

# INSTITUTIONAL EDI PLAN

Outlining our ambitions  
2022-2027

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

The Open University has developed a new five-year 2022-2027 institutional strategy entitled [Learn and Live](#). One of the five goals of the strategy is '[Equity](#)'. This Institutional Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Plan has been developed to implement the goal of greater diversity and inclusion at the OU in all areas, at all levels and in every aspect of how we work and what we achieve individually, collectively, institutionally and therefore contributing to social and environmental justice.

To place EDI principles as a lens through which we view all behaviours, policies and practices is an important move designed to make clear the commitment and importance of these principles for all OU staff, students and communities. The OU's Mission Statement of being 'Open to People, Places, Methods and Ideas' and Vision of being 'Inclusive, Innovative and Responsive' embraces the EDI principle of equity. Whereas equality gives everyone the same resources and opportunities, equity ensures that individuals are allowed resources and opportunities according to their needs and circumstances.

Diversity is a crucial part of this plan as representation and inclusion by people with a wide range of attributes, skills, characteristics and lived experiences brings different thoughts, voices and perspectives to a discussion. Being included, feeling a sense of belonging and relatedness to our institution is important for wellbeing and feeling valued. An inclusive workforce is critical for the OU's Vision, resilience and reimagination.

The OU is an institution that works with a wide range of communities locally, nationally and globally with students, schools, colleges, universities, external partners, governments, research partners and employers. To continue these rewarding relationships and stay true to our Mission, we must reflect and value the diverse communities that we serve and hope to serve in the future.

This EDI plan is designed to provide the OU with direction and guidance for making our place of work a better, more inclusive and more productive organisation. Historically, EDI initiatives within organisations have often fallen on the shoulders of the most marginalised staff with no recognition or reward for the efforts that often bring about structural change. We must recognise and accept that working towards a more equitable, diverse and inclusive institution benefits everyone so therefore, EDI work is everyone's responsibility and accountability and must be embraced as such if we are to have cultural change at the OU.

The OU is a public body which has several statutory duties. The [Public Sector Equality Duty](#) under Section 149 of the [Equality Act 2010](#) requires us to pay due regard to eliminate

discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations between groups of people. [Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998](#) requires the need to promote equality of opportunity and good relations across a range of personal characteristics. The Equality Scheme (ES) 2022-2027 outlines institutional equality objectives for staff and students. The student statutory objectives are aligned to the requirements of the [Access, Participation and Success \(APS\)](#) and the [Access and Participation Plan \(APP\)](#). This EDI Plan encapsulates the ES, APP and APS drawing the objectives into one document with guidance on key areas for attention. The ES, APS and APP provide readers with the ‘why’ EDI is a priority. The EDI Plan provides readers with the ‘how’ to address inequities by focusing on actions that will generate change.

We recognise that many faculties and institutions are now using the term Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility (EDIA). However, we continue to incorporate Accessibility under the heading of Inclusion for the purposes of this plan and continue to use the widely recognised sector term, and as currently used by Advance HE- ‘EDI’.

### **What is the purpose of the EDI plan?**

EDI is one of the five goals of the OU’s [Learn and Live](#) strategy. This indicates the commitment to, and importance of embedding equitable and inclusive practices in all that we do and holding ourselves accountable to that commitment. It highlights the importance of increasing diversity and inclusion at all levels and in all areas for OU staff and students. The purpose of this inaugural EDI plan is to provide guidance and strategic direction on how we can work towards ingraining equity, diversity and inclusion within our structures. Our EDI plan sits alongside our Equality Scheme. Together they set the EDI direction, compliance and focus for the whole organisation. The EDI plan details our approach to EDI and the strategic objectives for and of the mainstreaming we aspire to.

## **2. THE VISION FOR EDI AT THE OU**

Our vision is to have a fair and inclusive organisational culture that effectively achieves the [Learn and Live](#) strategy based on consistently ambitious standards and our EDI values. The OU will be sector leading for equitable and inclusive practice and policy. Our staff will be diverse by way of lived experience, thought and knowledge at all levels of the institution. Our students will have an equitable journey that will enable the university experience to be a transformative one enabling all to flourish and reach their potential.

We will seek to nurture a sense of belonging for those we employ and encourage an environment where people feel comfortable being their authentic selves at work. We want everyone coming into contact with us, off and online and regardless of reason to feel respected, treated with dignity and to experience our stated commitment to our EDI values. We want alignment between what we say and what we do. We will work energetically towards this vision through a mainstreaming approach, by embedding EDI into our plans, policies, processes and behaviours. We will achieve our vision through strong senior leadership and ownership of this Vision, and accountability for it at all levels.

### **Key objectives underpinning our EDI plan**

#### *Commitment to an evidence-led process.*

The process of change must be evidence-led by reliable and accurate data and implementing effective interventions by design that generate the desired outcomes. We will regularly monitor and evaluate progress against our institutional KPIs.

#### *Communication to staff and students*

We will keep lines of communication open and in all directions. We will listen to understand and value the importance of lived experience of diverse groups of people.

#### *Accountability for our actions*

We will ensure that objectives are clear, consistent and achievable. Accountability for specific objectives will be embedded in our professional practice.

### **Establishing an EDI Structure across the OU**

The EDI Committee is part of the University governance structure and has delegated authority to Senate. EDI representation across the OU should be established in all four faculties, all schools, professional services units, and have student representation. There will be a named EDI representative in each of the areas who is responsible for driving the EDI agenda in their unit and working with the management team so that communication flows in all directions. There will be flexibility within each Faculty for organising EDI representation. However, each Faculty must have an EDI representative who will be a member of the University EDI committee and hold accountability along with Faculty management for advancing the OU's KPIs within their remit.

Each of the nations will have an EDI representative that is appointed by the Nation Director and that individual will attend the Nation Senior Management team meetings. The rep will also ensure that EDI is a standing item on the meeting agenda. Each of the reps will also be members of the University EDI Committee.

### 3. A FEW OF OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

**Athena Swan:** The Open University has been a member of the [Athena Swan Charter](#) since 2012 and received its first institutional Bronze award in 2013. Since then, the charter has been expanded from an initial remit to advance the careers of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics to cover Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences as well as gender equality more broadly, looking at where men are underrepresented and asking institutions to detail their support for trans and gender-diverse people. The OU successfully renewed the institutional Bronze award in 2016 and again in 2020. A gap analysis has been undertaken to prepare the OU to apply for a Silver award in the coming years. At departmental level, the OU has four School Bronze and four Silver awards. To drive our mission for all departments to have applied for awards by November 2023, we have launched an Athena Swan SharePoint site, developed a comprehensive Data Pack and run Data Analysis workshops. There are additional plans in place to fully embed Athena SWAN values across all Schools.

**Race Equality Charter:** A Race Equality Charter self-assessment team was convened in March 2021 to work towards an application for the [Race Equality Charter Mark](#). We are in the process of developing an action plan for a new submission in 2024. The OU has an active and thriving [Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff network](#) as well as a Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic Ally Group.

**Disability Confident:** In 2020, the OU achieved [Disability Confident Level 1](#) status as a Disability 'Committed' employer. Prior to obtaining the Disability Confident award, the University was a member of the Business Disability Forum and held a Disability Standard award. The OU has an active network for disabled staff, called [Enabling Staff@OU](#), and another network for Neurodiverse staff, the [Neurodiversity Network](#).

**Stonewall:** The OU has two active LGBT+ staff networks, one covering all LGBT+ identities (the [Proud Network](#)), and the other for trans and gender diverse (the [Trans Network](#)). LGBT+ events and initiatives, such as Pride and LGBT+ History Month are marked at the OU by the networks, Marketing and Communications, and the EDI team through internal and external channels. We are also members of Stonewall's UK Diversity Champions Programme.

**Financial support:** The OU offers a range of scholarships and bursaries to disabled veterans and carers. Two new financial support programmes are the [Black Students Support Fund](#) and [Sanctuary](#) scholarships both commencing in September 2022. The Sanctuary scholarships will be aligned with the University of Sanctuary application as we work towards achieving this status which is an award conferred by Cities of Sanctuary UK. This network of over 90 cities and a growing number of universities, colleges, schools and museums share the vision that our nations and institutions will be welcoming places of safety, offering sanctuary for those forced to flee persecution and violence. The award is granted to institutions which take measures to put this vision into practice and provide resources to enable best practice in meeting the needs of forced migrants.

## 4. BEST PRACTICE IN THE NATIONS

### The Open University in Wales

Commitment to EDI values in Wales is underpinned by alignment to the [Open University's Mission and the Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#), which calls for 'a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances'. The OU in Wales holds a [Chwarae Teg FairPlay Employer Silver Award](#) for the promotion of gender equality in the workplace. We have been an active participant in the HEFCW (Higher Education Funding Council for Wales) Race, Access and Success Collaborative Project 2021, and have made a public pledge as part of the [Zero Racism Wales](#) campaign, outlining our commitment to further developing an anti-racist organisational culture. The OU in Wales works in partnership with third sector organisations including [Race Council Cymru](#), [Welsh Refugee Council](#), and [Race Equality First](#), and we have engaged with external parties to screen our recruitment processes with a race and gender lens. The OU in Wales promotes the Disability Confident Scheme and we have received a number of job applications under the scheme. We have increased the diversity of our staff team over the last five years, including a significant increase in racially minoritized colleagues. As of February 2022, 11% of all staff and 17% of front-line student-facing staff at the OU in Wales are from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds. The Wales Student Recruitment and Support team utilise an inclusivity tool, adapted from the OU Inclusive Curriculum Tool, as an integrated part of call-listening and reflection activities. The OU in Wales established an EDI Challenge Panel in 2020 to actively question and scrutinise the performance and progress of our Senior Leadership and Advisory Team (SALT) towards EDI unit objectives. The OU Trans Staff Network is led from Wales and our Cardiff office provides accessible gender-neutral toilet facilities for staff and visitors. All front-line student-facing staff in Wales receive trans awareness training as part of their training induction.

### The Open University in Scotland

In our outcome agreement with the [Scottish Funding Council \(SFC\)](#), fair access, equalities and inclusion are key priorities, and we are required to report on the recruitment and retention of students with protected characteristics, with care experience and from the 20% most deprived postcodes. [The Public Sector Equality Duty](#) has specific duties in Scotland and we are required to publish a report, including our EDI goals, every four years. Other statutory requirements in Scotland include [The Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act](#) which places 'corporate parenting' responsibilities on all post-16 education bodies, and the [British Sign](#)

[Language \(Scotland\) Act](#) which requires all public bodies to publish a BSL action plan. Delivering on our Corporate Parenting Plan, we have seen the number of undergraduate entrants declaring care-experience increase and we were delighted to co-produce with Who cares? Scotland, a free course on OpenLearn Create for staff in Scotland's universities to better understand and support those who have experienced care. We work in partnership with a range of other organisations in Scotland to support work on racism, gender balance, gender-based violence, estranged students and forced migration. We joined fellow Scottish universities and colleges to support a public declaration against racism and have actively engaged in a sector-wide anti-racist project funded by SFC. Through our work in Scotland to support carers, the whole OU has been awarded [Carer Positive](#) (Established) status, an award operated by Carers Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government.

## **The Open University in Ireland**

Equality activities in Northern Ireland are underpinned by the [Northern Ireland Act 1998](#), which deems the University to be a public authority and required to promote equality of opportunity across the protected characteristics and also to promote good relations in the community. We produce an Equality Scheme which sets out how we will deliver on these "[Section 75](#)" duties; since 2012 a single OU Equality Scheme has met the legislative requirements of the UK as a whole. Each year we offer a progress report to the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and provide "Fair Employment" data on our workforce composition.

The University is currently looking to align to the [Northern Ireland Diversity Mark](#) and the team has started to use an anonymised recruitment process in early 2022. We produce a [Widening Access and Participation Plan for the Department for the Economy](#), which also funds the [Community Partnership Programme](#) which reaches out to more disadvantaged student communities in twelve local partnerships across Northern Ireland.

Legislation for Northern Ireland on language and culture in respect of both Irish and Ulster Scots is anticipated in the coming year and resources are earmarked for its implementation.

A priority for the coming year is to align to the [Public Sector Equality Duty in the Republic of Ireland](#) and senior staff have participated in a review of equality in the Irish higher education sector led by the [Royal Irish Academy](#). The Open University has contingents attending the Pride Parades in both Belfast and Dublin, when these can take place.

## 5. OUR PRIORITIES

### 5.1 Priority one: Leadership and governance

Leaders have the power to ensure an unwavering commitment to the EDI agenda across the institution. This means that leaders can create a climate where staff and students have an equitable experience. They have the authority to drive diversity initiatives and create an inclusive institution. It is the aim of the OU to have a senior leadership team that is diverse across protected characteristics because this will provide opportunity for a greater ability to relate to all of the OU community. Diversity brings greater depth and breadth of experience and knowledge along with the ability to effectively problem solve. Institutional productivity and creativity are also enhanced when teams are diverse. Authentic representation of diverse leadership teams can be a starting point for the organisational culture to reflect the values of equity and inclusion and can be a catalyst for positive change ([McKinsey Report, 2020](#)).

Diversity and inclusion at the highest levels of institutional leadership serves as a signal to students, employees and other stakeholders that the organisation understands and values EDI. There is both the opportunity and need to embed diversity at all levels of the institution and the varying geographic and sociocultural contexts in which they operate. The importance of diversity is outlined in [The Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) that highlights diversity as one of the five ways of working which enables sustainability.

Leadership and Governance at the OU is comprised of The Council, The Vice Chancellor's Executive, Senate, and all line managers

#### OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

##### Objective 1: Leaders will demonstrate a visible commitment to inclusive practices

- **Action 1:** Leaders will participate in ongoing EDI professional development and this will be included in their CDSA process. Leaders will also be provided resources for handling important aspects of employee welfare and the importance of knowledge and awareness around such issues will be emphasised.
- **Action 2:** Leaders will ensure staff within their unit engage in relevant EDI professional development and included in the CDSA process. All staff will participate in a suite of education and awareness programmes aligned to the values of the institution, enabling them to understand the intersectionality of equality with sustainability and support staff

accordingly. The awareness workshops will be at the induction stage and continue throughout employment.

- **Action 3:** Leaders will demonstrate competency in handling of complaints related to discriminatory matters.
- **Action 4:** Leaders will be provided with opportunities to engage in reciprocal mentoring opportunities.
- **Action 5:** Leaders will ensure inclusive digital and physical spaces across the institution.

**Objective 2: Leaders will drive diversity initiatives and address underrepresented groups in their teams**

- **Action 1:** Leaders will ensure that there is active and effective EDI representation within their unit where the EDI representative has time allocated for overseeing projects / interventions that address our KPIs. (EDI rep / EDI Champion).
- **Action 2:** Leaders must ensure effective EDI representation at the Leadership Team meetings and EDI must be a standing item on the agenda.
- **Action 3:** Leaders will take ownership of the monitoring and progress of their unit's demographic data in relation to the diversity of staff and students.
- **Action 4:** Leaders will be accountable for addressing under-representation of specific groups i.e., gender, ethnicity and/or declared disability within their unit.

**Objective 3: Leaders will ensure an equitable experience for staff and students**

- **Action 1:** Leaders will take responsibility for ensuring an equitable experience for staff (such as remuneration and rewards).
- **Action 2:** Leaders ensure equitable access to developmental opportunities and career progression of all staff.
- **Action 3:** Leaders will have oversight and take responsibility for ensuring equitable student outcomes. This process must ensure engaging with a range of diverse students.

## SUCCESS MEASURES

<b>Objective 1: Inclusive Leadership</b>	<p>Inclusive leadership should result in fewer complaints of discrimination, harassment, tribunals, grievances</p> <p>Increase in staff satisfaction as measured by the Staff Barometer Survey.</p>
<b>Objective 2: Driving Diversity</b>	<p>An increase in recruitment of staff who are Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic and colleagues with declared disabilities across all grades.</p>
<b>Objective 3: Equitable Experience</b>	<p>A decrease in the gender and ethnicity pay gap.</p> <p>An increase in promotions of staff who are Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic and colleagues with declared disabilities across the four faculties APP / APS data.</p> <p>An increase in student satisfaction of students from diverse and under-represented communities and backgrounds as measured by the National Student Survey.</p>

## 5.2 Priority two: Culture change

Our core values are to be inclusive, innovative, and responsive. We will continue to be guided by those values and develop a behavioural framework aligned to our mission of social justice. We must create an environment that promotes positive behaviours and one where we are able to respectfully challenge inappropriate behaviours. Our aim is to enable everyone to study and work in an environment that is free of bullying, harassment, and discrimination. Reports focusing on harassment of marginalised groups reveal that it is a common experience in HE for staff and students (see link). The effects of such behaviours are harmful to all concerned, potentially expensive for institutions and carry the risk of serious reputational damage. These issues impact on the student and staff experience, wellbeing and outcomes. Our goal is to enable people to be their authentic self at work and while studying.

## OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

**Objective 1: Embed the [Report and Support Online Tool](#) across the whole OU**

- **Action 1:** We will continue to build trust within the tool and the reports handling processes we have in place so that staff, students, and visitors feel safe and confident to submit reports of bullying and harassment.
- **Action 2:** Reports will be published widely using the data that will show trends seen over time and valuable insights into what is happening at the OU, which groups of people are being affected and what are the issues that they are dealing with. This will help us take a more targeted approach to implement changes that will aim to mitigate these problems.

### **Objective 2: Develop and deliver an Allyship programme**

- **Action 1:** An institution-wide intersectional Allyship programme will be established. It will be a community of practice where people will learn how to effectively use their privilege to advocate for underrepresented groups, especially those that experience discrimination and daily micro aggressive incivilities.
- **Action 2:** The Allyship programme will be open to all staff and students. Open conversations focusing on the fundamentals of allyship will be established with workshops addressing various areas such as concrete actions on how to be an upstander and using allyship language.

### **Objective 3: We must ensure that our behaviours are aligned with the OU's values to be inclusive, innovative and responsive as in the Behavioural Framework**

- **Action 1:** Using the behavioural framework and The Student Charter as guidance, demonstrate a zero tolerance for inappropriate behaviours / discrimination, by ensuring that bullying and discrimination is addressed swiftly and effectively using the relevant policies and procedures.
- **Action 2:** As a collective, we commit to creating an environment where all staff and students respect the rights of others to hold different beliefs and opinions. Expression of differing, and perhaps contested views is always carried out in a respectful and professional manner.

### **Objective 4: Engaging in effective Equality Impact Assessment**

An [Equality Impact Assessment \(EIA\)](#) is a way of considering the effect of the University's decisions, policies, procedures and projects on different characteristics protected in equality

law. It is a process to check that any change that may have an impact on people will be effective for everyone it is intended to benefit. A thorough EIA is vital to meet our statutory legal duty and to bring our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion goals within the University-wide strategy into practice.

- **Action 1:** The current EIA template and guidance will be refreshed to make them more easily accessible.
- **Action 2:** Regular training sessions will be provided to support staff in completing EIAs from May 2022.

## SUCCESS MEASURES

<b>Objective 1: Tackling Bullying and Harassment</b>	Evaluate the use of the 'Report and Support' online system.  Establishment of the Misconduct and Harassment working group to monitor the reports.
<b>Objective 2: Develop and deliver an Allyship programme</b>	Good participation in the allyship programme.  Completion of personal actions identified within the Allyship programme.  Increased staff satisfaction as evidenced in the staff survey.
<b>Objective 3: Behavioural Framework</b>	A decrease in complaints that have discrimination as a key feature
<b>Objective 4: Equality Impact Assessments</b>	An increased number of Equality Impact Assessments completed and returned to the EDI Team for publishing.

## 5.3 Priority three: Staff Networks

Staff Networks bring people together and help to build a more inclusive organisational culture which enables us to deliver on our mission. We recognise that many of our colleagues identify with several our staff networks, and we are committed to working collaboratively to promote and encourage intersectionality.

The Open University boasts eight staff networks: [BME](#); [Care and Caring](#); [Enabling Staff@OU](#); [International Communities Support](#); [Proud](#); [Neurodiversity](#); [Trans Staff Network](#); and [Women@OU](#). Our staff networks provide an invaluable service to its members and the wider OU community by creating safe spaces for staff to raise awareness of issues faced and effect change. Staff Networks help to create a strong sense of connection and belonging in the workplace.

### OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

**Objective 1: Support the engagement of Staff Networks by providing a consultation and engagement mechanism that is central to the Learn and Live University Strategy, Equality Scheme and EDI plan.**

- **Action 1:** We will establish a staff network framework designed to provide clarity of purpose, roles and responsibilities and support for each network. Guidelines will enable the effective running of each network and successful collaboration between networks. This will support meaningful engagement and help to develop a sense of common purpose.
- **Action 2:** The staff networks will have a standing item at the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. Issues raised during Network Lead meetings will be brought forward to the EDI Committee by the EDI Senior Manager.
- **Action 3:** Networks will be provided with self-managed budget that will be linked to their annual objectives and action plans.

**Objective 2: Increase support for the networks Leads so that they can function more effectively and achieve their goals.**

- **Action 1:** Provide release time to enable Staff Networks to support the University to meet its legal obligations in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duties. This time will be accommodated within the Academic workload management system and agreed with the relevant line manager.
- **Action 2:** Establish a suite of leadership and EDI training for the staff network leads to enable them to build on their existing skills and experience to effectively lead their respective network.
- **Action 3:** The Staff Network lead role will be recognised in the CDSA annual review process by their line managers.
- **Action 4:** Administration support will be provided to the Network Leads to help with keeping intranet pages up to date and the organisation of comms, events and other adhoc tasks.

**Objective 3: To increase visibility of Staff Networks and to widen participation of staff.**

- **Action 1:** Provide support for the annual National Day for Staff Networks event.
- **Action 2:** As a way of enhancing belonging at the OU, staff members will be granted permission to regularly attend network meetings and relevant events.

**SUCCESS MEASURES**

<p><b>Objective 1: Support the engagement of Staff Networks by providing a consultation and engagement mechanism that is central to the University Strategy, Equality Scheme and EDI plan.</b></p>	<p>Regular meaningful consultation and engagement with Staff Networks.</p> <p>Staff Network objectives and actions plans informed by data and aligned with the University Strategy, Equality Scheme and EDI plan.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2: Increase support for the Staff Network Leads so that they can function more effectively and achieve their goals.</b></p>	<p>Increased opportunities for professional and personal development for Staff Network Leads.</p> <p>Effective leadership, greater accountability; Increased administrative support.</p>
<p><b>Objective 3: To increase visibility of Staff Networks and to widen participation of staff.</b></p>	<p>Recognition of the valuable role Staff Networks play in improving the working conditions of staff with protected characteristics.</p> <p>An increase in the participation of staff in the Staff Networks.</p>

## 5.4 Priority four: EDI data and reporting

At the core of successful and impactful EDI initiatives are clear and robust measures of EDI efforts and outcomes. Accurate and reliable data (which come in many forms; in-house people system data, surveys, interviews and focus groups) are integral to the process and provide a realistic view of the experience of marginalised groups within the organisation. As a priority, it is crucial to ensure that we have accessible and robust processes in place to support the following:

- Ensure our actions are led by robust sources of information.
- Accurately pinpoint focus areas and groups and run intersectional analyses to guide meaningful actions.
- Assess the impact of our EDI targets, systems and activities at all levels of the organisation, and providing transparent view of the process to our audiences (EDI Report).
- Equip leaders to monitor and action EDI initiatives in their respective units, to identify and respond to hidden biases within practice and people experience.
- Provide the four nation offices with true and reflective data for accurate local benchmarking.
- Evaluate our commitments against the intention-impact gap model to measure that what is communicated and actioned is perceived and experienced by our people.
- Gather deeper, more meaning insights from marginalised groups to understand the interpersonal dynamics, social connections and shared interactions with colleagues in the workplace.
- Maintain up-to-date and consistent practices on reporting, categorisation and definitions relating to EDI data (e.g., analyses, survey options, grouping variables in systems).

### OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

#### Objective 1: Establish an EDI-focused survey for staff and students

To further demonstrate our commitment as sector leaders in EDI, we must go beyond adding demographic questions to general engagement surveys. EDI-specific surveys are designed to collect critical feedback from our people on views of fairness (equity), representation (diversity) and sense of belonging (inclusion). The survey will seek to explore whether

underrepresented groups feel that they are part of the organisation, have a voice, experience positive interactions with managers and colleagues, can safely report discrimination, see opportunities for them, psychological safety, and more.

- **Action 1:** We will develop a well-researched inclusion and equity survey that also covers mandatory survey questions for equality charter marks (Athena Swan and REC) to enable a streamlined approach to EDI data. We also address and outline data ethics in the survey such as the purpose of the survey, confidentiality, right to withdraw and how data will be analysed and who will have access.
- **Action 2:** We will run the inclusion survey every two years and translate findings in an internal executive summary report and include key insights in our annual EDI report.
- **Action 3:** Previous surveys have shown that promoting the survey through email newsletters and on OU Life have increased response rates. To maximise engagement, we will continue to work with Marcomms to promote the survey through VCE announcements in email newsletters, OU Life and Student Home.

**Objective 2: EDI Data Monitoring: Improve the quality, transparency, access, and use of data to support units and the EDI team with public duty and Equality Scheme monitoring requirements.**

We will report on staff and student numbers in an EDI Annual Report to meet our public legal duty and address our Equality Scheme targets. Central data teams will be responsible for ensuring data quality of all EDI reporting requirements to support reliable and quality decision-making.

- **Action 1:** We will produce a public-facing annual EDI Impact Report that will include top-level data of the demographic composition of our staff and student population. The report will also seek to address Equality Scheme KPI targets, as well as headlining EDI work success stories to promote and acknowledge the dedication and hard work carried out across the university.
- **Action 2:** We will increase support for staff to self-serve reports to analyse data relevant to their unit and Nation population. Central data teams will provide unit business planners with monthly automated self-serve dashboards to support the monitoring of Equality Scheme KPIs. Recruitment data will also be provided as a live feed to support hiring managers make informed and timely decisions on positive action. Central data teams will support users on how to use the reports and provide guidance on data protection and compliance.

- **Action 3:** Data owners will prioritise correcting data quality issues that are relied upon for EDI work so that staff have quicker access to accurate and reliable information. Central data teams will also deliver pre-defined and sense-checked datasets to the EDI team for use across high-profile EDI reports.
- **Action 4:** Proprietary staff and students surveys will continue to feature EDI measures, and results will be analysed and communicated through an EDI lens. Existing survey data dashboards will present results against demographics to understand perceptions through the lived experiences of marginalised groups.
- **Action 5:** We will increase communications on how data is being collected, analysed and why (rationale and benefits). Promoting data transparency gives our staff and students a peace of mind knowing that information they provide will be used fairly and ethically. People who understand what they are consenting to, and how it benefits them, are more likely to be comfortable with doing so.
- **Action 6:** We will establish benchmarking guidelines for staff and student data that can be used across equality monitoring reports and equality charter mark submissions.
- **Action 7:** We will communicate data KPI milestones in our newsletters to increase transparency of our progression.

### **Objective 3: EDI Data governance: Improve guidance on terminology, language, and data category standards**

The words we use matter and are key to facilitating a respectful, psychologically safe, inclusive and welcoming environment. By embracing inclusive language in how we categorise and speak about protected groups in our systems and reporting functions, and encouraging others to do the same, we demonstrate a commitment to an EDI-conscious way of working.

We will strive to ensure that inclusive language is reflected in our systems and reporting functions and avoid language that perpetuates harm or offense towards our staff and students. We will continue to evolve as new terminology emerges or current language becomes obsolete.

- **Action 1:** Central data and system teams will consult with EDI data specialists and EDI Committee on key system and reporting changes affecting EDI data. Categorisations and definitions of protected characteristics will align to EDI-owned data reports. This will foster consistency against data definitions, categorisations and ensure appropriate sentiment of EDI analysis.

- **Action 2:** Dashboards, surveys, Equality Opportunity forms and other sources collecting EDI data should seek guidance from the EDI team to ensure terminology, groupings and questions are appropriately framed. EDI team will create guidance materials to support this.
- **Action 3:** We will continue to promote inclusive and self-describe options for demographic categories in our systems, forms and surveys, and reduce labelling groups as ‘Other’. Labelling marginalised groups as ‘Other’ is known as ‘Othering’: a form of exclusion where minoritised social groups are defined as having identities different from the ‘norm’. Equally, we will continue to evolve Success Factors and student data systems to reflect current and appropriate terminology.
- **Action 4:** All staff data are measured using a unique counting methodology to avoid duplicating staff with more than one appointment.

#### **Objective 4: Candidate Experience Survey**

While our administrative recruitment data shows patterns and trends at each stage of the recruitment cycle, a candidate survey will uncover the sentiment behind these trends from the voices of candidates themselves. This survey will be designed as feedback form and will seek to address differences in experience of specific groups and explore their likelihood to apply as well as recommend working at The OU. Insights from candidates will be valuable to informing improvements towards our recruitment processes.

- **Action 1:** We will distribute a candidate survey to all applicants to collect actionable insights of the applicant/candidate experience.

#### **SUCCESS MEASURES**

<b>Objective 1: Establish an Inclusion Survey</b>	An all-encompassing culture survey meets the requirements for all equality projects; achieving at least 50% disclosure rate, survey data and analysis are accessible to staff.
<b>Objective 2: EDI Data Monitoring</b>	Staff have easy access to regularly updated, accurate staff and student data visualisations that can be analysed against Equality Scheme baseline numbers; increased disclosure of demographic data in our systems; all engagement surveys are analysed through an EDI lens.

<b>Objective 3: EDI Data Governance</b>	Established consistent benchmarking, definitions and counting methodologies for EDI reporting; reduced data quality issues; culturally insensitive terminology removed from systems and reporting; EDI team will have oversight and be consulted on system changes affecting EDI data.
<b>Objective 4: Candidate Experience Survey</b>	Responses from successful and unsuccessful applicants that can be used to cross-reference administrative recruitment data; increasing response rate; no difference in marginalised groups' experience

## 5.5 Priority five: Learning and teaching

The Learning and Teaching aspect of the EDI Plan is aligned to the five principles within the [University Learning and Teaching Vision and Plan](#). The principles are as follows:

- 1) A high-quality, supported distance learning experience is enabled through innovative teaching and assessment.
- 2) Students are supported to begin and progress through their OU journey at the appropriate level and intensity for their needs.
- 3) Learning is designed and delivered as anti-racist, anti-discriminatory, accessible and inclusive.
- 4) Students and their voice are integrated into the planning of our teaching to enhance the quality of our provision.
- 5) Teaching and learning are designed and delivered as an academically rigorous, research-informed process.

### OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

#### Objective 1: Improve outcomes for all students

- **Action 1:** We will introduce a suite of educational programmes for staff and students designed to raise awareness about modular gaps so that we are able to implement effective interventions to close them.
- **Action 2:** For staff to close awarding gaps, there must be ownership of the problem with a full understanding of the factors that cause and sustain the gaps. Staff from the APP/APS and EDI Team will present awarding gap data at Boards of Studies meetings along with relevant interventions and targets.

## **Objective 2: Provide an anti-racist, intersectional, inclusive curriculum**

- **Action 1:** We will evaluate and modify all current curriculum and continue to develop an anti-racist, anti-discriminatory, and intersectional curriculum so that all our students see themselves reflected in it. Aligned with our sustainability goals, we will work towards a decolonised, decarbonised and democratised curriculum which reflects the needs of most of the world.
- **Action 2:** The inclusive curriculum tool will be used across all modules to assist with this process.

## **Objective 3: Accessibility by design**

- **Action 1:** Accessibility will be embedded across all learning platforms and technologies with relevant ownership identified.
- **Action 2:** Digital poverty that leads to digital exclusion will be addressed in line with digital inclusion processes.

## **Objective 4: Incorporation of the student voice**

- **Action 1:** Students will be invited to provide feedback at the mid-point and the end of the module. This information will be collated and shared with the module teams so that an action plan can be created and implemented.
- **Action 2:** We will implement new working practices and systems that will improve module production that will also enhance the student voice thereby building staff / student partnerships as highlighted in the Student Charter.

## SUCCESS MEASURES

<b>Objective 1: Improve outcomes for students</b>	Staff attendance and engagement in CPD (Continuing Professional Development) related to closing awarding gaps  Faculty ownership of awarding gap data as documented by a relevant action plan to close the gaps
<b>Objective 2: Anti-racist, intersectional, inclusive curriculum</b>	Institutional wide use of the Inclusive Curriculum Tool
<b>Objective 3: Accessibility by design.</b>	Accessibility – new home, profile raised.
<b>Objective 4: Student Voice</b>	Student Voice as part of the feedback mechanism within a module, ensuring students can benefit from changes made in response to their feedback.

### 5.6 Priority six: The staff experience

The OU staff are committed, dynamic and resourceful. We work at the OU because we connect with the social justice mission of being open to people, places, methods and ideas. In our efforts to enhance diversity within the staffing body, we must address our recruitment and selection processes. We must also ensure our staff are supported in their professional development and that no structural inequalities or barriers exist for any groups of staff in terms of promotion, career progression and job satisfaction.

## OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

### Objective 1: Fair Recruitment and Selection

Many potential employees are no longer making decisions based on the value of working for an organisation but rather on an organisation's ethics and values. The HE sector is subject to the Public Sector Equality Duty in the requirement that equality considerations are reflected into the design of policies, the delivery of services and taking steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people.

- **Action 1:** At the beginning of the recruitment process, Hiring Managers should request diversity data and work in collaboration with their PSBP/Resource Account

Manager to evidence the demographic composition of the unit where the vacancy is located to ensure best practice in diverse recruitment.

- **Action 2:** Advertise vacancies across a range of platforms to attract diverse audiences and therefore candidates.
- **Action 3:** Use anonymous short-listing processes where possible and practical.
- **Action 4:** Deploy a positive action (Equality Act 2010) approach as outlined in the Positive Action Guide for Hiring Managers ( [Positive Action Guide](#))
- **Action 5:** Ensure all staff who serve on interview panels have specific and appropriate EDI training and this is dated within two years of the interview panel.
- **Action 6:** Ensure the use of Diversity Statements for all candidates as part of the recruitment and selection process.
- **Action 7:** Hiring Managers must ensure the interview panel is diverse by way of gender, ethnicity and age. The Chair's EDI Statement must be included prior to shortlisting and the interviews to assure compliance and agreement among all members of the panel.
- **Action 8:** Continued commitment to using non-gendered language in our adverts.

**Objective 2: Ensure that all staff are aware of the equity and inclusion behaviours that we wish to embody at the OU.**

- **Action 1:** Enable staff to participate in a range of equality and inclusion educational workshops during induction and then at regular intervals to refresh knowledge and awareness.
- **Action 2:** During induction, staff should be made aware of how our flexible working policies will allow them to look after their health, wellbeing and dependants.
- **Action 3:** Offer wide ranging and role appropriate professional development opportunities for all staff around EDI topics and issues.
- **Action 4:** Demonstrate through action a zero tolerance for inappropriate behaviours / discrimination.

**Objective 3: Implement a career progression framework that supports and promotes opportunities for all staff within the institution.**

- **Action 1:** We will partner with People Services to ensure a career progression framework that is transparent and effective is developed.
- **Action 2:** We will continue to develop positive action programmes such as the 100 Black Women Professors NOW and Aurora to address inequalities of opportunities in career progression.
- **Action 3:** We will further develop our academic promotions profiles to ensure that they reflect and value the variety of academic careers with the University.
- **Action 4:** We will act on evidence to ensure that academic promotions processes are equitable across the faculties, removing the barriers experienced by some groups of staff in accessing support and guidance around their promotion cases.
- **Action 5:** We commit to developing a clear organisational learning offering which supports the development of all our staff within their roles and helps them meet their career aspirations.

**Objective 4: Take action to address the ethnicity and gender pay gap across the OU which results in women and racially minoritised individuals receiving less compensation than white men.**

- **Action 1:** Gender, ethnicity and disability pay gap data will be monitored across the institution.
- **Action 2:** An action plan will be developed and implemented to address issues around related to progression, promotion, salary on hiring practices, discretionary merit awards, part time working issues and grade/role allocation.
- **Action 3:** Existing rewards and recognition processes will be monitored and further evaluated to ensure parity across all staff.
- **Action 4:** We will commit to developing and implementing innovative practices around job sharing, career breaks, promotion, parental and caregiving leave to support staff appropriately at various stages in their careers.

**Objective 5: Support the development of our staff through appropriate mentoring and reciprocal mentoring arrangements.**

- **Action 1:** All units and faculties will put in place clear mentoring arrangements which enable staff to access mentoring support at a variety of career stages including induction, role change, seeking promotion and career development.
- **Action 2:** Reciprocal mentoring programme will be offered to ensure staff have the opportunity to learn from the lived experience of diverse colleagues.

**Objective 6: All staff leaving the university or moving to a different internal department will be offered an exit interview.**

- **Action 1:** When staff do decide to move onto new ventures, either internally or externally we will conduct a comprehensive exit interview which can be anonymous if requested.
- **Action 2:** Exit interview information will be used to address any issues and build on strengths within our institution. These interviews are an important part of the process for changing the culture at the OU.

**Objective 7: Committee membership will be diverse and representative.**

- **Action 1:** All committees that are part of the OU’s governance structure will have diverse membership and representation.
- **Action 2:** Where appropriate, the membership of university committees will also include representatives from the Open University Student Association (OUSA).

**SUCCESS MEASURES**

<p><b>Objective 1: Fair Recruitment and Selection</b></p>	<p>Informed by data led interventions, progress towards underrepresentation in the workforce, particularly, but not only, leaderships levels. Transparent process at every stage backed up by rigorous data collection, analysis, evaluation and action data-led interventions</p>
<p><b>Objective 2: Behavioural Framework</b></p>	<p>OU values in Action principles embedded and adhered to – reflected in staff survey</p>

<b>Objective 3: Career Progression</b>	Informed by data led interventions, progress towards underrepresentation closing gender, disability and ethnicity promotion gaps, improving pipeline developing which will lead to future improvements in diversity of senior staff
<b>Objective 4: Gender, Ethnicity and Disability Pay Gap</b>	Informed by data, monitor, evaluate, disseminate and action data led interventions
<b>Objective 5: Mentoring</b>	All staff are offered opportunities for mentoring and/or reciprocal mentoring with clearly sign posted and high-quality schemes in place
<b>Objective 6: Exit Interviews</b>	Informed by data, monitor, evaluate, disseminate and action data led interventions
<b>Objective 7: Committee Membership</b>	Diversity and inclusion are represented across all committees and boards that are part of the governance structure

## 5.7 Priority seven: The student experience

The student voice and student engagement are imperative in generating change in the EDI process. In particular, differential student outcomes between various groups need to be addressed. The targets outlined in the Access and Participation Plan and [Access and Participation Success Strategy](#) provide guidance on areas to focus on such as ethnicity, Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), and students with declared disabilities.

We will co-create equality projects with our students and endeavour to address inequities and student outcomes in research opportunities. It is important that students' experiences and voices shine through in the work that we do. We aim to listen to and work together with the OU Students' Association and the student body, including the [student networks](#), in all their diversity.

We will support our students in their endeavours to successfully progress through and complete their chosen module(s) or qualification, working to reduce inequitable outcomes between different demographic groups of students.

A vision for student voice at the OU is set out in the [Student Charter](#): 'We actively support student engagement in University decision-making, ensuring the feedback loop is closed; and commit to building partnership between staff and students.'

**Objective 1: Reduce inequalities in access, participation and success (APS) for all learners from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds**

- **Action 1:** Work with and support marcomms, APP, APS and the EDI Team to design robust access interventions that target underrepresented and disadvantaged communities to make the OU their choice of institution for study.
- **Action 2:** Ensure students who are underrepresented and disadvantaged have the tools needed to fully engage in their study.
- **Action 3:** All student support systems must be aware of the needs of both individuals and various groups of students, especially those who are the most marginalised and vulnerable.
- **Action 4:** All line managers to ensure that staff have knowledge of interventions to close student outcome gaps. Specific activities must be built into CDSAs.
- **Action 5:** All staff must have an appreciation of the impact of structural inequalities and how it relates to disparities in student outcomes. Essential for staff to address the degree award gaps from a non-deficit perspective.
- **Action 6:** Work with Marcomms to understand why significant numbers of specific groups of students (Black students, those with disabilities, and those who are from IMD1 communities) leave the OU before the first fee liability point and develop interventions to address this issue.
- **Action 7:** Identify and implement ways to reduce digital poverty.

**Objective 2: Promote the value of student voice and student satisfaction across the University and embed these in all our work as cornerstones of student success**

- **Action 1:** Evidence of being guided by the student voice and student satisfaction outcomes for all unit activities and all major change initiatives at the University.
- **Action 2:** Evidence that the unit's activities promote a culture of listening to and acting on the student voice, and of closing the feedback loop.
- **Action 3:** More and better-quality student voice activities in place across the University – including acting on student views, providing a greater range of engagement

opportunities, supporting innovation, engaging more diverse students, evaluation of activities and closing the feedback loop.

- **Action 4:** Increased awareness of student voice opportunities amongst students – what it means and how to get involved, with larger numbers and a greater diversity of students engage.

## SUCCESS MEASURES

<p><b>Objective 1: Reduce inequitable outcomes in APS</b></p>	<p>Reduction in inequitable outcomes by monitoring the disproportionality of access, success and progression for students from APS characteristics and the underpinning key drivers.</p> <p>Decreases in awarding gaps, modular good passes, and gaps in graduate outcomes between disadvantaged groups. Increased retention and registration of the same groups. Targets aligned to the APP/APS targets.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2: Promote the Value of the student voice and student satisfaction</b></p>	<p>Increase in the proportion of students satisfied with their OU study experience (NSS (National Student Survey)</p> <p>Increase in the proportion of students who are satisfied with the teaching, assessment, and academic support on their course.</p>

## 5.8 Priority eight: Research, scholarship and knowledge exchange

The research aspect of the EDI Plan is aligned to the five activities outlined in the [Research Plan](#). The five activities are as follows:

- 1) Societal challenges
- 2) The next generation
- 3) Open research
- 4) Building on our strengths
- 5) Improving our processes

The EDI plan will also interface with the new OU [Scholarship](#) and [Knowledge Exchange Plans](#) as appropriate.

There are known disparities across staff groups with some academics much less able to develop across the range of research, scholarship and knowledge exchange portfolios. The challenges and barriers for women, colleagues from ethnic minorities communities and staff with disabilities and /or caring responsibilities have well documented and to a certain extent, understood across the sector. Teaching, administration and invisible labour workloads are frequently higher for women staff when compared to men. These disparities contribute significantly to disparate funding opportunities, promotions deficits and hence the gender and ethnicity pay gap. Indeed, perceived hierarchies within the institution, where some activities are valued above others lead to inequity for staff and missed opportunities to bring diverse voices to the fore.

## **OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS**

**Objective 1: Ensure fair and appropriate decision-making processes around what research, scholarship and knowledge exchange activity is funded and supported.**

- **Action 1:** Ensure all academic activities are to be afforded equal status within the university, with all staff enabled to develop balanced and sustainable academic careers.
- **Action 2:** Funding decisions for research, scholarship and knowledge exchange will be based on the views of a broad range of diverse stakeholders including students, to ensure equity on what is resourced and why.
- **Action 3:** Ensure all research conducted adheres to appropriate ethical guidelines.

**Objective 2: Foster a culture which creates diverse staff and student involvement in all academic activities, ensuring that existing barriers to engaging with research, scholarship and knowledge exchange for staff and students are overcome.**

- **Action 1:** Establish processes for the recruitment and retention of a diverse student research population.
- **Action 2:** Ensure appropriate support mechanisms are in place to enable all Post Graduate research students to feel a sense of belong and flourish at the OU.
- **Action 3:** Ensure that undergraduate students are given direct and equitable opportunities to engage in research activity within their programmes.
- **Action 4:** Support staff, within their roles, to participate fully across the breadth of teaching, research, scholarship and knowledge exchange.

- **Action 5:** Research supervisors will have cultural competence so they are able to effectively work with a diverse group of research students

**Objective 3: Value and promote all institutional activity (teaching, research, scholarship and knowledge exchange) to exemplify the OU to all our stakeholders as a knowledge creating and knowledge sharing institution.**

- **Action 1:** Support staff to conduct research and scholarship to address long standing equity issues in teaching and learning.
- **Action 2:** Deliver a research and scholarship informed curriculum to the benefit of all our students.

### SUCCESS MEASURES

<p><b>Objective 1: Ensure fair and appropriate decision-making processes around what research, scholarship and knowledge exchange activity is funded and supported.</b></p>	<p>Diversity of staff and students receiving internal support under any scheme within the Research Plan.</p> <p>PGR completion.</p> <p>PRES overall satisfaction.</p> <p>Diversity of the PGR applicants and registered population.</p>
<p><b>Objective 2: Foster a culture which creates diverse staff and student involvement in all academic activities, ensuring that existing barriers to engaging with research, scholarship and knowledge exchange for staff and students are overcome.</b></p>	<p>Ensuring diversity within the PG population; support mechanisms.</p>
<p><b>Objective 3: Value and promote all institutional activity (teaching, research, scholarship and knowledge exchange) to exemplify the OU to all our stakeholders as a knowledge creating and knowledge sharing institution.</b></p>	<p>Monitor and evaluating the effectiveness of staff support as perceived by the relevant staff.</p> <p>Curriculum based on research and scholarship. The Curriculum guide is worth looking at.</p>