

# EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

## INTRODUCTION

This report outlines how the University of Essex meets, and seeks to exceed, its obligations under the General Equality Duty and the Public Sector Equality Duty as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and the gender pay gap reporting regulations. It describes how we ensure members of our community are aware of their rights and responsibilities, how we identify and address discriminatory practice or behaviour and how we seek to break down barriers to equality.

It also provides an overview of our commitments and aspirations in this area and our progress towards delivering those. Finally, the report summarises work carried out the academic year 2018-19, highlighting achievements and identifying emerging themes.

Data used to support the narrative is either by academic year, the latest year being 2018-19, or point-in-time data which uses the latest available data at the time of writing the report (April 2020).

## OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Inclusion is one of the University's core values. It is a thread that runs through every aspect of our activities and is the basis on which we make judgements and take decisions. We articulate our commitment in this area and the expectations we have of all members of our community from the moment a prospective member of staff or student engages with the University and this continues throughout the staff and student lifecycle.

We do not tolerate any form of discrimination. We encourage reporting of inappropriate behaviour and we have a zero tolerance approach to any form of harassment, bullying, sexual violence or hate crime which means that (i) we will take action and (ii) the action will be proportionate to the circumstances of the case.

Our policy statement on equality, diversity and inclusion is included in all key University documents including student prospectuses and handbooks, student admissions policies, staff recruitment literature and employment policies.

### Policy statement on equality, diversity and inclusion

The University of Essex celebrates diversity, challenges inequality and is committed to nurturing an inclusive and diverse community that is open to all who have the potential to benefit from membership of it, and which ensures equality of opportunity for all its members.

We expect all members of our campus communities, employees, workers, contractors, students and visitors to be treated, and to treat others, with dignity and respect. We do not tolerate discrimination against any individual or groups of people because of their age, gender identity, marriage and civil partnership status, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, because they have a disability, or because they are pregnant, breastfeeding or have recently given birth.

To support our value-commitment to inclusivity, we extend protection from discrimination beyond our legal obligations to cover other forms of difference such as socio-economic background, political beliefs and affiliations, family circumstances, appearance, personal interests.

## OUR LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

### Equality Act 2010

Under the General Equality Duty set out in the Equality Act 2010 (the Act), the University has obligations as both an employer and as an education provider. This means that we must, in the exercise of our functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In addition, as a public authority, we must:

- Publish information to demonstrate our compliance with the General Equality Duty across our functions;
- Prepare and publish equality objectives.

Discrimination, as defined by the Equality Act 2010 covers:

**Direct Discrimination:** Direct discrimination occurs when someone is treated less favourably than another person because of a protected characteristic they have or are thought to have (discrimination by perception), or because they associate with someone who has a protected characteristic (discrimination by association).

**Indirect Discrimination:** Indirect discrimination occurs when a rule, policy or practice is neutral on the face of it but its impact particularly disadvantages people who share a particular protected characteristic.

**Harassment:** Harassment is defined as ‘unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual’s dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for that individual’.

**Victimisation:** Victimisation occurs when an individual is treated detrimentally because they have made a complaint about discrimination or harassment or have given evidence relating to such a complaint or because they are suspected of doing so.

### Gender pay gap reporting regulations

As an employer with 250 or more employees, we are subject to the gender pay gap reporting regulations. This means that we are required to publish annually the following information about our gender pay gap:

- Mean gender pay gap in hourly pay
- Median gender pay gap in hourly pay
- Mean bonus gender pay gap
- Median bonus gender pay gap

- Proportion of males and females receiving a bonus payment
- Proportion of males and females in each pay quartile

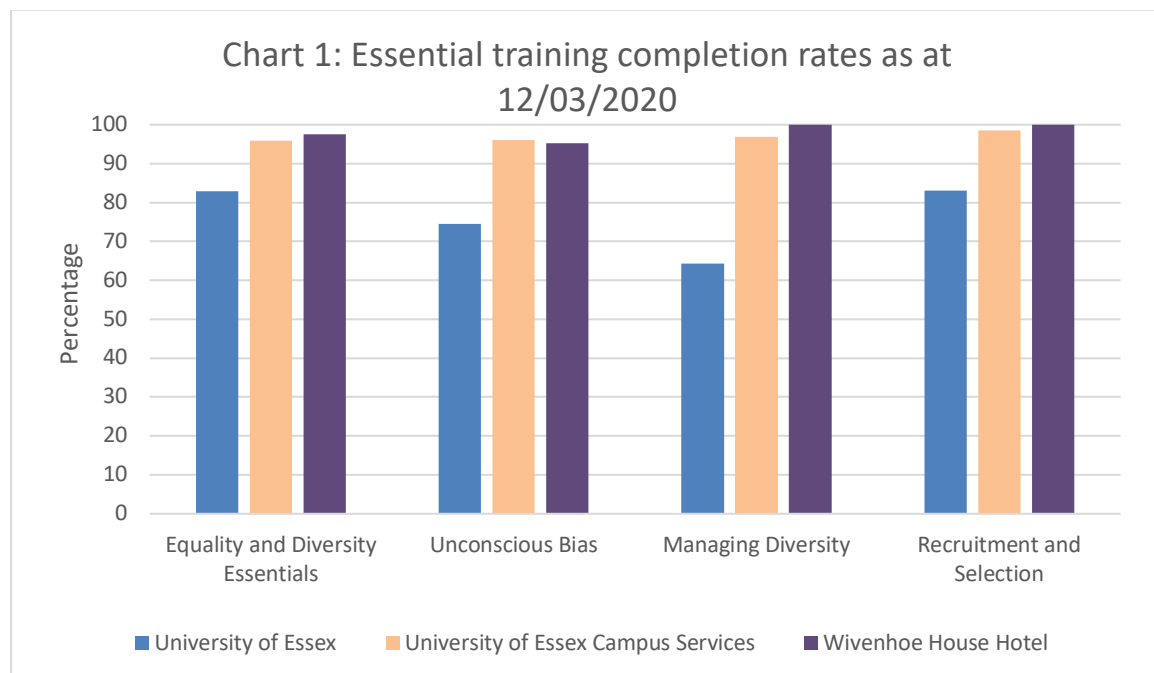
### Equality, diversity and inclusion-related training and awareness raising

We support members of our community to behave in ways that comply with the law and our own expectations through training and awareness-raising activities. Awareness-raising takes a variety of different forms including staff induction events and Welcome events for students, targeted communication campaigns and engaging in external charters that seek to remove barriers to participation and progression for various groups of people.

Under our Essential Training Policy, all staff must complete Equality and Diversity Essentials and Unconscious Bias training within six months of commencing employment. In addition, those with management responsibilities must also complete Managing Diversity and Recruitment and Selection training and those holding specific roles or undertaking specific responsibilities, for example, Senior Personal Tutors and those making decisions about the quality of research outputs, must also complete essential role-based training.

Particular groups of students are also required to complete Equality and Diversity Essentials and Unconscious Bias training, including students undertaking a Frontrunner position, Student Ambassadors, students for whom their professional body requires it and Residence Life Coordinators and Assistants.

As at 12 March 2020, 84.13% of all staff<sup>1</sup> had completed Equality and Diversity Essentials training and 76.69% had completed Unconscious Bias training. In addition, 67.78% of all staff had completed Managing Diversity training and 84.63% had completed Recruitment and Selection training. The chart below breaks down completion rates by University of Essex, University of Essex Campus Services (UECS) and Wivenhoe House Hotel (WHH) staff.



<sup>1</sup> Includes University of Essex Campus Services and Wivenhoe House Hotel staff in addition to University of Essex staff.

We are currently developing our 'How we work at Essex' training which will consolidate our existing suite of training into one overall package and will be introduced in the academic year 2020-21. Bringing this training together will reduce the time it takes to complete essential training, which should help to improve completion rates. This is particularly important in relation to University of Essex staff whose completion rates fall below those of University of Essex Campus Services staff and Wivenhoe House Hotel staff.

### Equality objectives

We seek to embed equality, diversity and inclusion within every decision we make and every action we take across the whole range of the University's activities. This means that equality objectives are contained within all our institutional-level action plans. The following six are those that have the potential to contribute the most towards sustainable, cultural change:

1. To **reduce our institutional mean gender pay gap** from 17.6% as at March 2018 to under 5% by 2025 and to have no significant pay gaps (<5%) in relation to other protected characteristics (People Supporting Strategy Indicator of Change 6)

Our institutional mean gender pay gap has decreased year-on-year over the last four years. This indicates that the measures we have put in place to date to address this, and additional measures being actioned that have not yet had time to influence the gap, have facilitated changes that are sustainable over time and not quick fixes that are likely to only have short-term benefits. Our median gender pay gap reduced by 2.4% between 2018 and 2019, then rose back to the same level as in 2017 and 2018 (18.6%) in 2020. This reasons for this will be investigated in 2020.

Table 1: Institutional mean and median gender pay gaps 2017 - 2020		
Date	Mean gender pay gap	Median gender pay gap
31 March 2017	18.6%	18.6%
31 March 2018	17.6%	18.6%
31 March 2019	16.5%	16.2%
31 March 2020	16.1%	18.6%

2. By 2022, to have no significant (> 5%) equality attainment gaps for measures of student success at institutional level; and to maintain this through the period 2022-25 (KPI 6: Student Outcomes (Equality and Diversity))

The data shows a number of consistent trends and indicates we have considerable work to do in this area. The gap in good degrees between our white and black, Asian and minority ethnic students has fluctuated by 2.4% over the last 5 years but remains stubbornly high at above 15%. In addition, our mature students are less likely to obtain a good degree than our young students are, and our male students are less likely to obtain a good degree than our female students are. Although the gap is not significant, students from a POLAR4 Q1 area are also less likely to obtain a good degree than students from a POLAR4 Q5 area. Lastly, although the gap has fluctuated by 6.8% over the last 5

years and in 2018-19 the gap was zero, students with a declared disability are more likely to obtain a good degree than students with no declared disability.

Table 2: Undergraduate student good degrees<sup>2</sup> over 5 years (Data source: internal source)

Characteristic	2014/15		2015/16		2016/17		2017/18		2018/19	
	Good Degrees		Good Degrees		Good Degrees		Good Degrees		Good Degrees	
	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N
University	73.9%	1,695	74.5%	1671	74.5%	2,077	74.7%	2,146	74.4%	2,223
Mature <sup>3</sup>	67.9% -6.7%	161	74.0%	165	65.6% -10.1%	189	68.5% -6.9%	200	69.9% -5.1%	246
Young	74.6%	1,534	74.6%	1,506	75.7%	1,888	75.4%	1,946	75.0%	1,977
Declared Disability	75.5%	142	78.1%	153	77.2%	169	80.9%	228	74.4%	215
No Disability Declared	73.8%	1553	74.2%	1518	74.4%	1908	74.1% -6.8%	1918	74.4%	2008
Female	77.3%	941	77.1%	988	77.8%	1,203	78.0%	1,232	78.2%	1,258
Male	70.1% -7.2%	754	71.1% -6.0%	683	70.7% -7.1%	874	70.6% -7.4%	913	70.0% -8.2%	965
BAME (All)	63.0% -16.8%	493	64.1% -17.6%	561	64.8% -17.4%	743	66.4% -15.2%	811	66.0% -15.7%	890
White (All)	79.8%	1150	81.7%	1064	82.2%	1295	81.6%	1299	81.7%	1290
BAME (UK)	73.0% -9.6%	290	70.9% -15.0%	331	66.5% -17.4%	410	67.9% -14.4%	502	64.4% -18.3%	510
White (UK)	82.6%	821	85.9%	784	83.9%	967	82.3%	987	82.7%	938
BAME (Non-UK)	52.7% -20.9%	203	56.4% -15.6%	230	62.8% -14.9%	333	64.1% -15.5%	309	68.1% -11.0%	380
White (Non-UK)	73.6%	329	72.0%	280	77.7%	328	79.6%	312	79.1%	352
POLAR4 <sup>4</sup> Q1	73.0% -11.4%	127	79.5%	132	76.4%	198	74.5%	202	70.3% -6.9%	185
POLAR4 Q5	84.4%	324	83.3%	305	77.5%	331	79.0%	373	77.2%	385

<sup>2</sup> A good degree is a first or upper second degree classification

<sup>3</sup> According to HESA, undergraduate students are classed as young if they are under 21 years of age on entry, and mature if they are over 25.

<sup>4</sup> POLAR4 is defined as the proportion of young students across the UK that participate within higher education. Where Q5 represents areas with a higher proportion of higher education participation, and Q1 represents areas with a lower proportion of participation.

To support our work in this area, in March 2019, we joined ten other UK Universities on an Advance HE project entitled: “Towards Embedding EDI in the Curriculum Collaborative Project”. The project aimed to (i) enhance sector-wide understanding of what embedding EDI in the curriculum looks like (ii) explore the obstacles to, and opportunities for, embedding EDI in the curriculum, developing a picture of readiness for change (iii) identify and implement EDI approaches to improve the learning and teaching experiences for their students.

The outcomes and outputs from this project are feeding into, and complementing, our Race Equality Charter work.

3. To consistently be ranked in the **Stonewall Top 100** (People Supporting Strategy Indicator of Change x)

We have achieved Stonewall Top 100 Employer status in four of the last five years.



This represents a significant improvement on our ranking of 194 in 2015 and gives us confidence that we can continue to achieve our objective in this area. However, our fluctuating ranking shows that we cannot be complacent and we have much more work to do to remain at the forefront of promoting LGBT+ inclusion.

Specifically, our trans-inclusion score indicates that there is plenty of room for improvement in this area and we will use the outcome of the review of the circumstances resulting in and arising from the cancellation of the Centre for Criminology seminar on Trans Rights, Imprisonment and the Criminal Justice System, and the arrangements for speaker invitations to the Holocaust Memorial Week event on the state of Antisemitism Today, to help inform our future work.

Table 3: Stonewall rankings 2015 - 2020

Year	Rank	Number of participating organisations	Year on year position movement	Points scored/% score (maximum 200)	Average score for Top 100 organisations	Trans-inclusion work
2015	194	397	N/A	Unknown	Unknown	N/A
2016	53	415	↑ 141 places	141 (70.5%)	142 (71.0%)	N/A
2017	129	439	↓ 76 places	112.5 (56.3%)	148 (74.0%)	N/A
2018	59	434	↑ 70 places	134.5 (67.3%)	140 (70.0%)	65%
2019	93	445	↓ 34 places	109.5 (54.8%)	132 (66.0%)	54%
2020	57	503	↑ 36 places	133 (66.5%)	137.5 (68.8%)	59%

4. For **every department to hold an Athena SWAN award** by the end of the academic year 2020-21 (People Supporting Strategy Indicator of Change)



As at May 2020, of our 21 departments:

- ten hold an Athena SWAN award, nine bronze (Computer Science and Electronic Engineering (CSEE), Essex Business School (EBS), History, Language and Linguistics, Life Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, Psychology, Psychosocial and Psychoanalytic Studies (PPS), Sociology), one silver (Health and Social Care)
- two are about to submit an application for a first award - submission deadline 20 May 2020 (East 15 Acting School, Government)
- three are planning to submit an application for a first award in November 2020 (Economics, Law, Literature Film and Theatre Studies (LiFTS))
- one is planning to submit an application for a first award in April 2021 (School of Rehabilitation and Exercise Science (SRES))
- two need to resubmit following an unsuccessful application in November 2019 (Institute for Social and Economic Research (ISER) and the School of Philosophy and Art History (SPAH))
- three are participating in the University's internal Diversity Impact Awards scheme (Edge Hotel School, Essex Pathways, UK Data Archive (UKDA))

Departments are supported in their Athena SWAN work by Organisational Development staff and the University's Athena SWAN Peer College network.

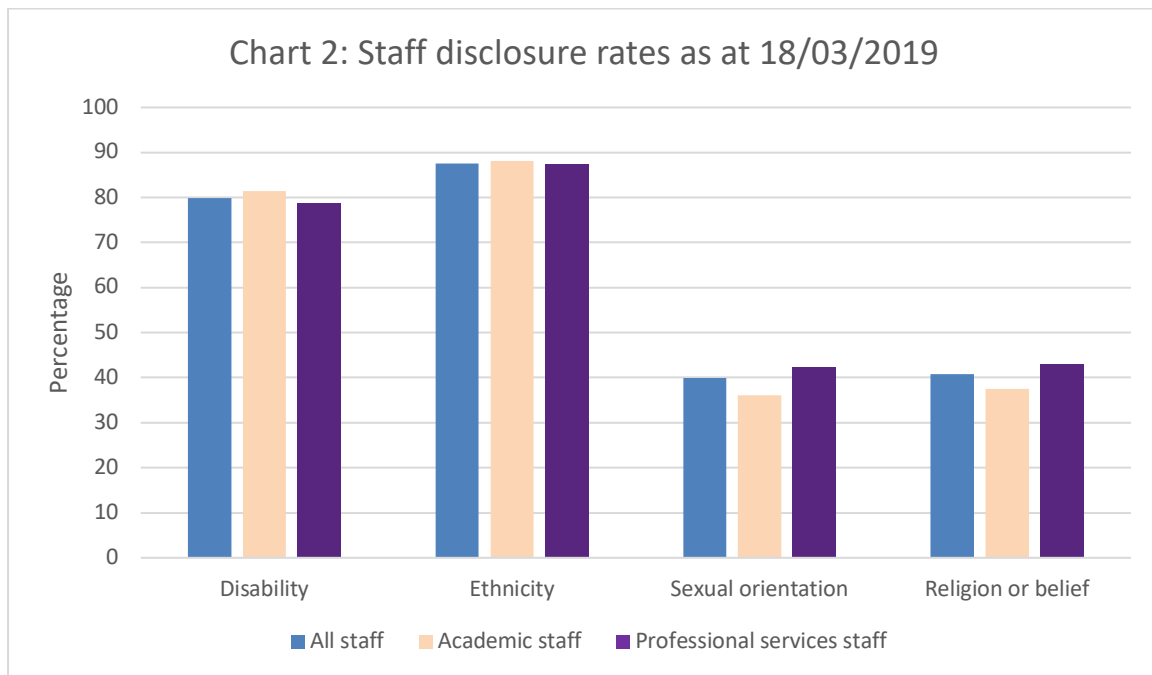
5. To **achieve an Institutional Bronze Race Equality Charter** award by the end of 2022 (People Supporting Strategy Indicator of Change)

We signed up to the principles of the Race Equality Charter in May 2017 and since then have been building our understanding of the requirements of the Charter and gathering data to support our submission. As required, we have set up a Self-Assessment Team (SAT) to help steer our work and we are on track to submit an application for a Bronze award in July 2022.

6. To have **no significant (<5%) staff non-disclosure rates for any protected characteristic** by 2022 and to maintain this throughout the period 2022-2025 (People Supporting Strategy Indicator of Change 2)

Of the seven protected characteristics for which we gather data, disclosure rates as at 18 March 2019 for four of them (disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation and religion or belief) are in chart 2 below. Relatively high rates of non-disclosure for all four of these protected characteristics mean that we are some way off achieving our objective in this area, which in turns means it is difficult to determine where significant under-representation or differential outcomes exist. Of the remaining three protected characteristics, two (age and gender) we have a full dataset for legal reasons and the third (trans status) disclosure rates are so low that publishing them in the same way is meaningless.

Our 'Your Profile Counts' campaign to highlight why disclosure is important, and to encourage staff to do so, will be launched in 2020.



## MECHANISMS FOR IDENTIFYING AND ADDRESSING DISCRIMINATION

We identify potential discrimination in two main ways – proactively through monitoring the outcomes of our policies and processes and reactively through issues raised by members of our community. Where there is evidence of discrimination, we take action on both an individual and institutional level, as appropriate.

Our Education Committee is responsible for overseeing our performance in relation to equality and diversity in respect of student admission, continuation, degree outcomes, satisfaction and development. Education Committee reviews activity currently in place and recommends to Senate areas where further work is needed to address continuing or emerging inequalities.

The Human Resources and Equality and Diversity Group (HREDG) is an advisory group to University Steering Group (USG) and is responsible for keeping the University's people strategies, including those relating to equality, diversity and inclusion under review and to make recommendations to USG on any changes required. HREDG also monitor the performance of the University in relation to the equality, diversity and inclusion performance indicators included in the People Support Strategy.

The People Supporting Strategy Committee has oversight of the University's People Supporting Strategy and workforce plan and makes recommendations to Council regarding strategic people policies and plans, and the strategic framework for remuneration and reward, including actions being taken to address any material pay gaps.

Lastly, the Safeguarding Advisory Group (SAG), which is also an advisory group to USG, is responsible for monitoring the University's implementation of its statutory obligation to safeguard vulnerable people. This includes having oversight of the Policy on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech and the University's work to tackle sexual violence.



These committees/groups receive a variety of reports, by protected characteristics, to enable them to fulfil their terms of reference and identify potential discriminatory practice. Areas covered include:

- Student admissions, continuation and degree outcomes
- Feedback from student and staff surveys e.g. NSS and Employee Voice
- Trends and issues identified through Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charter (REC) work
- Staff recruitment, promotion and pay
- Trends and issues identified through Report and Support<sup>5</sup>

Our work on Athena SWAN and the REC has highlighted the need for us to gather and analyse additional data systematically in order to build a more holistic picture of the participation, progression, satisfaction of different groups of staff and students and to identify potential inequalities. These areas include grievances and complaints, those who access support services and feedback from exit questionnaires. The launch of our staff electronic document management system will facilitate the collection of this information in a format that enables the data to be analysed more easily.

Actions taken in response to monitoring the outcomes of our policies and processes include:

- Having identified, through our Race Equality Charter (REC) work, that we are neither equipped nor ready to tackle the structural inequalities that have led to the under-representation and differential outcomes for staff and students from a black, Asian or minority ethnic background we have postponed our submission for a Bronze Institutional Award until July 2022 and will use external expertise to ensure we make informed decisions and do not take action that could further alienate the people we are trying to support
- Having identified that our institutional gender pay gap would decrease significantly if we had a 60/40 gender distribution of staff in each department, in line with the current pattern of distribution, departments are now required to consider the effect on the gender balance and the gender pay gap for all appointments with the aim of achieving a 60/40 distribution by 2025
- Having identified, through Report and Support, that a significant number of people in one area of the University had submitted a report citing similar issues, a plan was put in place to develop and support all staff working in that area

In addition to identifying potential discrimination through Report and Support, staff and student surveys and our Athena SWAN and Race Equality Charter work, we also identify potential discrimination, and take action to address it, in a variety of other ways including:

- Through our staff networks and student societies
- Through issues raised directly with our Inclusion Champions, Inclusivity Leads, SWIS and People and Culture staff
- Through staff engagement in development activities
- Through referrals to Occupational Health
- Through our policy development work

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<sup>5</sup> Report and Support is the University's online portal for employees, workers, students, contractors and visitors to report sexual violence, harassment, bullying, hate crime or relationship abuse.

## KEY WORK AND ACHIEVEMENTS 2018-19

In 2018 -19, work to embed equality, diversity and inclusion across the whole range of the University's activities continued at pace. A number of existing strands of activity were strengthened and new ones developed and introduced. A few examples are highlighted below.

### Inclusion Champions

A review of the roles and responsibilities of our Diversity Champions, who are all members of USG, led to a change of name to Inclusion Champions, the appointment of new Inclusion Champions in some areas and the introduction of individual action plans for each Champion.

Each action plan sets out the activities and objectives in three main areas: engagement activities, knowledge-building activities, leadership activities and aims to:

- Increase engagement of USG members with under-represented or marginalised groups of staff and students
- Increase understanding at the senior level of the challenges facing staff and students from under-represented or marginalised groups
- Support USG members to be active role models for equality, diversity and inclusion within the University community
- Support USG members to promote the University's equality, diversity and inclusion-related priorities within the University community
- Increase USG support at equality, diversity and inclusion-related events and activities through attendance, welcoming participants, speaking or engaging in debates/discussions
- Ensure continued compliance with equalities legislation

### Inclusivity Leads

Each department/school appointed an Inclusivity Lead whose role is to:

- be a champion for, and to support the Head in embedding, inclusive practice within the department/school
- be a central point for information, good practice and promotion of inclusive practices across the Department/School
- help students and staff to develop and implement inclusion-related initiatives within the Department/School
- share information about what relevant activities and initiatives are taking place across the rest of the University

Inclusivity Leads meet regularly as a network to share experiences and good practice and receive a monthly newsletter containing information about upcoming events, relevant research/publications and highlights the activities of one department/school each month.

### Tackling sexual violence

Work as part of our tackling sexual violence project continued. We launched our Report and Support online portal in May 2018 and embarked on a comprehensive communications campaign in 2018-19, resulting in increased awareness and use of the system.

A review of our harassment and bullying guidance resulted in the introduction of our 'zero tolerance approach to sexual violence, harassment and hate crime'. Zero tolerance means that (i) we will take action and (ii) the action will be proportionate to the circumstances of the case.

The staff 'personal relationships and conflict of interest' guidance was strengthened to include reference to our zero tolerance approach and to help staff make the right choices, that protect both themselves and others, when interacting with other staff and students.

A review of the remit of our long-standing Harassment Advisory Network (HAN) resulted in it being re-launched as the Harassment Report and Support Service (HRSS). A number of new Harassment Support Workers were subsequently recruited and trained in order to respond to reports made via Report and Support involving staff, contractors and visitors to the University. Staff from the Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service (SWIS) respond to reports involving students.

### LGBT+ Forum

In response to a proposal put forward by a group of LGBT+ staff, the LGBT+ Forum was set up. The Forum is open to staff who are part of the LGBTQ community, providing a safe space to socialise as well as discuss LGBT+ matters within the University and beyond.

In addition to having a stall at Colchester Pride and working with the Essex LGBT Alliance and the LGBT+ Allies on a pronouns campaign, the Forum worked collaboratively with People and Culture staff to produce our 'Supporting trans and non-binary staff' document. This document, and the partnership-working way in which it was developed has become the blueprint by which People and Culture now approach policy development.

### Diversity Impact Awards

In order to support Professional Services sections in creating inclusive working environments, and in recognition that there are currently no external frameworks, such as Athena SWAN, to support work in this area, we developed our own internal Diversity Impact Awards scheme.

The scheme recognise a Section's commitment to addressing inclusivity challenges specific to their particular area e.g. under-representation of male staff in administrative roles. There are three levels of awards, **Bronze** – understanding the challenges and building a foundation for change, **Silver** – demonstrating impact of previously identified actions and **Gold** – being at the forefront of good practise and acting as a beacon to other Sections.

Sections are assessed on five themes: communication, senior or high-level commitment, effective analysis of data, self-reflection and honesty, engagement. A pilot involving two sections – People and Culture and Communications and External Relations – is currently underway.

### Review of the experience of Jewish staff and students

In February 2019, we were shocked to find antisemitism at the University Essex. The University and Students' Union (SU) took a number of immediate actions to address the concerns that had been raised, to confirm that antisemitism and any other form of hate crime are antithetical to the values of the University and have no place on our campuses, and to show solidarity and support for the Jewish community at Essex.

A review of the experience of Jewish students and staff was also initiated, with input from an Independent External Group who received direct testimony from students and staff, and advised on the scope and findings of the Review.

The University appointed an Independent External Group to receive direct testimony from students and staff, and to advise on content and approve the recommendations of the Review. Their subsequent report made 33 recommendations on how the experience of Jewish students and staff

at the University could be improved. Wider conclusions of relevance to all minority groups of faith and none at the University were also highlighted. Work to implement all 33 actions is ongoing and as at January 2020, 25 were completed or embedded into ongoing work, and the remaining eight in progress.

### Chrysalis

Organisational Development developed a new personal and professional development programme called “Chrysalis”, which was launched in January 2019 and is open to all staff. The programme reflects the University’s ways of working and values and includes a mixture of theory, group work and self-reflection.

Sixty-six colleagues have completed the programme over five cohorts to date, one of which took place at Southend. The programme has now been adapted to run virtually; 24 people are taking part in the current programme with another 24 registered on the next programme which takes place in the summer term.

To continue networking and collaboration, the alumni have created their own Chrysalis network.

The programme objectives are:

- Increased self-confidence and self esteem
- Strategies for coping and dealing with change
- To be able to evaluate and understand what your key strengths are
- Career development
- To be more self-aware of your impact on others
- Building resilience
- Goal setting
- Having a growth mind-set
- Improved assertive communication skills



In June 2019, we heard that the YUFE (Young Universities for the Future of Europe) consortium that we are a part of was successful in securing European Commission funding. As a YUFE member, we envisage:

- giving our students and staff access to a range of opportunities at seven other young research universities in seven different countries;
- building a YUFE-wide education system that is open, accessible and inclusive, founded on the central principle of putting students at the forefront of everything we do;
- designing and delivering YUFE Open Programmes (at all study levels) that will make Europe-wide higher education and seamless physical and virtual mobility a reality for students;
- YUFE-wide education and research collaborations that will focus on contributing to addressing key current and future global societal challenges (ie European identity and responsibilities in a global world; Citizens well-being; Digital societies; and Sustainability);
- our graduates having the opportunity to achieve an additional YUFE Diploma Supplement recognised throughout Europe which they will earn through accumulating recognition of mobility, language learning, professional training, work experience and community volunteering;

- our academic and professional services staff benefiting from a range of enhanced YUFE-wide career and development opportunities;
- enhanced working with our region (through Essex County Council) and the regions of the other seven partners who have all committed to a range of initiatives including: (i) building Challenge Teams made up of students, researchers, citizens and professionals from the public and private sector who will work together to seek to better understand and address global, regional and local challenges (2) building entrepreneurial capacity (3) enabling meaningful community volunteering.

Our specific role during the pilot phase (December 2019 – November 2022) is to lead the Diversity and Inclusivity taskforce and we will share our expertise and experience in this area with our partners, benefit from their expertise and experience, and develop initiatives together for the benefit of current and future students and staff.

## EMERGING CHALLENGES AND TRENDS

The equality challenges faced by the University mirror challenges faced by the HE sector in the UK as a whole. In addition to areas already covered in this report such as closing the gender pay gap, improving outcomes for black, Asian and minority ethnic students and tackling sexual violence there are a range of other issues that we need to address. A few of these are highlighted below.

### Balancing inclusion and academic freedom

Academic freedom and inclusion are dual commitments at the heart of our community. These twin commitments – to academic freedom and to inclusion regardless of backgrounds, characteristics, opinions or ideas – are also enshrined in law. Section 43 of the Education (No.2) Act 1986 requires all those concerned in the governance of universities to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for members, students, employees and visiting speakers.

This means that we must take account of all of the freedoms and responsibilities at stake when making decisions about specific issues and, at times, we have been challenged on decisions we have made. Other universities have also been challenged about decisions they have made, for example, to no-platform speakers and in March 2018, a report from MPs and Peers alleged that ‘free speech in university was under threat from ‘intolerant attitudes’’. In February 2019, guidance to help HEIs navigate this difficult area was published by the Equality and Human Rights Commission<sup>6</sup>.

Balancing inclusion and academic freedom, particularly in the current context within which we operate, is an ongoing challenge.

### Tackling racial harassment and inequalities

In October 2019 the Equality and Human rights Commission released its report on racial harassment in higher education<sup>7</sup>. The report raised a number of concerns including the number of incidents, reporting rates and universities handling of incidents. Worryingly, 24 per cent of ethnic minority students report having experienced racial harassment on campus. The report concluded that:

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/freedom-of-expression-guide-for-higher-education-providers-and-students-unions-england-and-wales.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/racial-harassment-in-british-universities-qualitative-research-findings.pdf>

- racial harassment is a common experience for a wide range of students and staff at universities across England, Scotland and Wales.
- racial harassment can have a profound impact on an individual's mental health, educational outcomes and career.
- the higher education sector does not fully understand racial harassment and university staff lack the confidence in dealing with race issues.
- There needs to be leadership to help embed a culture where racial harassment is not tolerated – a lot of recent university action to tackle harassment has focused on sexual harassment and there is not the same confidence in talking about, and tackling racial harassment.

Through our work on the Race Equality Charter and as part of the collaborative Advance HE inclusive Curriculum project, we have learnt that we are not yet in a position, as an institution, to get to the heart of the issues. This is due to a lack of institutional capability and confidence across the staff and student community to navigate the complexities around the language of race, white privilege and white fragility and how this manifests itself in individual behaviours and in institutional structures and processes, and how it disadvantages black students and staff.

We are committed to working towards achieving a Bronze Race Equality Charter Award and to embedding an effective approach to race, ethnicity and inclusion that will enable us to create the long-term sustainable culture change we aspire to achieve.

### Admission of students

There are some emerging trends in terms of our student population, in particular when looking at the proportion of mature students, both undergraduate and postgraduate.

Our overall mature undergraduate student population has been declining steadily since 2014-15 and has fallen by 11.3% over the last two years. In 2018-19, mature students accounted for just 18.4% of our new undergraduate student population. This echoes a concerning national decline in mature entrants since the introduction of tuition fees in 2012-13.

The decline in the registered mature student population is against the backdrop of a 4.7% increase in applications received from mature students between 2015-16 and 2018-19, and a 21.6% increase in offers made to mature students over the same 4-year period. However, mature applicants are significantly less likely to receive an offer than young applicants. In 2018-19, 62.7% of mature undergraduate applicants received an offer compared with 84.8% of young applicants.

Our overall mature postgraduate student population is also in decline, reducing from 53.3% in 2015-16 to 49.5% in 2018-19. This decline, as is the case with undergraduate applicants, is against a backdrop of a 6.8% increase in applications from mature students over the same 4-year period and a 1.7% increase in offers. In 2018-19, 60.5% of mature postgraduate applicants received an offer compared with 72.4% of young applicants.

There are also emerging trends in terms of gender and ethnicity. The proportion of new female undergraduate students has steadily declined from 57.8% in 2015-16 to 52.7% in 2018-19. In contrast, the proportion of female postgraduate students has increased from 58.2% to 62.4% over the same period.

The proportion of new undergraduate UK students from a black, Asian or minority ethnic background increased from 23.2% in 2015-16 to 31.1% in 2018-19. In contrast, the proportion of

new undergraduate UK students who are white decreased from 46.0% in 2015-16 to 40.7% in 2018-19.

Tables 4 and 5 show the breakdown of new undergraduate and new and returning postgraduate students by characteristic.

Table 4: Undergraduate new student registrations over 4 years, by characteristic

Characteristic	2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		2018-19	
	New registrations		New registrations		New registrations		New registrations	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Mature</b>	1135	24.2%	1181	23.8%	1016	20.2%	947	18.4%
<b>Young</b>	3546	75.8%	3780	76.2%	4003	79.8%	4205	81.6%
<b>Disability declared</b>	485	10.4%	473	9.5%	530	10.6%	563	10.9%
<b>No disability declared</b>	4196	89.6%	4488	90.5%	4489	89.4%	4588	89.1%
<b>Female</b>	2705	57.8%	2733	55.1%	2727	54.4%	2715	52.7%
<b>Male</b>	1975	42.2%	2226	44.9%	2289	45.6%	2435	47.3%
<b>White UK</b>	1988	46.0%	1984	43.9%	1860	40.0%	1929	40.7%
<b>Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic UK</b>	1003	23.2%	1274	28.2%	1396	30.0%	1474	31.1%
<b>White Non-UK</b>	580	13.4%	551	12.2%	574	12.3%	619	13.1%
<b>Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Non-UK</b>	748	17.3%	711	15.7%	818	17.6%	712	15.0%
<b>POLAR 4 Q1</b>	475	15.7%	487	14.7%	518	15.7%	477	13.9%
<b>POLAR 4 Q5</b>	671	22.2%	785	23.7%	745	22.5%	812	23.7%

Table 5: Postgraduate new and returning student registrations over 4 years, by characteristic

Characteristic	2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		2018-19	
	New registrations		New registrations		New registrations		New registrations	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>Mature</b>	578	34.5%	484	33.4%	615	37.4%	621	38.2%
<b>Young</b>	1096	65.5%	964	66.6%	1031	62.6%	1003	61.8%
<b>Disability declared</b>	129	7.7%	87	6.0%	159	9.7%	142	8.7%
<b>No disability declared</b>	1545	92.3%	1361	94.0%	1487	90.3%	1482	91.3%
<b>Female</b>	974	58.2%	888	61.3%	988	60.1%	1014	62.4%
<b>Male</b>	699	41.8%	560	38.7%	657	39.9%	610	37.6%
<b>White UK</b>	429	78.9%	331	70.3%	483	74.3%	439	73.2%
<b>Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic UK</b>	115	21.1%	140	29.7%	167	25.7%	161	26.8%
<b>White Non-UK</b>	371	36.1%	302	33.2%	377	39.9%	351	36.7%
<b>Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Non-UK</b>	656	63.9%	609	66.8%	567	60.1%	606	63.3%
<b>POLAR 4 Q1</b>	91	15.2%	90	17.1%	122	16.4%	114	16.2%
<b>POLAR 4 Q5</b>	146	24.4%	133	25.2%	177	23.7%	158	22.4%

## PROGRESS SUMMARY AND FUTURE MONITORING

This report indicates that whilst we have made good progress in some areas, there is much work still to do in order to address the under-representation and differential outcomes of particular groups of staff and students.

The external context within which we are currently working – being in the Brexit transition period and the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic also presents additional challenges that, as yet, we do not fully understand.

This means that it is even more important we continue to monitor the impact of our policies and processes on different groups of people, to make values-based decisions and to keep members of our community at the centre of our thinking.