommon to refer to personal endeavours (including charity involvement) as a means of providing an audience with context or background to oneself and one's own personal pursuits outside of work. To try and construct a *"story"* or draw (incorrect) inferences about our client's academic integrity by reference to unconnected and unsubstantiated matters, is neither fair, nor balanced reporting.

For clarity, our client did not respond to any of your enquiries based on advice he received from the Communications team at the University of Cambridge. He has been informed, however, that the University of Cambridge did respond to select enquiries.

Our client is concerned by THE's muddled approach to enquiries pertaining to his academic record and expertise. They appear to originate from a source who does not understand the academic process (for example, the ethics approvals process) and as such, are not questions which either the University of Cambridge or our client can properly answer. Where responses have been provided about methodology and best practice by the University of Cambridge, one of the country's leading academic institutions, your journalist has refused to accept those responses. We are instructed that your journalist has also sent several Freedom of Information requests to institutions connected with our client. While our client does not know if this is fuelled by your journalist or his anonymous source, our client has serious concerns about this aggressive approach, which is again dealt with towards the end of this letter.

The 19 September Enquiry now seeks to advance very serious allegations of *"suspected plagiarism"* in our client's PhD thesis, published as long ago as September 2015, which was undertaken at Liverpool John Moores University.

As an academic, our client is not averse to criticism, nor does he wish to stifle the legitimate voicing of opinions of those who may disagree with his work. However, the fact that our client's published work spanning the last decade is being called into question, and that his 2015 PhD thesis is now the subject of a complaint made by your journalist to our client's doctoral awarding university (Liverpool John Moores University), and current employer (University of Cambridge), appears to suggest that there is an axe to grind against our client, personally. Our client feels that these repeated enquiries are a campaign of harassment against him, many of which have no bearing on his academic career and seem to be raised solely with the aim of sully his reputation.

We will now address specific points below.

Our client's position

In the 19 September Enquiry you state as follows:

"In our story we will explain how broader concerns over suspected plagiarism in some of your earlier research papers led our publication to undertake Turnitin checks on your 2015 doctoral thesis. That analysis flagged numerous examples of plagiarism – either verbatim, near-verbatim or close paraphrase."

Firstly, the genesis of those *"broader concerns"* remain entirely unparticularised – it is not clear what the nature of those *"concerns"* are, when or how they were made, and by whom.

As for Turnitin, we note that no similarity score is provided in relation to our client's PhD thesis. Without this information, it is difficult for our client to assess the severity of the allegation being put to him. We are instructed by our client, who, since 2017, has

supervised PhD students and examined PhD theses¹, that a similarity percentage of between 0-20% is generally accepted as a low, and indeed acceptable, score from Turnitin, and any percentage within that range is often the result of relatively inexperienced researchers not referencing correctly, more prevalent in social sciences subjects such as our client's. Our client had only been reading and writing for 9 years at the time of starting his PhD thesis – something which his PhD supervisor was aware of and recognised, and at the time he was exactly that: a PhD *student*, not a career academic. Of course, with time and experience, he has become a more astute writer and researcher, as is the case for anyone who progresses in their career within academia.

For the avoidance of doubt, our client vehemently denies the allegation of plagiarism. To state otherwise, as you evidently intend to do, would be highly reputationally damaging to our client.

We are instructed that, following the 19 September Enquiry, our client has arranged for his PhD thesis to be independently peer-reviewed by individuals at the University of Cambridge. As part of this review, his thesis has been run through Copyleaks, a similar plagiarism detection program to Turnitin, and it returned a result of 2.6%. Scribber, another similar platform, returned a percentage of 7%. Our client has also processed his PhD thesis himself through Turnitin and it returned a similarity result of 6%. As set out above, none of those scores are sufficient to substantiate an allegation of plagiarism, and the variance between these scores on the different platforms is indicative of the difficulties associated with plagiarism reviews.

As a result of the complaint, and as our client considers right and proper, the University of Cambridge has advised that it is undertaking an initial screening of the complaint to determine whether it should be formally investigated. Our client denies the allegations being levelled against him and believes an outcome will be reached that is reflective of the same.

However, the fact and content of any such investigation (even at the initial screening stage) is private: it is being conducted by a private institution and the process is confidential. The only reason that your journalist has been provided with any information about that process is because he himself is the complainant. The circularity of this process and your subsequent publication is transparent.

As you will know, publication of the fact of any potential investigation, similarly, is likely to cause our client serious reputational damage. Indeed, any publication in relation to this matter could put such an investigation in jeopardy by negatively impacting, or prejudicing the outcome, to the detriment of our client. We trust that, as a responsible publication which champions itself as an “*important voice for academic matters*”, you will give due regard to our client and the procedures which must be carried out accordingly following your complaint to those institutions, and give those institutions the ability to carry out their own procedures before ventilating unsubstantiated allegations publicly. This is particularly so given that our client may be vindicated by those institutions, an outcome which is unlikely to result in press attention to sufficiently mitigate the damage caused.

Since his PhD thesis and becoming an academic, our client has made notable contributions to his field of study. He was part of The Leading Routes; a collective of academics that produced the ground breaking report: ‘The Broken Pipeline’. This report led to the Government providing £8 million in funding to the Office for Students which strengthened the academic pipeline for Black and Minority individuals in 2020. Professor Arday's work has also contributed to the development of better pathways for Black students to gain access to some of the most elite institutions in the UK.

¹ Professor Arday is currently supervising 15 PhD students and has examined over 35 PhD theses as an external examiner.

Finally, it is important for us to convey our client's concern that this apparent attack by THE may be, whether consciously or unconsciously, racially motivated. There has been growing concern among eminent academics over recent months about the racially motivated targeting of black academics in the United States, seeking to have them removed from their posts for championing diversity and equality, and the similar issues being faced by individuals such as Professor Arday in this jurisdiction. Those concerns have been raised by a number of academics to leaders in education and government. Our client cannot speak to the quality of your source, but urges you to exercise caution, mindful of the risk of being caught up in this narrative.

We await your confirmation that no article will be published pending the outcome of the aforementioned internal procedures by those institutions. In the meantime, if you are able to provide further particularity in relation to your allegations then our client, through this firm, is willing to consider them.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carter-Ruck", written in a cursive style.

Carter-Ruck