

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY

2018-2022

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FOREWORD

Diversity and Inclusion really matter – both to me on a personal level, and to Oxford Brookes as an institution. These qualities are at the heart of everything we do and are embedded in our guiding principles.

At Oxford Brookes we are actively striving to be fully inclusive, reflecting society at large, where people from many cultures and backgrounds live and learn alongside each other. Our ambition is to provide the best possible environment in which each person, regardless of background, can flourish and fulfil their potential.

I believe that the opportunities open to people shouldn't be limited by disability, gender, ethnicity or nationality. Nor should they be limited by where they grew up or went to school. It's vital that we remove all barriers, ensuring there's a level playing field for all.

We have made some excellent progress so far in celebrating and supporting diversity. I've been particularly proud of our events programmes such as LGBTQ+, Black History and Disability History Months, and that we now have EDI champions in every faculty and directorate. In 2018 the University also launched a campaign to encourage students and staff to report sexual violence, hate crime and harassment relating to students.

Yet there's still much to do and I'm determined to build on the momentum. In this strategy we have set ourselves clear targets that will help us to ensure diversity is at the heart of everything we do as a University – an approach that will enhance the experience of every student, staff and visitor. Put simply we have the scope to develop as an ever more diverse and truly inclusive institution in the years ahead.

Professor Alistair Fitt
Vice-Chancellor

1 OUR COMMITMENT

Diversity includes everyone

1.1 Oxford Brookes University has a long standing commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). This encompasses work to enhance the experience of our students and staff, as well as a wider contribution to the advancement of EDI across the higher education sector and beyond, through the Centre for Diversity Policy Research and Practice.

1.2 The University seeks to go beyond legal compliance, striving to be a sector leader in the advancement of equality, diversity and inclusion. This approach is based on the following understanding:

Equality is about breaking down barriers, removing disadvantage, and creating a level playing field.

Diversity takes this a step further valuing people as unique individuals and celebrating differences.

Inclusion is where the talents and potential of all are harnessed, everyone is valued and can be themselves.

1.3 Our vision is to be an organisation which attracts a diverse community of staff and students, which creates a culture of inclusion where students and staff feel they belong and can thrive, and where diversity is celebrated and integrated into all aspects of the University's day-to-day life. Ultimate success would be that these become so firmly embedded in everything that we do, so instinctive in the way we do things here, that EDI-focused initiatives are no longer required.

1.4 This strategy builds on the progress made to date and is intended to guide the University's EDI agenda over the next three years.



2 WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED

The University is proud of what has been achieved in taking forward the **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2015 – 2018**. We have made good progress in many areas, particularly in relation to gender equality and LGBTQ+ inclusion.

- 2.1 Our commitment to EDI is demonstrated through success in achieving major national awards including Athena SWAN, Disability Confident Scheme level 2 and participation in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.
- 2.2 We have established programmes of events celebrating diversity including LGBTQ+, Black History and Disability History Months as well as recognising national events including International Women's Day, Bi-visibility Day and Trans Day of Remembrance. Events have also been run to promote wellbeing for students and staff.
- 2.3 We have extended engagement with underrepresented groups through establishing staff networks (LGBTQ+, BAME and Staff Disability Networks) and recently created faculty and directorate-based EDI champions. Engagement with Brookes' Union has been maintained through representation at the EDI Advisory Group. Within Brookes Union there are a number of student 'communities', including BAME¹ students community, and students with disability.
- 2.4 We have continuously improved the accessibility of our physical estate. The Estates Disability Issues Group (renamed the Estates and Facilities Accessibility Advisory Group) was established to consider the needs of users (staff, students and visitors), to develop solutions and to monitor the implementation of those solutions. For example, the refurbishment of the Clerici building has transformed accessibility for a major section of our Headington campus which houses the Oxford Brookes Business School and the Sir Kenneth Wheare Hall, where graduations are held.
- 2.5 Performance against student widening participation milestones has historically been above sector performance on application, retention and good completion data for **disabled students**². However, this is not the case for all groups.
- 2.6 We have reviewed and enhanced our key EDI policies. The Harassment and Bullying Policy (which covers both students and staff) has been revised and we have appointed and trained staff harassment advisers resulting in an increase in staff awareness of the policy by 21% to 73%³. In addition 95% of staff are aware of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion policy.
- 2.7 The University has recently undertaken a research study on students' thoughts and attitudes towards harassment, hate crime, sexual violence and reporting mechanisms; and has introduced a tool to enable both students and staff to report incidents involving students. In 2018, we launched a university-wide campaign (It's not OK, It's not Brookes⁴) to encourage reporting of incidents of sexual violence, hate crime and harassment.

¹ Black Asian and Minority Ethnic

² Oxford Brookes' performance against widening participation milestones reports

³ Staff survey 2014 and staff survey 2018

⁴ www.brookes.ac.uk/students/report-and-support/

3 WHAT WE STILL NEED TO ACHIEVE

While we are proud of these achievements, we recognise that we have much more to do.

- 3.1 We need to be attractive to a more diverse cohort of future students and address real and perceived barriers that prevent certain groups of students from making an application to Oxford Brookes.
- 3.2 Reduce the attainment gap between Black and White students and improve the proportion of Black and Asian students progressing to highly skilled employment or further study.
- 3.3 Increase the representation⁴ of BAME staff overall to more closely mirror the proportion of BAME students and the working age BAME population in the Oxfordshire area. In working to close this gap we need to support career progression to strengthen representation in leadership positions.
- 3.4 Address factors that contribute to the gender pay gap of 11.9% (mean gross hourly pay)⁵. In particular, this will involve

exploring part-time working and career progression.

- 3.5 A growing number of students and staff require support with mental health. We need to develop a deeper understanding of underlying causes to inform preventative strategies, as well as ensuring appropriate and timely support is in place.
- 3.6 We need to continue to strengthen the governance, leadership and management of EDI activity to recognise the increasingly complex external reporting requirements, charters and accreditations, and connections with closely linked activity including access and participation, Technician Commitment and HR Excellence in Research. The aim is to achieve clearer visibility, coordination and synergies as we work towards common goals.

⁴ Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2016-2017 (staff)

⁵ Gender pay gap report 2017



4 WIDER CONTEXT

The University does not operate in a vacuum: this strategy reflects changes in the wider environment, including:

- 4.1 Demographic changes indicate increasing ethnic diversity in the UK population, particularly among younger age groups who are our future students and staff.
- 4.2 There is growing political interest in addressing disparities in participation and outcomes, as well as improving social mobility as illustrated by the metrics introduced to the Teaching Excellence Framework, as well as the expectations set out for Access and Participation plans by the Office for Students, and a stronger approach to inclusion in the Research Excellence Framework 2021.
- 4.3 There are higher expectations for organisations to remove barriers that prevent disabled people accessing jobs and services, including strengthened requirements around Web Content Accessibility.
- 4.4 There is growing demand for mental health support amongst students with the government proposing a certificate of excellence to reward institutions that show they are making student and staff mental health a priority, and have improved mental health and wellbeing outcomes.
- 4.5 The Public Sector Equality Duty to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not is facing particular challenge by individual and collective responses to extremist activity.
- 4.6 There is a growing recognition that sub-groups within a protected characteristic are far from homogeneous and that genuine progress requires developing a deeper understanding of the experience at a sub-group level, i.e. the trans experience within the LGBTQ+ context, and how the intersection of protected characteristics shapes an individual's experience, eg BAME women.
- 4.7 There has been a significant growth in the number and influence of equality accreditation and award schemes. There is a need to integrate our approach to these different schemes to achieve better synergies and avoid the risk of developing narrow, siloed initiatives.



5 ADVANCING EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The EDI strategy outlines work that covers three key themes together with one enabler which will apply across each of the key themes:

- A Diversity in and throughout our communities**
- B Greater accessibility to, and inclusivity of, our estates, facilities and services**
- C Diversity confident students and staff**
- D Effective governance and reporting (enabler)**

These are described below, setting out the overall goals and the ways in which we intend to influence improvement, and how we will monitor progress. Detailed actions, owners and timescales are set out in the action plan. The University recognises the important role of Brookes Union in relation to student equality and will actively engage in strong partnership working to explore areas of joint interest and enable the activities of Brookes Union to complement this strategy and action plan.



A Diversity in and throughout our communities

What we are trying to achieve

We wish to reach a position where our student and staff populations reflect the diversity of the catchments from which they are drawn as well as the communities we serve. Beyond achieving a more diverse student and staff body, we wish to see equality of outcome reflected in attainment and progression to postgraduate study or employment (students) and reflected at all levels within the organisation (staff).

How we will do this

1. We will analyse and monitor applications and offers for both students and staff by key diversity characteristics to build a deeper understanding of the challenges and to provide a clearer focus for effective action.
2. We will ensure our student and staff recruitment materials and messages are attractive and reach out to a diverse audience, taking positive action where necessary to address under-representation.
3. We will review and enhance selection and offer processes ensuring improvements are free from bias in design and delivery. This will include offers and conversions for students and selection approaches for staff.
4. We will ensure proactive support to students on induction and transition into their first year and review the ongoing support provided by academic advisers and student support coordinators.
5. We will increase engagement with the Employability Framework and develop targeted approaches to address areas of low employment success for students.
6. We will ensure that our career pathways for staff are transparent and we will use targeted development programmes and mentoring and coaching to build a diverse pipeline of future leaders, including part-time staff.
7. We will ensure our approaches to Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 are informed by robust equality impact assessment and are transparent to all involved.

We will monitor our progress through

- Diversity of applications and offers to students and staff
- Diversity of the student and staff body
- Diversity of staff successfully gaining promotion and rewards
- Student retention
- Student employment outcomes
- Diversity of staff in senior positions including in professorial and senior management roles
- Outcome of equality impact assessments for REF 2021

B Greater accessibility and inclusivity of our estates, facilities and services

What we are trying to achieve

We wish to reach a position where students, staff and visitors are able to freely access and benefit from the estate, facilities and services as appropriate to their needs. As a minimum this is the removal of barriers, however our aim is to embed inclusivity in the design of what we do.

How we will do this

1. We will embed accessibility into future estates developments and redevelopments.
2. We will approach curriculum design, assessment, feedback and teaching in ways that will strengthen inclusivity.
3. We will strengthen understanding and build the skills required to ensure that accessibility is considered in the design and development of future web content.
4. We will strengthen our approaches to inclusive support and workplace adjustments to enable our students and staff to participate in the full range of opportunities offered by the University.
5. We will extend and strengthen the effectiveness of technology enhanced learning approaches.

We will monitor our progress through

- Good completion rates for students
- Retention of students and staff with a disability
- Retention, progression and success of BAME students
- Compliance with Web accessibility standard (WCAG 2.0)
- Result of NSS question on learning resources
- Staff and student feedback to the satisfaction survey question, "I feel part of a community of students and staff"

C Diversity confident students and staff

What we are trying to achieve

Our Guiding Principles⁶ include that our people flourish in a culture of respect and support, where we celebrate difference and thrive on each other's success. Our goal is that the daily interactions our students and staff experience through work, study and socialising positively contribute to a culture of inclusivity. We also aim to produce graduates who leave Brookes diversity confident and able to manifest a generosity of spirit as they progress in the world.

How we will do this

1. We will improve awareness and understanding of privilege, underrepresentation and unconscious bias to embed equality, diversity and inclusion into the day to day working lives of staff looking specifically at the role of decision-makers and influencers including line managers, lecturing staff, research leads as well as senior leaders.
2. We will strengthen the contribution internal communications make to promoting a culture that values difference and embraces inclusivity. Specifically this will include increasing the diversity of images and content, continuing to celebrate history months and the regular publication of EDI focused newsletters.
3. We will enhance approaches to engagement and consultation providing more opportunity for diverse voices to be heard and for a greater range of voices to influence developments at the earliest stages. This will build on our relationship with staff networks and embedding the role of EDI champions.
4. We will promote awareness of mental health and increase the skills and confidence of students and staff to manage their own mental health and provide support to others as appropriate.
5. We will take further action to embed a culture of zero tolerance around sexual violence, hate crime and harassment, increasing confidence to report it.

We will monitor our progress through

- Proportion of staff undertaking EDI-focused skills development
- Absence and leavers for reasons of mental health (staff and student)
- Monitoring images combined with content analysis of communication material⁸
- Qualitative reporting from network groups and champions
- Reporting of sexual violence, hate crime and harassment

⁶ Confidence, Enterprising Creativity, Connectedness, Generosity of Spirit

⁷ "I feel part of a community of staff and students, I feel satisfied with the support I get from my manager and colleagues"

⁸ Methodology to be discussed with CDPRP

D Effective governance and reporting

What we are trying to achieve

We will develop structures and reporting that facilitate the coordination and prioritisation of the University's EDI initiatives. We will move towards a position of 'EDI by design', enhancing our ability to proactively consider equality, diversity and inclusion in our decision-making. As a result Oxford Brookes will remain recognised across the sector for our commitment to EDI.

How we will do this

1. We will undertake work to review the organisation and governance of EDI-related activity to identify opportunities for synergy, explore intersectionality and support the advancement of the University's EDI agenda.
2. We will seek to ensure that diverse perspectives are considered and reflected in decision-making by influential groups and the Vice-Chancellor's Group.
3. We will actively seek to increase the diversity of the Governing Body.
4. We will benchmark our activities and drive continuous improvement by engaging in sector-wide, national accreditations.
5. We will continue to strengthen data collection and annual reporting enabling a robust data-informed approach to future EDI work.

We will monitor our progress through

- National accreditations
- Diversity of the Governing Body
- Diversity of influential university committees
- Benchmark data

6 RESPONSIBILITIES

Various groups are involved in EDI across Brookes. The role of these groups (as at Oct 2018) is described below.

6.1 University committees and organisational units with formal EDI remit

Board of Governors

The Board of Governors is responsible for determining the overall mission and educational character of the University and for monitoring the performance of the University.

Vice-Chancellor's Group (VCG)

The VCG is the primary executive body of the University, with responsibility for developing and implementing university strategy. This is undertaken through regular monitoring of the HE policy environment, approval and review of key university projects, and monitoring the University's financial performance and key performance indicators, which are then reviewed by the Board of Governors. Membership includes the Pro Vice-Chancellor Student and Staff Experience and the Director of Human Resources.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group (EDIAG)

The EDI Advisory Group is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and reports to the VCG. The EDIAG is responsible for producing and monitoring the University's EDI Strategy and Action Plan. It produces the Annual EDI Report and makes recommendations for action, ensuring the University fulfills its obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty. The Multifaith Advisory Board, Athena SWAN Steering Group, Race Equality Steering Group and the Estates and Facilities Accessibility Advisory Group have report lines to the EDIAG.

Access and Participation Group (APG)

The Access and Participation Group (APG) advises the Vice-Chancellor's Group (VCG) on all matters relating to access and participation for students, particularly those with protected characteristics, those of particular ethnicities and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. The group covers matters relating to the entire student life cycle from pre-enquiry through to employment. APG may also advise other relevant University and Faculty committees including, for example, the Quality and Learning Infrastructure Committee and Teaching and Learning Enhancement Committee, and the group communicates with the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Group.

Human Resources Directorate

The HR Directorate takes the lead in advancing EDI policy and practice, monitoring and reporting, and provides advice and guidance on EDI issues as they relate to the University's workforce. It also provides Occupational Health services and advice on reasonable workplace adjustments. The Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development (OCSLD) delivers a range of learning and development activities across the University and ensures that EDI practice is at the core of development initiatives including leading on the development of the PESE inclusive teaching project and embedding awareness and understanding of EDI into core learning and development.

Directorate of Academic and Student Affairs

Advice and guidance for students is provided through the Wellbeing department in the Directorate of Academic and Student Affairs. Wellbeing offers services including counselling, disability service and specialist mentoring to all students enrolled with Oxford Brookes. It is also home to the Multifaith Chaplaincy which is also open to university staff and visitors.

6.2 Working Groups and Steering Groups

The University has convened a number of groups to take forward EDI initiatives or bring oversight to particular operational performance. These include the Athena SWAN Steering Group, Race Equality Steering Group, Race Equality Action Group, Estates and Facilities Accessibility Advisory Group, as well as teams delivering projects to enhance the student experience.

6.3 Networks and champions

The following groups supplement the work undertaken by the formal structures set out above.

- Staff Diversity and Inclusion Networks: LGBTQ+ Staff Forum, Staff Disability Network, BAME Staff Network. These groups are self-organised providing an inclusive forum for peer support, raising matters of interest on behalf of the group and helping to inform University practice.

- Each directorate and faculty has an EDI champion to facilitate the promotion of EDI and EDI-related activity locally.

6.4 Partners

We recognise that we cannot achieve our ambitious plans in isolation and therefore draw on good practice and support from across the higher education sector and beyond. In particular, this includes:

- Brookes Union and other student groups
- Advance HE
- UCEA
- UHR
- Higher Education Race Action Group
- Stonewall
- Centre for Diversity Policy Research and Practice (based in Oxford Brookes Business School)
- Recognised trade unions (UCU, UNISON)

7 MONITORING

- 7.1 The EDI Strategy and supporting Action Plan will be published on the University's web pages after formal approval by the Vice-Chancellor's Group.
- 7.2 Delivery of the action plan will be monitored by the EDIAG where a progress report will be considered at the end of every academic year. This review will be used to inform future priorities and objectives.
- 7.3 The University will also develop annual EDI report(s) providing a summary of progress against this strategy together with statistical data on the diversity profile of applicants, students and staff for all protected characteristics. This will be published on the University web pages, fulfilling the requirements outlined in the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- 7.4 The progress report and statistical data will be shared with VCG and Board of Governors.

