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 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Institutional Plan has been developed to implement the goal of equity, 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 values of being 'Inclusive, Innovative and Responsive' embrace 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[1]. 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.

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[1] https://www.peoplemanagement.co.uk/experts/research/diversity-drives-better-decisions

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.

Three key principles underpin 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 key performance indicators (KPIs).

Communication with 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 SMART so they are clear, consistent and achievable. Accountability for specific objectives will be embedded in our professional practice.

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.

LGBT+ Initiatives: 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](#) that 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.

THIS PLAN OUTLINES OUR AMBITION FOR EDI AT THE OU

Establishing an EDI Structure across the OU

The EDI Committee is part of the University governance structure and has delegated authority from 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.

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 renumeration and rewards).
- **Action 2:** Leaders will 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.

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. Reports focusing on harassment of marginalised groups reveal that it is a common experience in HE for staff and students (see Equality Human Rights 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 the student and staff experience, well-being, and outcomes. We will seek to nurture a sense of belonging for those we employ and encourage an environment where staff and students feel comfortable and confident being themselves, free from unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

Objective 1: Embed the Report + Support Online Tool across the whole OU

- **Action 1:** Working collaboratively between People Services, Student Support and the EDI Team, 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, harassment, assault, hate crimes, sexual misconduct and unlawful discrimination.
- **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.
- **Action 3:** Work will continue that raises awareness of the tool, ensuring that it is signposted so that those who need it are aware of how to access it.
- **Action 4:** The reports handling process will continue to be monitored and evaluated to ensure that best practice is followed.

Objective 2: Develop and deliver an Allyship programme

The Allyship programme will be an institution-wide initiative for all staff and students. 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. 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.

- **Action 1**: Establish an institution-wide intersectional allyship programme and community of practice which will be aligned with the Behavioural Change Framework.
- **Action 2:** Increase awareness of the programme and encourage participation.
- **Action 3:** Line managers will be provided with advice and guidance to enable them to support allyship, diversity and inclusion within their teams.

Objective 3: 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.
- **Action 3:** As a collective, we commit to working with organisations that share our values.
- **Action 4:** Every individual within the OU community will take responsibility for their actions aligning to the OU values and the behavioural framework.

Objective 4: Engage 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:** The EDI Team will provide regular training sessions to support staff in completing EIAs from May 2022.

Objective 5: Communicate EDI initiatives to raise awareness and build engagement

- **Action 1:** Communications will be used to inform, educate and support the OU community about EDI and our initiatives, demonstrating its importance as an institution-wide priority and its relevance to all OU staff and students.
- **Action 2:** Communications will feature more celebratory success stories and good practice, encouraging staff and students to adopt inclusive attitudes in all that they do.
- **Action 3:** Communications will give a voice to diverse groups and individuals, adding to a sense of belonging in the organisation and addressing under-representation.

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 of 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 their 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 and intersectional approach.
- **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 a self-managed budget that will be linked to their annual objectives and action plans.

Objective 2: Increase support for the Network 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 individual workload plans and agreed with the relevant line manager.
- **Action 2:** A suite of leadership and EDI training for the Staff Network and Network Steering Group Leads will be established 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 ad-hoc tasks.
- **Action 5:** We will ensure that Network Leads are supported with projects that benefit the institution and are aligned to the OU's values (e.g., Carer's Passport).

Objective 3: 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, line managers will offer flexibility around working hours to enable staff to attend network meetings and events where possible.

- **Action 3:** Staff Networks will be promoted as part of new staff induction activities.

- **Action 4:** Information about Staff Networks and their activities will be publicised through the EDI website and other equality, diversity and inclusion communication channels.

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 meaningful 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 Marketing and Communications to promote the survey through VCE announcements in email newsletters, OU Life, Tutor Home 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 set up a data management 'advisory board' consisting of key data owners across the university. The board will be responsible for discussing and planning workstreams, data frameworks, solutions that will support the organisation in achieving our equality monitoring and reporting goals and responsibilities.

- **Action 3:** 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. Central data teams will support users on how to use the reports and provide guidance on data protection and compliance.

- **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 run a data transparency communications campaign, to communicate 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 the 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 ensure consistency across 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. The 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.

5.5 Priority five: Teaching and learning

The Teaching and Learning aspect of the EDI Plan is aligned to the five principles within the University Teaching and Learning 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:** Introduce a suite of educational programmes for staff and students designed to raise awareness about modular gaps so that we can 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, so that module and qualification teams are aware of awarding gaps and take responsibility for addressing them.

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

- **Action 1:** Module teams 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 will continue to be developed by the APS Team as a proactive tool to be used across all modular content and assessment practices.

Objective 3: Embed accessibility by design

- **Action 1:** Accessibility will be embedded across all learning platforms and technologies with relevant unit and faculty ownership identified.
- **Action 2:** Poverty leading to digital exclusion will be addressed by a focus on increasing access to affordable technology.

Objective 4: Integration of diverse student voices

- **Action 1:** Students will be invited to provide feedback at the mid-point and at the end of the module, this will include feedback on EDI issues. This information will enable module teams to draw up appropriate action plans to address any emerging issues.
- **Action 2:** We will implement new working practices and systems to improve module production and enhance the integration of diverse student voices, building staff / student partnerships as highlighted in the Student Charter.

5.6 Priority six: The staff experience

The OU staff are committed, dynamic and resourceful. Most colleagues work at the OU because of a strong connection 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 Diversity Pool within the Resourcing Hub should be regularly updated and used rather than overreliance on specific staff members. 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**.**

- **Action 5:** Ensure online forums are inclusive spaces for all who are eligible and wish to contribute.

- **Action 6:** The EDI Team will work constructively with the Unions to further the EDI agenda across the OU.

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, gender and disability pay gap across the OU

The gender and ethnicity pay gap at the OU is 13.3% and 20.1% respectively* (March 2022). This gap is based on data that indicates that women and racially minoritised individuals receive less compensation than white men.

- **Action 1:** Gender and ethnicity 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:** The Insight Team will provide information on the feasibility of including the disability pay gap data for 2022. Any existing challenges/barriers to publishing this data will be tackled with robust interventions.

- **Action 4:** Existing rewards and recognition processes will be monitored and further evaluated to ensure parity across all staff.

- **Action 5:** 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.

*The Gender and Ethnicity pay gap data: The Covid-19 pandemic had an impact on the pay gap data. Additional hours worked by our Associate Lecturers (ALs) to support extraordinary student growth contributed to the increase in pay gap data. Due to the gender pay gap methodology, the calculation of earnings must reflect an hourly wage and this requirement has artificially inflated the average hours worked for ALs. The end result gives the impression that male AL colleagues were paid more for the same work, when in fact, male ALs were working more additional hours than their female counterparts.

Objective 6: Offer an exit survey / interview to all staff leaving the university or moving to a different internal department

- **Action 1:** When staff do decide to move onto new ventures, either internally or externally we will conduct a comprehensive exit survey or interview which can be anonymous if requested.
- **Action 2:** Exit survey / interview information will be used to address any issues and build on strengths within our institution. These surveys/ 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 must work towards having a diverse membership and representation. This aspect must be considered in communications when calling for new members.
- **Action 2:** Where appropriate, the membership of university committees will also include representatives from the Open University Student Association (OUSA).

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 (APP) 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, the alumni 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:** Facilitate and support collaborative work between Marcomms, APP, APS, Academic Services, the faculties 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 and alumni – what it means and how to get involved, with larger numbers and a greater diversity of students engaged.

- **Action 5:** Ensure online forums are inclusive spaces for all who are eligible and wish to contribute.

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 minority 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:** Research and scholarship funding will be actively monitored to ensure fair and equitable allocation of resources.

- **Action 4:** 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 research supervisors have cultural competence so they can effectively work with a diverse group of research students.

- **Action 3:** 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 4:** Ensure that undergraduate students are given direct and equitable opportunities to engage in research activity within their programmes.

- **Action 5**: Support staff, within their roles, to participate fully across the breadth of teaching, research, scholarship and knowledge exchange.

- **Action 6:** Work proactively to ensure all staff have access to supportive networks enabling them to seek research and scholarship funding.

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.
- **Action 3:** Ensure that a plurality of academic career types (research, teaching, scholarship and knowledge exchange) are supported and appropriately rewarded across the institution.

6. OUR OVERARCHING SUCCESS MEASURES

Priority Area	Overarching Success Measures	Timeframe Short term = within 1 year Mid = 1-3 years Long = 3 years +
1: Leadership and Governance	Increase in staff satisfaction as measured by the Staff Barometer Survey	Mid
	Increase in recruitment and retention of staff who are Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic and staff with disabilities across all grades	Recruitment = Mid Retention = Long
	Decrease in the gender and ethnicity pay gap	Short
2: Culture Change	Number of Bullying & Harassment cases received via Report and Support.	Short term increase / long term decrease in reports
	Engagement in Allyship Programme.	Mid
	An increase in Equality Impact Assessments completed.	Mid
3: Staff Networks	Increased participation across all Staff Networks	Mid
	Increased support for staff network leads so that they can function more effectively and achieve Staff Network goals.	Short
	Recognition of valuable role staff networks play in improving the working conditions of staff with protected characteristics.	Mid
4: EDI Data and Reporting	EDI Survey	Short
	Accessible accurate data enabling Units/Faculties to make informed decisions for action priorities.	Mid
	Consistent benchmarking, definitions and counting methodologies for EDI.	Mid
5: Teaching and Learning	Institution wide use of the Inclusive Curriculum Tool *	Mid
	Implementation of mid and end-of-module evaluations across the institution	Mid
	Awarding gap data	Mid
	Pay Gap Data *	Short

6: The Staff Experience	Academic career progression data	Mid
	Improved diversity in recruitment and retention data.	Mid
7: The Student Experience	APP/APS data *	Mid
	National Student Survey (NSS)	Short
	Post Graduate Experience Survey (PRES)	Mid
8: Research, Scholarship and Knowledge Exchange	PGR population and scholarships diversity data	Mid
	Access/availability of research information to inform practice	Short
	Promotion of institutional activity	Short

*Proposed success measures for the Equity goal (Learn and Live).