UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Annual report 2024/25

Contents

Introduction from the Vice-Chancellor

I am very pleased to share this report of activity that has been undertaken during 2024/25 at the University of Sussex to create and sustain an inclusive culture.

Sussex has had a long-standing commitment to becoming a working and learning environment in which everyone – whatever their background, belief, or identity – is able to flourish, where everyone feels they belong, where diversity is embraced and celebrated, and where we work hard to address entrenched patterns of inequality and disadvantage. To these ends, there have been a number of important markers of progress over the past year.

Most notably, we secured Disability Confident Leader accreditation for our organisation and four Athena Swan awards for our Schools. These external frameworks provide systematic structures to drive the incremental improvements that lead to meaningful long-term change, as well as enabling us to track our progress over time. The 2024 Staff Survey indicated a greater sense of belonging and an increase in the proportion of those who feel they can be themselves at work. The ethnicity pay gap in the Professional Services staff group has been eliminated and ongoing programmes – including *Black at Sussex and the Open Listening Programme* - continue to evolve and engage more people, as we seek to create a diverse, open, and welcoming culture in which freedom of speech is foundational. A British Council-funded gender equity initiative for a new reciprocal mentoring scheme has been developed in partnership with the University of Ghana. In addition, extensive work has been undertaken to ensure compliance with the new Office for Students Condition of Registration E6 in relation to harassment and sexual misconduct. I extend my thanks to the many people across the University community who have contributed to this work, especially those in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion team.

As we reach the end of the *Inclusive Sussex* strategy period, I am very encouraged to see the impact of the sustained work that has taken place in pursuit of this strategy. Significant milestones have been achieved, recognising the efforts made to address structural inequalities, uneven progression and representation, and to deliver improvements in staff and student experience. This progress serves as a reminder of the importance of embedding our commitment to inclusion in everything we do, and of the need for specific and intentional plans in a world of intensifying inequalities and cultural polarisation. This underpins our approach to advancing the wellbeing and flourishing of our students and staff as we embark on a new University strategy period with the launch of *Sussex 2035: Creating Progressive Futures – flourishing, sustainability and progress for the whole world.*

Progress has not been uniform, however, and pay and awarding gaps endure for minoritised groups. Work and life at Sussex have also been impacted by external factors, requiring nuanced responses in an increasingly challenging cultural and political context.

I conclude by underlining my personal commitment to ensuring that Sussex continues to support staff and students in all their diversity, upholding freedom of speech and academic freedom, and seeking to remedy the disadvantage experienced by members of all minoritised groups. Our work to create a truly inclusive community at Sussex will continue with renewed commitment and clear priorities in the coming year.

Professor Sasha Roseneil
Vice-Chancellor and President

Reflections from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Culture, Equality and Inclusion

This is the final report on our *Inclusive Sussex* strategy which concluded, along with Sussex 2025, at the end of academic year 2024/25.

I am very pleased that further progress was made during the year against the success measures in the strategy. We achieved Disability Confident Leader accreditation, recognising efforts to progressively improve our approach to representation and development of disabled staff. Meanwhile, in addition to the four School award holders, a further four Schools achieved Athena Swan awards - Life Sciences, Engineering and Informatics, the Business School, and Law, Politics and Sociology, and the two remaining Schools without an award (Global Studies and Media, Arts and Humanities) have applications in progress (with MAH just being notified of success). This year, Staff Survey results on the majority of EDI questions showed increases in positive responses compared to previous surveys. A higher proportion of respondents said that they feel like they belong at the University, are treated with dignity and respect, and can be themselves at work.

Beyond the success measures, the most recent pay gap data confirmed that the ethnicity pay gap in the Professional Services staff group is no longer present. Meanwhile, we launched new anti-racist e-learning for staff, and the Black at Sussex programme gathered momentum, with a new funding framework to expand opportunity and activity. We also introduced a cross-cultural learning and leadership development initiative for women and minority genders with a British Council funded Reciprocal Mentoring scheme co-convened with University of Ghana.

Work on supporting freedom of speech and the broader culture of the University continued. The Open Listening programme held termly introductory workshops for staff and introduced a new applied programme. *In Conversation* events featured Fox Fisher, Professor Kalwant Bhopal and Professor Gary Younge.

External engagement on equality, inclusion and freedom of speech included forums, lectures and collaborations with City University, London School of Economics and London South Bank University.

Significant preparatory work was undertaken to meet new Office for Students regulations. We implemented training and policy initiatives to meet the requirements of new Condition of Registration E6 to reduce and eliminate sexual misconduct and harassment and also support compliance with the Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023. We also began the work of embedding new guidance – Regulatory Advice 24 – on freedom of speech across the University.

EDI oversight and reach has been developed with Associate Deans for Culture, Equality and Inclusion established within the four Faculties and an EDI Board, reporting to the University Executive Board.

A number of external factors have influenced our work this academic year. In March, the OfS found that Sussex had breached Conditions of Registration E1 and E2 in respect of matters of freedom of speech. Subsequently, the University commenced judicial review proceedings against the OfS seeking to quash that decision. The High Court has now granted the University permission to proceed and the hearing is scheduled for February 2026. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court judgement in *For Women Scotland v Scottish Ministers* was issued in April 2025, determining the meaning of the protected characteristic of sex in the Equality Act as biological sex, and we continue to consider its implications and await substantive guidance from the Equality & Human Rights Commission. More generally, the extent of conflict and contestation in the external environment, both nationally and internationally, provides an increasingly challenging backdrop to EDI work, including within the University. Significant financial constraints are also impacting the Higher Education sector as a whole, and this has been a factor in the University's recent Voluntary Leavers Scheme and consequent reduced capacity and resources.

Reflecting on the University's progress over the seven-year *Inclusive Sussex* strategy period, much has been achieved, though there remain areas of underrepresentation, disadvantage, marginalisation and inequality. We have achieved the majority of the key performance indicators that we set ourselves, including the Race Equality Charter Bronze award, Stonewall Workplace Equality Index Top 100 Employer, and Disability Confident Leader accreditation. Eight of our 10 Schools hold Athena Swan awards (with one more having just been notified of success and the other in progress, as noted above), in addition to our institutional award. We have introduced and embedded several innovative and potentially sector-leading initiatives, including the Black at Sussex programme; a British Council Reciprocal Mentoring scheme with University of Ghana; the Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showman and Boater pledge and supporting work; and an Open Listening Programme. We have also seen overall improvement in the proportion of staff who believe that the University is committed to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, measured through responses to the Staff Survey.

The University has improved representation of underrepresented staff, including in senior leadership positions. There have been increases in numbers of those from underrepresented groups across the protected characteristics of sex, ethnicity and disability, with increases in both percentages and absolute numbers. Representation of women, racially minoritised and disabled staff in grades 9 and 10 has also increased during the strategy period.

Pay gap progress, and the underlying factors this reflects, has been slower than hoped for. Our aim to halve the gender pay gap by 2024 has not been achieved, though the trend shows a steady reduction overall during the strategy period. We plan to use pay gaps as a primary success indicator for our work in future, as these are a helpful proxy for many underlying issues – particularly representation and distribution.

Meanwhile, the disabled student awarding gap closed over the strategy period and the Asian heritage awarding gap also reduced. However, despite some narrowing during recent years, the Black awarding gap currently stands at a similar level to 2017/18.

Over the period of the new strategic plan, we will maintain the current theory of change and overall approach adopted in the *Inclusive Sussex* strategy but with the focus on supporting the new University strategy, *Sussex 2035: Creating Progressive Futures – flourishing, sustainability and progress for the whole world.*

Professor David Ruebain
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Culture, Equality and Inclusion)

Inclusive Sussex

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018-2025

In July 2018 the University launched *Inclusive Sussex*, a seven-year Equality, Diversity and Inclusion strategy. Following the appointment of the University's first substantive Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC) for Culture, Equality and Inclusion in October 2021, a 'refreshed' version was agreed by Council in July 2022, with an expanded narrative and theory of change, a new, additional goal – Connected Sussex, and revised targets. *Inclusive Sussex* was a key enabling strategy within the University's strategic framework *Sussex 2025 - A Better University for a Better World.*

The University's vision is to drive inclusion, where all community members have equal access to opportunities and where structural and systemic barriers are removed. The aim is to ensure that everyone can fulfil their potential and contribute meaningfully to the University's mission. By focusing on reducing inequalities, addressing underrepresentation and disadvantage, celebrating diversity, and promoting greater inclusivity, the University seeks to foster a thriving community where collective progress and achievement are maximised.

Equality and diversity goals

Inclusive Sussex sets out five key goals - equality, diversity, connectedness, accessibility and flexibility.

Equal Sussex

Reduce the gaps in representation, experience, progression and reward between those with protected characteristics that are under-represented or disadvantaged and others.

Diverse Sussex

Be a place that celebrates and proactively supports and encourages diversity.

Connected Sussex

Build a thriving community that fosters good relations and supports a rich, diverse, rigorous, collegiate and inquisitive teaching, learning and research environment.

Accessible Sussex

Provide equal access to excellent learning, research and employment opportunities for all, with regard to disability but also recognising the particular needs of those with other protected characteristics.

Flexible Sussex

Become an organisation that is flexible by default, ensuring inclusivity in all activities and practices.

Equal Sussex

Reduce the gaps in representation, experience, progression and reward between those with protected characteristics that are under-represented and disadvantaged, and others

Pay gaps

In March 2025, the University published its 2024 gender pay gap data. For the sixth consecutive year, the disability and ethnicity pay gaps were also reported, and for the second year, the intersectional sex/ethnicity pay gap was published. Pay gaps reflect differences in the average pay of staff grouped by demographic categories and do not indicate differences in pay for performing the same or similar roles. While pay gap data is a valuable indicator of occupational segregation or concentration, understanding the reasons for any disparities requires consideration of additional qualitative data.

Table one: Summary of 2025 pay gap figures and change on previous year

Pay gap	Mean	Increase (+) or decrease (-)	Median	Increase (+) or decrease (-)
Disability	17.2%	-0.3%	13.5%	+2.4%
Disability – academic	11.7%	-2.2%	16.2%	+2.2%
Disability – Professional Services	12.7%	-1.0%	6.8%	-0.1%
Gender	15.5%	+1.1%	15.1%	+2.7%
Gender – academic	8.9%	+0.5%	7.9%	-0.4%
Gender – Professional Services	10.2%	-1.8%	10.8%	+2.0%
Ethnicity	-3.8%	-0.8%	-3.0%	-0.9%
Ethnicity – academic	6.6%	+2.5%	11.1%	+5.4%
Ethnicity – Professional Services	-0.3%	-2.2%	-0.5%	-3.3%

"At the University of Sussex, we are striving to create an environment in which every staff member can achieve their goals, develop their potential, and be themselves.
We embrace diversity in all its forms - background, identity, belief, thought, discipline, and method.

Reducing pay gaps is a crucial part of our vision because we want to ensure that all staff are rewarded fairly and equitably."

Sasha Roseneil, Vice-Chancellor

Disability pay gap

The mean disability pay gap for 2025 is 17.2%, a small decrease from the previous year. It has also decreased in both the academic and Professional Services staff groups. In line with a wider sector trend, numbers reporting a disability have steadily increased over recent years, with 13% of staff now reporting a disability compared to 6% in 2020.

The median pay gap, however, has risen to 13.5%, reflecting the mixed picture across different staff groups and pay quartiles.

The key driver for the gap remains the spread of staff across pay levels. Professional Services (PS) show higher disability disclosure rates at 16%, compared with 10% for academic staff, and as these roles are more often in lower grades, this continues to influence the overall figures.

Encouragingly, representation of disabled academics in the top quartile has risen from 5% to 8%, helping to narrow the mean gap in this group.

For PS staff groups the gap has decreased because of the distribution of disabled staff across the pay quartiles.

There continues to be low representation of disabled staff in the top quartile for both staff groups.

Hourly pay gap year on year comparison

Year	Median	Mean
2020	11.3%	18.3%
2021	13.7%	19.1%
2022	9.5%	13.4%
2023	11.1%	17.4%
2024	13.5%	17.2%
Percentage point change since 2023	2.4%	-0.3%
Percentage point change since 2020	2.3%	-1.2%

The University remains committed to reducing the disability pay gap and the Disability, Equality and Inclusion Steering Group will continue to develop and review actions to address it. Some of the focus areas include recruitment policy and procedure, promotion and career progression, and a planned positive action initiative focused on disabled leaders, as well as ongoing efforts to ensure the inclusion of disabled staff.

Gender pay gap

The University continues to monitor and publish its gender pay gap annually. In 2025, the mean gender pay gap increased for the first time since 2020, rising by 1.1 percentage points to 15.5%. The median gender pay gap also increased to 15.1%, up 2.6 percentage points from 2024.

This shift is largely explained by changes in the Professional Services staff group, which grew by approximately 200 staff, many concentrated in lower grades. While this contributed to an overall institutional increase, the Professional Services pay gap itself decreased by 1.8 percentage points, supported by a higher proportion of women in the top pay quartile (53% compared with 50% the previous year).

Among academic staff, the mean pay gap increased slightly by 0.5 percentage points. Although the proportion of women in the academic workforce fell from 50% to 48%, the proportion of women in the top pay quartile has continued to rise year on year, reaching 42% in 2025 (41% in 2024 and 33% in 2023). The mean pay gap has nevertheless increased slightly this year because the proportion of men has increased in the upper mid and lower mid pay quartiles.

The gender bonus gap fluctuates over time and has reduced this year, with the mean bonus gap at 50.8% compared to 59.8% in 2024. The inclusion of Clinical Excellence Awards, as required by the methodology, significantly impacts the calculation. If these awards are excluded, the academic staff mean bonus gap would reduce to 14.8%.

Hourly pay gap year on year comparison

Year	Median	Mean
2020	12.7%	18.4%
2021	12.0%	17.9%
2022	12.4%	16.9%
2023	12.5%	14.4%
2024	15.1%	15.5%
Percentage point change since 2023	2.7%	1.1%
Percentage point change since 2020	2.4%	2.8%

Academic hourly pay gap 2024

Gender	Median	Mean
Women	7.9%	8.9%
Other	16.9%	20.0%

PS staff hourly pay gap 2024

Gender	Median	Mean
Women	10.8%	10.2%
Other	16.2%	21.2%

All staff hourly pay gap quartile distribution 2024

Quartile	Woman	Man	Other
Top	46%	53%	1%
Upper mid	51%	48%	1%
Lower mid	58%	41%	1%
Bottom	72%	26%	2%

Academic staff hourly pay gap quartile distribution 2024

Quartile	Woman	Man	Other
Top	42%	57%	1%
Upper mid	50%	50%	1%
Lower mid	49%	50%	1%
Bottom	53%	46%	1%

PS staff hourly pay gap quartile distribution 2024

Quartile	Woman	Man	Other
Top	53%	46%	1%
Upper mid	62%	37%	1%
Lower mid	72%	25%	2%
Bottom	73%	24%	3%

Actions to address gender pay gaps continue to be coordinated through the University's Gender Equality Action Plan, linked to Athena Swan. These focus on recruitment and promotion processes, pay frameworks, career development programmes and flexible working policies to ensure sustained progress. The University will also be taking forward positive action initiatives this year to address the gender pay gap.

Further information about pay gaps can be found here:
https://staff.sussex.ac.uk/news/article/67672-latest-pay-gap-data-reported-by-sussex

Ethnicity pay gap

The University's overall mean ethnicity pay gap in 2025 is -3.8% seemingly in favour of racially minoritised staff, with a median gap of -3.0%.

When the staff groups are disaggregated, differences emerge with an increase in the mean pay gap for the academic group from 4.1% to 6.6% in favour of white staff, reflecting more racially minoritised staff in lower pay quartiles. In Professional Services, the gap has narrowed to almost zero, at -0.3%, reflecting even distribution of racially minoritised staff across quartiles. Racially minoritised staff now represent 18% of the workforce overall, comparable to the latest available whole sector figure of 19.1% (2022/23 data).

The mean ethnicity bonus gap has reduced sharply to -135.9%, largely due to Clinical Excellence Awards. Excluding these, the academic bonus gap would be 11.7%.

Actions to address ethnicity pay disparities are embedded in the Race Equality Charter action plan, focusing on recruitment and progression, improving data quality, advancing representation in senior roles, and targeted positive action programmes.

Hourly pay gap year on year comparison

Year	Median	Mean
2020	-4.7%	-2.6%
2021	-4.7%	-2.5%
2022	-3.0%	-1.7%
2023	-3.9%	-4.6%
2024	-3.0%	-3.8%
Percentage point change since 2023	-0.9%	-0.8%
Percentage point change since 2020	1.7%	1.2%

Academic staff hourly pay gap 2024

Median	Mean
11.1%	6.6%

PS staff hourly pay gap 2024

Median	Mean
-0.5%	-0.3%

All staff hourly pay gap quartile distribution 2024

Quartile	Ethnic minority	White	Unknown
Top	17%	74%	9%
Upper mid	20%	72%	8%
Lower mid	21%	72%	7%
Bottom	13%	81%	6%

Academic staff hourly pay gap quartile distribution 2024

Quartile	Ethnic minority	White	Unknown
Top	14%	74%	11%
Upper mid	25%	71%	4%
Lower mid	27%	67%	7%
Bottom	30%	63%	8%

PS staff hourly pay gap quartile distribution 2024

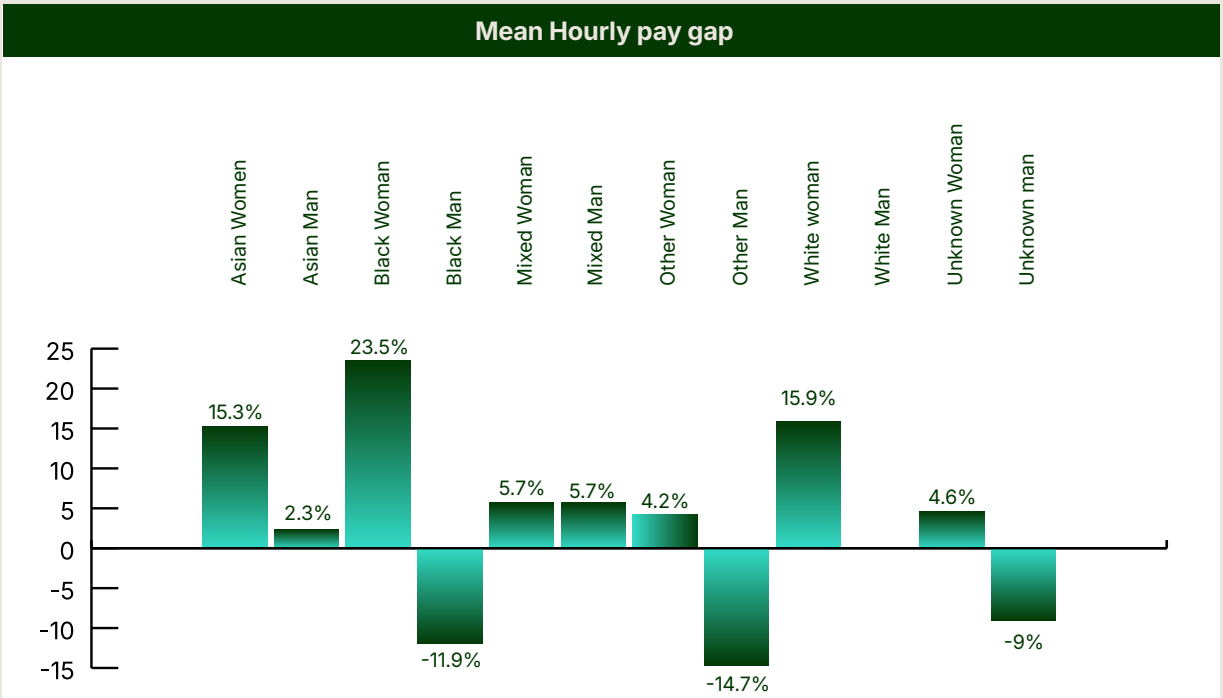
Quartile	Ethnic minority	White	Unknown
Top	11%	79%	10%
Upper mid	12%	82%	6%
Lower mid	10%	84%	5%
Bottom	13%	80%	7%

"The reduction to almost zero of the mean pay gap for racially minoritised staff within Professional Services demonstrates progress both in terms of representation of staff in this group as well as even distribution across the pay quartiles. The ethnicity and gender intersectional pay gap does, however, highlight ongoing challenges, as well as offering further insights into areas of disadvantage, enabling us to develop targeted approaches to address these challenges and work towards eliminating inequality at Sussex."

David Ruebain,
Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Culture, Equality and Inclusion
and Chair of the Race Equality Charter Self-Assessment Team (REC SAT)

Intersectional sex and ethnicity pay gap data

Intersectional pay gap: Gender and ethnicity (mean, 2024)



Note: results are expressed relative to white males.

Pay gaps persist for women across all ethnicities, with Black women experiencing the largest gap at 23.5% compared to white men. This has increased by 1.6 percentage points since last year. The gaps for white women and Asian women have also risen to 15.9% and 15.3% respectively.

The data shows that gender remains the primary driver of pay disparities, with men from racially minoritised groups generally closer to pay parity with white men.

Actions to address intersectional pay gaps are embedded across the Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter Equality and Inclusion Action Plans, and within the People Strategy. These focus on improving representation in senior roles and addressing barriers to progression, in line with the Inclusive Sussex strategy. Targeted positive action programmes are a priority for the 2025/26 academic year.

"Given our commitment to equality and diversity, including our current action plans focused on driving improvements, it is disappointing to see increases in our pay gaps. Such pay gaps demonstrate the importance of tackling systemic issues such as occupational segregation to deliver long term substantive change. As we look ahead to consider actions needed, at the heart of our work and thinking is our core belief that providing an inclusive workplace for our employees is fundamental. We will develop a People and Culture Strategic Plan in the coming year which will include actions to deliver improvements in our pay gaps. This plan will underpin delivery of the University's ambitions set out in the Sussex 2035 strategy."

Colin Shipp
Executive Director of HR

Awarding gaps

The latest published data for awarding gaps relates to the 2023/24 academic year (as student return data is received in November). The Access and Participation Plan (APP) targets for ethnicity and disability awarding gaps are for year-on-year reductions over the period of the Plan (2020-2025).

Data for the last seven years is as follows:

Metric	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
UK White to UK Black	25.0	19.7	18.0	16.5	18.6	25.8	24.9
UK White to UK Asian	20.8	12.2	6.5	4.2	5.9	11.7	13.3
No disability to disability	6.9	5.3	2.3	2.4	1.6	-1.7	-3.5
- to Cognitive / Learning Difficulties	1.4	6.9	2.0	1.6	2.7	0.7	-4.3
- to Mental Health condition	10.4	6.6	3.6	3.1	1.2	-1.2	-3.1
- to multiple impairments	4.4	0.7	2.6	4.2	2.3	-4.8	-2.1
- to sensory, medical / physical impairment	4.0	0.9	-2.2	-3.5	0.9	-2.3	-8.6

The awarding gap target for Black students is to reduce the gap from 25 percentage points (pp) in 2017/18 to 5pp by 2024/25. After success in closing this awarding gap until 2020/21, we saw a rise in the awarding gap between 2021-2023 (as did the sector) following awarding gaps closing during the Covid-19 pandemic. The most recent data shows a closing in the gap again in 2023/24.

The Asian heritage awarding gap target is to reduce the gap from 21pp (in 2017/18) to 2.1pp by 2024/25. After closing significantly, this gap has widened in the past three years and is now 13.3pp.

The awarding gap target for students with disabilities is to eliminate the gap by 2024/25. This was achieved in 2022/23, with data showing a negative gap, i.e. a higher percentage of disabled students received a first or 2:1 than non-disabled students. This trend has continued in 2023/24.

The table above also includes the gaps between students by disability/impairment type (compared to students with no declared disability).

Targets for the Access and Participation Plan (APP) were set against a benchmark of 2017/18. The Black awarding gap narrowed initially, before reopening in more recent data (with a small closure most recently). The Asian heritage awarding gap also closed initially before reopening in the past three years. This pattern has mirrored awarding gap trends in the sector. Our analysis suggests that one of the significant reasons for this pattern is the changing assessment practices during the Covid-19 pandemic, and increasing returns to previous assessment types after the pandemic. The disabled student awarding gap has closed, and indeed reversed, which is better than the trend in the sector.

Our new APP (2025-2029) has been approved by the Office for Students, and is now operating. In the new APP we have retained objectives focused on ethnicity-based awarding gaps, using 2022/23 data as the baseline:

- **Black** – reduction to no more than 12pp by 2029/30
- **Asian** – reduction to no more than 5pp by 2029/30
- **Mixed-heritage** – reduction to no more than 6pp by 2029/30

We have also introduced a new awarding gap objective focusing on the gap between students who have been eligible for **Free School Meals** and those that have not from 13.1pp (2023) to no more that 6.5pp.

We have removed an objective related to disabled student awarding gaps, but introduced objectives related to continuation and completion for students with mental health disabilities.

The UK white to Non-UK BAME (Black and Minority Ethnic) awarding gap is not included in the APP, which is only applicable to Home UK students, but is an institutional key performance indicator.

See our website for further information about the University's Access and Participation Plan.

Other activities to take forward 'Equal Sussex'

Equality Analysis Review

The University continues to strengthen its approach to Equality Analysis (EA), also known as Equality Impact Assessment, to ensure that equality considerations are embedded into policy development, projects, and services. Over the past year, the EDI Unit has reviewed and updated the EA process, including improvements to the form, guidance, and supporting information following consultation with key stakeholders, and has piloted a workshop to further support understanding and skills development.

The accompanying 'Understanding Equality Analysis' e-learning has also been refreshed, with monitoring of uptake introduced for the first time. To further raise awareness, Equality Analysis (EA) has been promoted through termly all-staff communications in the Inclusive Sussex newsletter.

New measures have been introduced to support consistency and accountability, including the establishment of a central master record for EA documents to enable the University to strengthen records management compliance and support more effective monitoring of uptake.

The EDI Unit has continued to engage with stakeholders to integrate EA into existing processes, for example through the Sussex Projects scoping stage and updates to committee paper templates. In addition, ad hoc support has been provided to colleagues across the University to help review and strengthen draft EA documents.

Equal pay audit

Equal pay is the entitlement for men and women to be paid the same for performing the same work within a workforce, unless the pay difference can be justified. This is work that equal pay law classes as the same, similar, equivalent or of equal value. It applies to employees and workers (including agency workers) on full, part-time, or temporary contracts, and to apprentices and self-employed people who perform work personally. The University completes internal equal pay audits to identify any discrepancies in equal pay.

In 2024 the University engaged an external provider to carry out an Equal Pay Audit. The report was presented to the Remuneration Committee in February 2025 and provided an independent analysis of pay across the institution.

The audit did not identify systemic equal pay issues in the majority of grades, but highlighted areas for further exploration and clarification to understand the causes of any discrepancies. Work is underway to examine these areas in more detail and ensure transparency and fairness are consistently applied. This work complements our ongoing monitoring of gender, ethnicity, and disability pay gaps and will inform future action planning to address structural inequalities in pay and progression.

Academic promotions process review

The University has continued work on its review of the academic promotions process, with the aim of streamlining the process in light of the new Faculty structure. The review is designed to strengthen fairness and transparency. A new category of criteria has been introduced for leadership and management - making it easier to recognise contributions that were previously difficult to evidence. This is particularly important in acknowledging the gendered impact of discretionary work.

The individual circumstances process has also been revised to ensure consistency, moving from School-level management to a University-level panel. This University-level panel will review the submissions on an anonymised basis, strengthening the objectivity of the process. New academic job titles have been implemented, following consultation with senior stakeholders, including Pro-Vice-Chancellors.

The criteria are not yet finalised, but the review has already responded to concerns raised about the evidence requirements and impartiality of promotions panels. The review is expected to conclude by March 2026. Currently the Academic Promotions process is paused due to financial challenges, however when the University is able to run the process again it will be with the new and updated process.

Gender equality

Athena Swan and Gender Equality Steering Group

The University of Sussex holds an Athena Swan Institutional Bronze award, achieved in November 2021 and running to November 2026. Planning is already underway for renewal, with consideration of a Silver application. Oversight of this work sits with the Gender Equality Steering Group, chaired by Professor Sarah Guthrie.

The group brings together colleagues from across Schools and Professional Services to monitor progress against the action plan, share good practice, and steer local and institutional action.

Understanding barriers to progression

A central focus this year has been deepening our understanding of the barriers to progression. In October 2024 the University hosted the first Female Professor Roundtable, creating space for senior colleagues to review data and reflect on structural inequities. A second roundtable, held in March 2025, examined salary distribution, promotion rates and workload in more detail. These discussions revealed disparities in professorial starting salaries. They highlighted concerns about lower starting salaries for internal female appointments and raised questions about the impact of market supplements, maternity leave and caring responsibilities on career progression. The conversations also addressed race as an intersecting factor in progression. The sessions brought together the Chair of the Gender Equality Steering Group, the Chair of the Race Equality Charter Steering Group (formerly SAT) and the Chair of the Parents and Carers Staff Network, ensuring that intersectional experiences were fully considered and integrated into action planning.

Learning from the roundtables is already shaping change and the discussions have informed Sussex's developing approach to positive action. A new toolkit is being designed to give colleagues confidence in applying the positive action provisions of Section 159 of the Equality Act, and targeted actions are in development.

Mentoring and leadership development

Mentoring has been a focus for 2024/25, both within Sussex and through an international partnership. The University continues to recognise that mentoring and line management play a central role in supporting career progression, in line with commitments in our Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter action plans.

Results from the Staff Survey, conducted in October 2024, were reviewed by the Gender Equality Steering Group with a focus on sex and gender. This analysis provided a useful temperature check on existing actions, confirming the value of line management as a critical source of support. 76% of staff reported satisfaction with their line management, with women reporting slightly higher satisfaction than men. The survey also underlined the importance of informal networks of support, which complement but are distinct from line management. It further highlighted the importance of compassionate leadership in shaping staff experiences; particularly for women who may encounter barriers linked to childcare or maternity. Supportive management practices play an important role in enabling staff to feel valued and able to thrive, which is often difficult to capture in formal reporting.

Alongside this, feedback from formal mentoring schemes has been very strong, with the institutional target of 80% positive feedback exceeded. This reinforces the value of structured support while highlighting opportunities to broaden participation, particularly from senior colleagues acting as mentors. Building on this, we have promoted the internal mentoring scheme more widely, monitored uptake and the identities of current mentors to identify gaps, and encouraged greater participation to ensure that staff at all levels can benefit from the scheme.

The Gender Equality Steering Group is now using these insights to shape the further development of Sussex's mentoring offer, ensuring mentoring becomes an embedded feature of institutional practice.

This focus on mentoring also provided the foundation for a successful joint bid by Sussex and the University of Ghana to the British Council Gender Equality Partnership programme. Mentoring was chosen as the central initiative because it was already a clear priority under both Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter, and because both institutions recognised its potential to drive meaningful cultural change. The resulting Sussex–Ghana Reciprocal Mentoring Project launched in January 2025. The project involves over 50 people in total, with more than 40 active mentoring participants and a core project team of around 10 colleagues drawn from both universities. It is jointly led by Professor Sarah Guthrie, Chair of the Gender Equality Steering Group at Sussex, and Professor Deborah Atobrah, Director of the Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy (CEGENSA) at the University of Ghana.

Mentoring pairs meet monthly to share experiences and reflect on leadership, culture and gendered barriers to progression, supported by inclusive mentoring training and ongoing peer learning. In July 2025 Sussex hosted three colleagues from the University of Ghana for a week-long exchange, which created opportunities to share lived experiences, strengthen relationships and generate new collaborations. The programme is already producing tangible outputs, including a practical mentoring toolkit and a co-authored paper currently in development, while also influencing Sussex's wider approach to leadership development and organisational learning.

By linking insights from the Staff Survey, feedback on formal mentoring, and the reciprocal mentoring project, Sussex is seeking to build a richer and more inclusive mentoring culture. This joined up approach demonstrates how evidence and action come together to create change, supported and driven forward by the Gender Equality Steering Group.

Other areas of focus in 2024/25

Alongside this, a number of other initiatives have taken place this year to embed gender equality across the University.

International Women's Day 2025

International Women's Day (8 March) was marked with a rich programme of activity under the theme Accelerate Action. Highlights included an exhibition in the library which showcased Early Career Researchers, while students in the School of Engineering and Informatics led a research showcase highlighting the experiences of women in STEM. A diverse programme of talks and workshops addressed menopause, neurodiversity, and women's historical experiences of persecution. These activities reflected both the vibrancy of Sussex's gender equality work and the importance of inclusive leadership across the University.

The University also launched the Sussex Women's Leadership Academy, a new initiative to support and empower early career researchers, inclusive of all women and minority genders. Running from March to June 2025, the Academy combined coaching workshops, weekly seminars, and peer-led book groups to build confidence, develop leadership skills, and foster community. Led by Dr Elizabeth Rendon-Morales and Professor Erika Mancini, and supported by the Sussex Researcher School and Research Culture, the programme was developed in response to the gender gap identified in promotion applications at Sussex amongst this group.

International Women in Engineering Day 2025

On 23 June, Sussex joined organisations around the world in celebrating International Women in Engineering Day under the theme Together we Engineer. The School of Engineering and Informatics hosted a series of activities celebrating the achievements and insights of women in engineering, including an interactive Padlet exhibition and a physical display of research posters created by female students and early career researchers in the Chichester Building. These initiatives provided a platform to showcase role models, inspire the next generation, and reinforce the University's commitment to gender equality in STEM.

Progress on School Athena Swan awards

At School level, progress towards the goal of all Schools holding Athena Swan awards by 2025 has continued. The School of Law, Politics and Sociology achieved Bronze in August 2024, bringing the total to eight Schools with awards. Applications are in progress for the Faculty of Media, Arts and Humanities and the School of Global Studies.

School	Current award
Brighton and Sussex Medical School	Gold (awarded April 2024)
Life Sciences	Bronze (awarded August 2019)
Psychology	Silver (renewed November 2020)
Mathematical and Physical Sciences	Bronze (awarded November 2023)
Engineering and Informatics	Bronze (awarded September 2024)
Education and Social Work	Bronze (awarded April 2024)
University of Sussex Business School	Bronze (awarded September 2024)
Global Studies	Application in progress
Media, Arts and Humanities	Bronze (awarded August 2025)
Law, Politics and Sociology	Application in progress (successfully awarded September 2025)

Looking ahead

The coming year will be an important period for consolidating and deepening the progress made in 2024/25. Work will continue on developing a Positive Action Toolkit and embedding learning from the Female Professor Roundtables into recruitment and promotion practices. The mentoring agenda will remain central, with formal scheme evaluation, learning from the Sussex - Ghana Reciprocal Mentoring Project, and new opportunities to strengthen line management and informal mentoring support.

At School level, we will continue to provide targeted support for the School of Global Studies and the Faculty of Media, Arts and Humanities to achieve their Athena Swan awards, with the aim of ensuring that all Schools hold awards by the end of the calendar year 2025. At institutional level, we will prepare for our renewal/application in November 2026, reviewing progress against our priority areas, evaluating the impact of actions, and setting out clear next steps for advancing gender equality.

Finally, the Gender Equality Steering Group will continue to draw on institutional data, survey findings and staff voices to shape practical actions so as to ensure that the University sustains momentum in addressing barriers and creates the conditions for genuine equity in career progression, leadership and work-life balance.

Race equality

Deliver our vision for anti-racist Sussex and move towards being a more inclusive University.

Race Equality Charter update 2024/25

This has been a positive year of activity for the Race Equality Charter Steering Group (REC SG).We have worked collectively to monitor progress against the action plan, ensure accountability, and provide space for members to raise points, ask questions, and measure progress. The group has also evolved its role and membership, moving from the Self-Assessment Team to a Steering Group model to more accurately reflect its remit and influence across the institution.

Training and staff development

As part of our REC action plan a new sector-specific online Race Equity training offer has been introduced. The two-module e-learning course, developed with Advance HE, explores microaggressions, privilege, and systemic racism. It supports staff to deepen their understanding, challenge biases, and contribute to a more inclusive Sussex. The REC SG continues to spotlight training as a core action, ensuring take-up is monitored and good practice is shared.

Ongoing termly meetings with the Professional Services Leadership Team (PSLT), attended by Sarah Law (EDI Consultant Lead on Race Equity), provide a regular opportunity to review divisional REC commitments and progress. These meetings spotlight training, EDI Champions, and other areas of progress, helping senior leaders stay accountable for REC actions and providing practical approaches to implement their commitments.

At Faculty level, Associate Deans for Culture, Equality and Inclusion are now actively engaged in embedding REC actions within academic structures. This dual engagement at Divisional and Faculty level strengthens accountability and supports a consistent approach across the University.

Student Voice and Race Equity Advocates (REAs)

The Race Equity Advocate (REA) scheme, led by the Students' Union in partnership with the Access and Participation Plan team, continues to support student-focused REC activity. REAs are students recruited through the Students' Union to support race equity activity within Faculties, including identifying barriers to inclusion and contributing to work aimed at narrowing awarding gaps. During the reporting year, the scheme operated in the Business School and the School of Media, Arts and Humanities, with plans in place for expansion across all Faculties in the following academic year.

At the end of 2024, a Race Equity and Student Voice sub-group was set up to strengthen collaboration between the Students' Union, REAs, the APP Team, and the REC Steering Group. The sub-group, including Chair, Professor David Ruebain, and the EDI Consultant for Race Equity, meets once a term

The group provides a clear route for REA insights to feed into the REC SG. REAs share progress reports through the sub-group, which are then cascaded into the REC SG and used to sense-check student-related actions, monitor progress, and guide priorities. A recent example of learning comes from REA-led workshops in the School of Media, Arts and Humanities, where students raised concerns about Eurocentric curricula, limited Global South content, lack of scholars of colour on reading lists, inconsistent use of content warnings, and the way language is used. At the same time, students acknowledged staff willingness to respond and make improvements. Their recommendations included stronger leadership guidance, recruitment of staff of colour, more inclusive reading lists, greater opportunities for student voice, and attention to community-specific perspectives.

This feedback has been discussed within the REC SG and is being used to inform monitoring of curriculum-related actions in the plan, while recognising that this work takes place alongside the University's commitment to academic freedom and freedom of speech within the law.

Curriculum and decolonisation

Curriculum change is a central strand of institutional work on equity. Through the Curriculum Reimagined project, which includes a strong focus on inclusivity, we are seeing important progress. This work is led through Education Committee structures, with Associate Deans for Culture, Equality and Inclusion playing a core role at Faculty level. For REC, the significance lies in how REC SG members have been able to engage with these developments and measure progress against the action plan. In November 2024 guest speaker Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor Claire Smith attended the REC SG meeting to provide a progress update, which has allowed members to sense-check developments against REC priorities.

Intersectional pay gap analysis and positive action

Last year the University conducted its first intersectional pay gap analysis on ethnicity and gender. This has now become an annual exercise which was repeated this year. Outcomes again showed significant disparities, particularly for Black women, which, alongside other data, informed an agreement via University Executive Board to develop positive action approaches. This includes developing a Positive Action Toolkit for recruiters and targeted leadership programmes. The REC SG has also been engaged in discussions about governance, decision-making and mentoring.

Survey analysis and staff experience

In March 2025 the REC SG undertook a structured activity to review the October 2024 Staff Survey results, with a focus on differences by ethnicity. Scorecards and heatmaps were reviewed in breakout groups, and key reflections included:

- lower participation rates from ethnic minority staff (38% compared to 56% for white staff), raising questions about trust and anonymity.
- divergent experiences between academic and Professional Services staff, particularly on wellbeing and workload.
- the prominence of "prefer not to say" responses, highlighting possible concerns around categorisation, data use, or anonymity in smaller Schools.
- improvement in perceptions of local support, but continuing concerns about progression and visibility of diverse leadership.

These discussions reinforced the need for better communication about data use, further qualitative insights, and closer attention to differences between staff groups and Faculties.

Roundtable and intersectional progression

In October 2024, REC SG members including David Ruebain, Isobel Pearce and Sarah Guthrie co-hosted a focused roundtable with the Gender Equality Steering Group and HR colleagues to explore progression rates for women in academia, particularly at the intersections of race and sex. Data on pay gaps, starting salaries, and promotion rates was reviewed, highlighting systemic barriers faced by racially minoritised women, especially Black women. A follow-up discussion took place in March 2025, where the group reflected further on these findings and considered practical steps. Together, these discussions directly informed the development of a positive action approach which will be taken forward in the next academic year. This work demonstrates how REC actions interlink with Athena Swan, supporting a more intersectional approach to progression (see Gender Equality section for further detail).

Mentoring and leadership development

In January 2025, the University launched a British Council-funded Gender Equality Partnerships project, co-developed with the University of Ghana. The scheme supports a cross-cultural reciprocal mentoring programme designed to enhance leadership development opportunities for women from diverse backgrounds, including women from racially minoritised groups. For Sussex participants, the project has provided opportunities to strengthen cultural literacy, explore global networks, and develop international collaborations through joint research and publications.

While this programme sits within the Gender Equality workstream, learning is cascaded into the REC SG by the EDI consultant who oversees both workstreams. This supports intersectional progress and directly connects with REC actions on mentoring and career development.

For more detail on the programme,
see the Gender Equality section earlier in this report.

Action plan review and breakout discussions

During the year the REC SG trialled new approaches to reviewing the action plan, including breakout discussions on culture, staff and students. These sessions allowed members to familiarise themselves with the 150+ actions, identify gaps or overlaps, and suggest ways to improve reporting and communication. Common themes included:

- the importance of engagement and visibility, building trust through stronger communication.
- the need for clearer ownership and coordination across Faculties and Divisions.
- suggestions to prioritise actions not only by urgency but also by impact, to make the plan more accessible.
- proposals to develop more dynamic meetings with focused discussion and short data presentations.

This approach gave REC SG members the opportunity to test the action plan against lived realities and institutional structures, reinforcing the group's accountability role.

Ethnic Minority Staff Network

The Ethnic Minority Staff Network has continued to meet regularly this year, with strong engagement from members. The network provides an important forum for connection and discussion, and its perspectives help to inform Sussex's ongoing work on race equality. The network's chair is also a member of the Race Equality Charter Steering Group, ensuring that the voices of racially minoritised staff are embedded in the development and delivery of the action plan, and has met with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Culture, Equality and Inclusion and the Assistant Director of CEI to act as a conduit for the perspectives of network members.

Looking ahead

As we look forward, preparations are underway for the REC mid-term review in 2025/26. Our aim is to identify three or four key focus areas, present the action plan in a more digestible way, and ensure consistent progress reporting. Strengthening student representation on the REC SG, continuing the work on positive action, and embedding insights from staff surveys and curriculum projects will be central. The REC SG remains committed to its role in holding the institution to account, building trust, and ensuring that REC actions continue to drive meaningful change. Work has also begun on strengthening REC SG leadership, following the departure of the previous Co-Chair.

Gypsy, Roma, Traveller, Showmen and Boaters (GTRSB) workstream

The University continues to progress its commitments under the GTRSB Pledge, signed in June 2023, with activity across education, community engagement and research. In 2024/25 this has included embedding recognition of the Roma Holocaust into Holocaust Memorial Day, widening participation initiatives with local schools, exhibitions in partnership with Brighton Jubilee Library, and hosting Prissy, the Gypsy Cob Horse sculpture outside Jubilee Building as a symbol of inclusion. Sussex academics have also continued to contribute research and national expertise in this area, strengthening both local and sector impact.

A highlight this year was the recognition of Chris Derbyshire, Chair of the GTRSB Steering Group, as winner of the Inclusive Sussex Award in the inaugural Sussex Awards ceremony. Chris was recognised for his sustained leadership in supporting GTRSB heritage young people into education, co-leading Sussex's signing of the national GTRSB Pledge, and his role in advancing Roma Holocaust memorialisation. This award underlines the visibility and value of GTRSB inclusion work within the University.

Building on this recognition, Sussex has also been invited to contribute a chapter to a forthcoming Routledge publication, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Communities in the United Kingdom: Critical Perspectives on Higher Education. The chapter will present Sussex case studies of outreach and inclusion practices, highlighting our pioneering role in this area and providing an opportunity to showcase the University's collective expertise, activism and practice to a national and international audience.

Looking ahead, priorities for 2025/26 include sustaining widening participation activity, embedding student voice, and strengthening collaboration with national partners.

Disability equality

Progress in delivering disability equality and inclusion work.

Disability Equality and Inclusion Steering Group (DEISG)

The Disability Equality and Inclusion Steering Group collaboratively and strategically steers the work of disability equality and inclusion across the University to address barriers in and disadvantages experienced by disabled staff, students and visitors.

Re-established in 2023, the DEISG supports and progresses key Inclusive Sussex activities. The group comprises of representatives from Human Resources, Student Experience, Estates and Facilities, the Staff Disability Network, the Staff Neurodiversity Network, and Student Officers. Meetings are held termly, and the work is reviewed and monitored through the group action plan.

Students Reasonable Adjustments (RA) Review

In 2024/25, the University began conducting a review to better understand and address the barriers and challenges for disabled students. The review started with a series of consultations in September 2024. The aim of the review was to develop a more inclusive and accessible learning environment for students looking at four streams – Policy, Process, Teaching and Assessment.

A working group was established to conduct this review, consisting of representation from Student Experience, Student Support and Wellbeing, Faculty leaders, the Disability Advice Team, Student Union Wellbeing, Academic Services, Educational Enhancement, Estates, Curriculum Policy, Exams and Assessments, the EDI Unit and subject matter experts. Further consultation included focus groups with students, and several process workshops with staff to identify common barriers and possible solutions.

The working group delivered their draft recommendations in July 2025 which included improvements to processes ensuring timely and adequate reasonable adjustments for students. Recommendations to teaching included:

- the development of resources and guidance relating to inclusive pedagogies.
- ensuring that the University's provision is anticipatory of the needs of disabled students.
- common adjustments to be implemented for all students as part of a culture of inclusive practice.

In addition, recommendations were made with regards to alternative modes of assessment, a potential Reasonable Adjustments Review panel as well as oversight of accessibility issues relating to physical and digital architecture. One of the outputs of the Reasonable Adjustments review includes the Accessible and Inclusive Learning Code of Practice.

Disability Awareness e-learning

During 2024/25, we developed a new mandatory Disability Awareness e-learning course for all staff, informed by the work of the Reasonable Adjustments Review Group, the Workplace Adjustments Toolkit Working Group and in response to feedback from our staff networks. It is designed to strengthen understanding of disability inclusion, the social model of disability, and the University's (and staff members') legal duties, with practical guidance on removing barriers for disabled staff and students.

By embedding this training into our mandatory offer, we aim to strengthen the support available for disabled staff and students, and to equip and empower all staff to make appropriate adjustments and provide inclusive experiences across the University. The course will launch in September 2025 and forms part of our continued commitment to creating an inclusive and accessible environment for staff, students and visitors.

Staff Survey – disabled staff engagement

There was a notable increase in those participating in the survey who identified as having a disability or impairment. This reflected the increase in representation also shown in organisational equality monitoring data. The survey also showed variation in the experiences of academic and Professional Services, between Schools and Divisions as well as variation according to length of service. The University will continue to build on its progress with regards to disability inclusion and increased representation within the University by seeking to ensure that experiences of disabled staff continue to improve consistently across the organisation.

Disability Confident

In October 2024, the University achieved Disability Confident Leader status, the highest level of the government's Disability Confident Scheme, recognising our ongoing work to improve disability equality and inclusion. It is a key success measure in the Inclusive Sussex strategy.

As a Disability Confident Leader, we are committed to best practice procedures and experiences in the recruitment and retention of disabled staff, reporting on disability, mental health and wellbeing, and building a culture of disability equality and inclusion.

Staff and students have been actively involved in shaping this work through the Disability Equality and Inclusion Steering Group, alongside colleagues in Human Resources, the Staff Disability Network, the Neurodiversity Staff Network, and other key teams across the University.

We will continue to build on this achievement through our action plan, which aims to reduce barriers, improve services, and foster a more inclusive culture across the University.

> **"I am delighted that the University has now attained Disability Confident Leader status, the highest of the three tiers of the scheme, in progressively improving our approach to representation of and development for disabled staff. This external validation is an important milestone in our disability equality and inclusion work, which we committed to achieve through the Inclusive Sussex strategy. The work of the steering group will continue to build on this achievement and to drive forward improvement."**
>
> David Ruebain
> Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Culture, Equality and Inclusion

Workplace Adjustments Toolkit

The Workplace Adjustment Toolkit provides updated guidance on workplace adjustments (or reasonable adjustments) for staff and managers. The toolkit includes information about managers' responsibilities to arrange, implement, change and review adjustments, and signposts to sources of information and guidance for all staff.

Effective workplace adjustments remove barriers to enable staff to fulfil their potential. All managers should work proactively and collaboratively with staff to put in place workplace adjustments where needed.

This guidance was updated at the start of the academic year, following the establishment of a Workplace Adjustments Working Group by Human Resources to review and improve the current guidance and processes. The working group includes representation from the Staff Disability Network and Neurodiversity Staff Network.

Other activities to take forward disability inclusion

Business Disability Forum information sessions

We ran two information sessions with Business Disability Forum (BDF) to highlight their range of resources, including content on accessibility, workplace adjustments, and condition and disability specific information.

The online sessions, led by Keith Harris, Disability Business Partner for BDF in conjunction with the EDI Unit, highlighted University resources and raised awareness about how staff can find resources and how they can support staff in a range of roles. The sessions resulted in an increase in staff signing up to the Business Disability Forum's Knowledge Hub which houses a range of resources available to staff and leaders.

Disability History Month

The University and the Staff Disability Network led events to mark Disability History Month (16 November – 16 December 2024), under the theme 'Disability, Livelihood and Employment.' This year's focus encouraged reflection not just on disabled people's participation in work, but also on how we can support them to thrive in the workplace. Activities included an online forum hosted by the Business Disability Forum as well as a talk on 'Navigating self-identification in the workplace'. Brighton and Sussex Medical School hosted a 'Living with Motor Neurone Disease' talk and the University also hosted 'Relish', a bagel van run by young people with Down syndrome in partnership with the Down Syndrome Development Trust. The Disability flag was flown from Sussex House as a visible marker of our ongoing dedication to disability inclusion.

Sussex has continued to mark awareness in support of disability equality and inclusion throughout the year including:

- Deaf Awareness Week
- Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) awareness month
- Autism Awareness Month
- Sign Language Week
- Neurodiversity Celebration Week
- International Day of Persons with Disabilities
- Dyslexia Awareness Week

Staff networks

The Staff Disability Network provides ongoing support for staff who identify as Disabled and is active in the Disability Equality and Inclusion Steering Group. They also continue to provide useful feedback in consultations regarding the University's ongoing work around disability equality and inclusion.

The Neurodiversity Staff Support Network continues to see a rise in membership of staff who identify with, or are curious about, neurodivergence. It is a source of ongoing support and advice to its members. The network's representatives have also been involved in a number of consultations in 2024/25 supporting culture, equality and inclusion work across the University.

Both networks engage members and non-members through newsletters, regular meetups and events such as the Chronic Fatigue at Work discussion, an online screening of the documentary 'This Might Hurt' to mark Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS) awareness month and more.

LGBT+ equality

Continue to work towards our vision of an inclusive Sussex for all

Stonewall

In May 2025, the University renewed its membership of Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme (which has since rebranded as Proud Employers).

Legal developments

There have been several legal developments in 2025 that have affected the University's LGBTQ+ inclusion work, particularly regarding trans inclusion. In March, the Office for Students found the University to be in breach of conditions of registrations relating to freedom of speech in respect of former versions of our Trans and Non-Binary Equality Policy Statement. This decision is now the subject of legal challenge. Meanwhile, in April, the UK Supreme Court determined the meaning of 'sex' and 'woman' in the Equality Act 2010 to refer to biological sex and biological woman. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) subsequently issued an interim update setting out its understanding of the implications of this judgement and has since conducted a consultation on proposed updates to its Code of Practice in light of the judgement.

The University submitted a response to the EHRC's consultation on proposed updates to its Code of Practice. This response itself underwent consultation with relevant staff etworks and steering groups including the LGBTQ+ Steering Group and the Religion and Belief Forum before submission. The response requested clarity from EHRC in several areas.

The University's Transitioning at Work Policy and associated guidance have been placed under review in light of the Supreme Court judgement pending publication of EHRC's updated Code of Practice.

LGBTQ+ Steering Group and Action Plan

In July and August 2025, recruitment was undertaken to expand membership of the LGBTQ+ Steering Group and so build a more resilient and diverse steering group that can contribute more effectively to LGBTQ+ inclusion work at Sussex. An unexpectedly high number of Expressions of interest were received, and seven additional members were selected. In choosing from the Expressions of Interest, we considered aspects such as representation of intersectional identities, diversity across job roles and areas of the University, interest in the processes of the Steering Group, experience of related activities, as well as the need to keep the Steering Group to a manageable size.

The University's LGBTQ+ Inclusion Action Plan is also under review, with the aim of producing a more focused, time-bound and attainable action plan informed by the Steering Group in the new academic year. Priority areas and themes that have been initially identified include - 'Building trust', 'Awareness and education' and 'Policy and practice'. These themes are drawn from staff survey results, feedback from network chairs and Students' Union officers, and feedback from a survey of LGBTQ+ Staff Network members.

Pride at Sussex

From 17 June to 30 July 2025, the Library hosted a photography exhibition spotlighting LGBTQ+ members of staff at Sussex. The project was led by James Ward-Lee, former Chair of the Trans and Non-Binary Staff Network, in conjunction with a small working group drawn from the LGBTQ+ Steering Group. Modelled on the Women at Sussex exhibition, Pride at Sussex featured photographs of participating staff members from across the University alongside a caption drawn from their experiences of being LGBTQ+ at Sussex. An accompanying Padlet features the photographs with extended versions of the participants' reflections.

"Being queer at Sussex means walking around campus and seeing our beautiful students and staff of so many different identities."

Hermione La Chapelle

"Every year we aren't the leading university for LGBTQ+ staff and students I see as a missed opportunity - we need to be talking and working with our staff and students about what they need."

James Ward-Lee

LGBTQ+ and Trans and Non-Binary Staff Networks

The LGBTQ+ Staff Network has run a range of events and activities throughout the year, including an LGBTQ+ history walking tour of Brighton for International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) followed by a drag show from Beverhausen at Komedia. A Polari Workshop explored the roots of queer dialect Polari, with participants learning about its history and creating their own poems in the language. The LGBTQ+ Staff Network also collaborated with the Trans and Non-Binary Staff Network for a Trans Pride pizza picnic at the Meeting House, creating a safe, welcoming space for trans and queer colleagues to connect. All events received excellent feedback from attendees.

Brighton & Hove Pride

Love and unity led the way during Brighton & Hove Pride on Saturday 2 August, with the University proudly taking part in the Community Parade once again this year. A walking group of 57 staff, students and alumni from across the University community joined the parade.

The Community Parade is a highlight of Brighton Pride weekend and we were honoured to be part of it. View the photos from Brighton Pride

Other activities to support LGBTQ+ inclusion

During the year several significant days have been marked at Sussex to support LGBTQ+ inclusion work, including the following:

- Bi Visibility Day
- Intersex Awareness Day
- Transgender Day of Remembrance
- LGBT+ History Month
- Transgender Day of Visibility
- Lesbian Visibility Week
- International Asexuality Day
- International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT)
- World Pride Month
- Trans Pride Brighton & Hove
- International Non-Binary People's Day

An article was published on Staff and Student News for each event, and in some instances the relevant flag was flown from Sussex House.

Diverse Sussex

Be a place that celebrates and proactively supports and encourages diversity.

Exit interviews project

During 2024/25, the Organisational Development team procured a self-managed survey platform through People Insight, with the EDI unit contributing to the procurement process and participating in the Staff Survey Steering Group. The platform hosts the all-staff survey and can also support additional surveys, including exit surveys. EDI and Organisational Development then worked together to design a refreshed set of exit survey questions, drawing on past exit surveys, the Staff Survey, and best practice examples. This approach provides continuity with previous data, allows cross-referencing across surveys, and supports more robust analysis. The new question set has been presented to the HR Executive, with implementation planned in the next phase.

Consistent approach to data

The University's commitment to fostering an inclusive and diverse workplace, where everyone feels valued and respected, depends on understanding the diverse backgrounds and experiences that individuals bring to Sussex.

Collecting equality data helps the University to understand and monitor diversity and patterns of underrepresentation at Sussex, providing evidence to inform and support action to improve policies, practices and initiatives.

Work is underway on developing Equality Monitoring Guidance that will ensure a consistent approach to collecting equality data across the University. This will allow for effective comparison of data across different areas. As part of this work, the wording of some questions and responses will be consulted on to ensure that relevant stakeholders feel accurately represented by the data.

The question on 'sex' in MyView's Equality Data section has recently been updated to reflect the Supreme Court judgement in For Women Scotland v The Scottish Ministers.

Diversity in Governance: Council, Senate, and Committees

In 2024, progress was made in establishing a consistent approach to monitoring the diversity of University governance structures. It was agreed that existing Higher Education Statistic Agency data can be used to track the composition of Council, while diversity in Senate and UEB will be monitored annually using MyView data, supported by the HR Systems and Planning team.

All monitoring will be conducted in anonymised, aggregate form, with careful attention to GDPR requirements and data privacy. Alongside this, sector-wide reports from Advance HE are being used to set meaningful benchmarks. This work provides a more robust basis for understanding representation across governance structures and will inform future actions to strengthen diversity and inclusion.

Connected Sussex

Build a thriving community that fosters good relations and supports a rich, diverse, rigorous, collegiate, and inquisitive teaching, learning and research environment

In Conversation events

The Inclusive Sussex: In Conversation with... series continued in 2024/25, bringing external voices and lived experiences into dialogue with our community. The series explores issues of liberation, equality, diversity and justice with voices from all walks of life and from a wide range of perspectives and viewpoints, bringing their expertise and lived experiences to the fore. Sussex has a proud history of welcoming staff and students from the widest range of backgrounds and working to create a truly inclusive community. We strive for Sussex to be a leading example of good practice and a place which welcomes rigorous discussion and debate.

In October 2024, Professor Kalwant Bhopal, Director of the Centre for Research in Race and Education at the University of Birmingham, discussed her book Race and Education: Reproducing White Supremacy in Britain. The event explored racial inequities in higher education, the interplay of race and gender, and the conditions required for race equality work to succeed.

Also in October, Sussex alumnus Fox Fisher, filmmaker and co-founder of My Genderation, showcased short films documenting the lives of transgender and non-binary people. Hosted by the Trans and Non-Binary Staff Network, the discussion focused on activism, allyship, representation of trans joy, and the power of storytelling in building solidarity and connection.

In February 2025, Professor Gary Younge author, journalist and broadcaster, spoke on Colouring between the lines: what the experiences of Black Germans in Nazi Germany tell us about systems of racial oppression in general and antisemitism in particular. A panel of Sussex academics extended the conversation to reflect on the ways racism and antisemitism differ, overlap and shape lived experience.

The panel was chaired by Professor David Ruebain, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Culture, Equality and Inclusion), and included Dr Naaz Rashid, Co-Director of the Sussex Centre for Cultural Studies and Associate Professor in Media and Cultural Studies and Dr Gerhard Wolf, Associate Professor in History.

Award-winning BBC journalist and Sussex Alumnus Clive Myrie was in conversation with Vice-Chancellor Professor Sasha Roseneil in October 2024, as part of the Sussex Big Read. Their discussion explored themes from his memoir Everything is Everything, including family history, identity, belonging, and how his time at Sussex shaped his career. The event, which also featured student readings and reflections, reinforced the importance of open dialogue, critical debate and inclusive leadership in advancing equality, diversity and inclusion at Sussex.

Black at Sussex

Black at Sussex continues to be a key and evolving programme at the University, focused on improving the experience of Black students and staff. Now in its third year, the programme has focused on visibility, legacy-building, cultural celebration, and equity-led structural change. From new creative commissions to expanding our network of support, the last 12 months have seen significant growth, deepened community engagement, and the laying of foundations for future impact. Black at Sussex has three clear objectives as set out and agreed by its steering committee:

- Celebrate Black culture among current and former students and staff.
- Establish and develop collaborative partnerships with Black-led organisations, internally and externally.
- Promote the University to Black students and staff.

Programme overview

The Black at Sussex programme aims to centre the experiences, contributions, and histories of Black staff, students, and alumni. Through cultural and academic initiatives, community partnerships, and targeted funding, it seeks to recognise inequalities, celebrate Black culture, and push forward the University's work on anti-racism and decolonisation. The programme is guided by a Steering Group, composed of Black members of staff and students, in line with its commitment to accountability and community leadership.

Leadership and infrastructure changes

A new chapter began in summer 2024 with a leadership transition as the Steering Group welcomed Gavin Mensah-Coker (Head of English Language and Intercultural Communication) as its new Chair. The group continues to draw on the expertise and lived experiences of representatives across Faculties, Professional Services, the Students' Union, and external partners.

To support delivery, the programme also welcomed a new Project Manager in September 2024, Bud Johnston. Bud has been coordinating the growing number of projects, overseeing impact monitoring, and managing finances and communications for the programme.

A new dedicated webpage for Black at Sussex was launched this year, improving visibility and providing a platform to share updates, highlight alumni, and showcase the programme of work. The webpage also acts as an archive of past and current projects.

Grants and proposal rounds

This year, Black at Sussex launched another open call for proposals. Seven projects were funded or earmarked for future funding, ranging from literature festivals to entrepreneurship events. Successful applicants include Afrori Books, Mid Street Lab, Women of Colour Brighton, BLK Brighton, Black Anti-Racism Community Organisation (BARCO), Blacademia, Tapestry of Black Britons and the return of Black Brilliance in Business.

Bridging Heritage – Mid Street Lab

A five-month creative programme (October 2025 – February 2026) involving exhibitions, workshops, student-led mapping, and a final showcase. It centres Black student experiences in Brighton's cultural life and leaves a lasting archive and creative map.

Tapestry of Black Britons – Paula Ogun Hector

Planned for November 2025, with a guest lecture on the tapestry project's origins, diasporic ambitions, and Sussex's Black student history. The lecture also invites audience input on future designs and explores a potential Sussex exhibition in 2026 or 2027.

Women of Colour Brighton

Scheduled for February 2026 the programme will deliver workshops and events showcasing the creativity and leadership of Black and Brown women in Brighton.

Brighton Book Festival

Promoting Black-authored books and launch of a student book club. The initiative provides a literary space for students to engage with the festival bringing Black voices front and centre.

BLACADEMIA – Urbanflo Creative

This symposium will combine academic and creative programming. Its aim is to platform Black scholarship and artistic practice while building stronger local and regional partnerships.

BHASVIC Outreach (Black History Month 2025)

Black at Sussex has been invited to host stalls for college students during October 2025. The stalls aim to inspire and inform prospective students about Sussex's commitment to Black communities.

BARCO Workshops and Exhibition Collaboration

Black at Sussex collaborated with BARCO to deliver Black led workshops centred around the theme of this year's 2025 carnival 'Crowns' exploring Black hair, heritage and history with school aged children. In October 2025, the Black Lives Matter exhibition co-created by BARCO and Brighton & Hove Museums will be hosted in the Sussex Library.

Guest lectures

Following a successful campaign to invite Black guest lecturers, a series of Black-led guest lectures has been approved, with dates pending final confirmation. These lectures aim to bring Black expertise and lived experience directly into the student learning environment.

Afrori Books Collaboration

In partnership with Afrori Books, Black at Sussex will run book-related events as part of Welcome Week and throughout the year. The initiative seeks to strengthen local Black-led engagement and provide Sussex students with access to diverse literature.

Black Brilliance in Business

Returning after successful launch in 2024/5, this initiative connects Black students with Black professionals, mentors, and entrepreneurs. The programme focuses on employability, business skills, and celebrating Black enterprise.

Black Brilliance in Business

Alumni Portraits Project – Eddie Otchere

A series of 12 alumni portraits has been commissioned, with the first six already exhibited as First Contact. In October 2025, the full portrait series will be launched as an exhibition in the Sussex Library, with Eddie Otchere opening the programme during Black History Month.

BlackPortraits of Presence

Looking ahead

As Black at Sussex moves into the second half of its five-year funding cycle, the focus will shift toward evaluation, sustainability, and archiving. The Steering Group is exploring ways to embed successful initiatives into University-wide practices and to ensure Black-led projects are integral to Sussex's culture and strategy.

Religion and Belief Forum

In 2023 the University established a Religion and Belief Forum with the purpose of strengthening and developing the University's commitment to creating a non-discriminatory, inclusive environment where the religious and non-religious faiths and beliefs (including those with gender critical and other protected beliefs) of all are respected, and where the values of open and respectful debate are upheld.

During 2024/25 the University further developed the approach to mark different key dates, working in partnership with the University Lead Chaplain and the Chaplaincy team.

Linked to the work of the forum, a small working group was formed to seek to better our collective understanding of different forms of racism and religious discrimination and lived experience, including through learning from the knowledge and experience of colleagues and experts and providing resources. These activities support our Dignity, Respect and Inclusion (DRI) Policy which sets out our expectations and obligations for the Sussex community.

The work is at an early stage and remains one of our priorities for the 2025/26 year. It will help us to extend our consideration of Antisemitism and Anti-Muslim discrimination as well as other forms of racism and religious discrimination. We have continued to engage regularly with our staff and student groups who may have been impacted by global events to ensure they are supported and their perspectives are heard. Meanwhile, we have engaged on the project with a number of external organisations, including the Aziz Foundation, the Yad Fellowship the Union of Jewish Students, the Community Security Trust and the Intra-Communal Professorial Group.

A Religion and Belief Code of Practice is currently under development. This document will support the DRI Policy and illustrate how it may operate in the case of religion and belief. It will provide examples of discrimination and harassment relating to religion and belief.

The University again marked Holocaust Memorial Day with a series of events, including testimony from Holocaust Survivors and a screening of a short animated film. Sussex was the first university in England and the second in the UK to host a Holocaust Memorial event. It has since earned a special place in our annual calendar, attracting a large and diverse audience of staff, students, alumni, students from local schools, and members of the local community. It is part of the University's commitment to ensure that the tragic mistakes of the past are never repeated or forgotten, and tackling hatred, discrimination and racism in the world today. The University was named a winner in the Best of Europe Region Awards by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) for our Holocaust Memorial Day Commemoration. CASE is a global nonprofit association dedicated to educational advancement and the awards recognise innovative, creative, and extraordinary work that aims to teach and inspire others.

The EDI unit also publicised several key multi-faith holy days, observances and awareness dates in 2024/25 providing staff and managers with information to support timetabling, work scheduling and requests for flexibility, further enabling staff and students to observe and practice their faiths.

Some examples are provided in the links below.

- Islamophobia Awareness Month
- Diwali
- World Religion Day
- World Interfaith Harmony Week

EDI e-learning provision

Following a review in the previous academic year, the University has continued to strengthen and promote its suite of EDI e-learning courses. Internal termly review meetings provide oversight of content, uptake and emerging needs, and completion reports from Organisational Development have been used more actively to target communications and raise awareness.

In late 2024, a new Introduction to Race Equity e-learning module was procured from Advance HE. The course covers key topics such as privilege, microaggressions and systemic racism, and was introduced following joint review by the EDI Unit, Organisational Development and the Race Equality Charter Self-Assessment Team. Although uptake so far has been modest, it provides an important resource to build shared understanding and is being promoted across the University through presentations, communications, and engagement with EDI Champions.

EDI e-learning was also spotlighted at a PS Leadership Team meeting, with examples from the Finance Division showing how uptake can be encouraged by linking training to survey results, protecting time for learning, and signposting through local communications. These approaches demonstrate how practical, low-cost actions can increase participation.

The University has committed to reviewing all EDI e-learning content on a three-year cycle, with the next full review due in January 2026.

Supporting a culture of dignity and respect— EDI policy framework review

Following the introduction of the new Dignity, Respect and Inclusion Policy in 2024, work has progressed to develop more detailed guidance and processes to illustrate and support the implementation of the policy. A revised Personal Relationships Policy was introduced on 1 August 2025, also to help meet the requirements of a new OfS E6 Condition of Registration, setting out expectations around intimate relationships. It aims to help safeguard and protect students and staff from inappropriate behaviour. The policy further strengthens the University's commitment to create a safe and respectful environment for all students and staff. An online declaration form and supporting procedure have also been introduced.

Work is also underway to develop a Code of Practice on Religion and Belief and one on Trans and Non-Binary inclusion. The overarching policy framework will include a library of case studies (also in development) which illustrate how the policy may apply in practice in different scenarios. In the meantime, we actively track cases received through Report and Support, including those relating to Antisemitism or anti-Muslim discrimination, to evaluate what intervention may be needed.

EDI governance and leadership

Revised EDI governance and leadership arrangements introduced in the last academic year have been embedded, with the EDI Board and a new leadership team, CEILT (Culture, Equality and Inclusion Leadership Team) to oversee operational implementation and bring greater cohesion and alignment.

Open Listening Programme

The Open Listening Programme continues to grow following the successful pilots delivered in 2023/24. The programme has supported staff across the University to develop skills for listening with intent, engaging with difficult conversations, and working constructively with conflict. Feedback from participants has been consistently positive, with many highlighting the value of purposeful listening and the creation of safe and supportive spaces for dialogue particularly across contested and controversial issues.

In 2024/25, after a considered review including previous participants, the programme has expanded to include an Applied Open Listening Programme, and Thematic Workshops. The Applied Programme offers a group of around 20 participants a programme of training and support over several months to deepen and implement the understanding and skills gained from introductory workshops. It also pilots a pathway for disseminating the Open Listening process, contributing to the process of culture shift. This new strand builds on the introductory workshops by offering opportunities to apply skills in practice, embed approaches within teams, and contribute to wider cultural change, and it will be evaluated at the end of the year to inform next steps. Alongside this, thematic workshops are also available to respond to emerging issues or tensions around contested issues, such as sex and gender, and meet the specific needs identified within the University community.

Accessible Sussex

Provide equal access to excellent learning, research and employment opportunities for all with particular regard to disability and also recognising the accessibility needs of those who fall within other protected characteristics

Accessibility on campus

Surveyors from AccessAble (the website and app designed to make visiting new places easier for everyone) were invited to conduct a full on-site accessibility survey in January 2025, and the results showed significant improvements in accessibility across campus. This is reflected in the updated campus accessibility guides which can be found on the University's AccessAble page: www.accessable.co.uk/university-of-sussex.

Plans to improve accessibility of the main entrance of the Library have had to be put on hold because of financial constraints. However, alternative plans are underway to install a temporary platform lift that will provide better access to the Library side entrance. Initial designs have been drawn up and consultations with representatives of the Staff Disability Network and Student Union have taken place. The University has also adopted the Royal Institute of British Architecture's Inclusive Design overlay to inform all future works and improvements to the campus environment and to equip built environment professionals to embed inclusive design into project briefs and delivery.

Projects delivered in 2024/25 include:

- door automation access projects in the Student Centre and Arts A and Arts B.
- door sensors added to Arts C building to increase accessibility to the building.
- accessible doors added to the Student Centre.
- a ramp installed, along with some sensors, at the entrance to Silverstone to improve access to the building.

Digital accessibility

As part of ongoing efforts to improve digital accessibility across the University, a series of training sessions was launched in May 2024 to support staff in increasing digital accessibility. The offer includes 'Introduction to Digital Accessibility'; 'How to Make Word Documents Accessible'; and 'How to check PDFs are Accessible'. Training has continued in 2024/25 and to date, 75 people have participated across Faculties and Divisions, all of whom completed the 'Introduction to Digital Accessibility' module, and some of whom completed an additional session. Participants spanned various departments. Next steps include promoting the bookable courses and creating a more targeted plan to reach priority teams.

In summer 2025, a new Digital Accessibility Strategy was developed to provide a defined roadmap and process for ensuring the current and new University websites meet digital accessibility guidelines. The strategy, led by the Digital Accessibility and Quality Assurance Manager, will help the University in its compliance with accessibility and equality law, and improve the overall digital experience for users by removing accessibility barriers.

The primary goal of the strategy is to ensure everyone using University of Sussex websites and web-based systems can find, understand, engage, and interact with content, including users with additional access needs and disabilities. A section of the website was user tested by a group of current Sussex students with additional access needs to inform future improvements. The University is committed to achieving and maintaining full compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 Level AA across all digital services, including websites, mobile applications, and online resources.

Flexible Sussex

Become an organisation that is flexible by default, ensuring inclusivity, in all activities and practices.

Activities to support Flexible Sussex

Carers Week 2024

Supporting parents and carers
The Parents and Carers Network has provided an important voice in shaping gender equality work this year. Contributions at the March 2025 roundtable reinforced the impact of caring responsibilities on progression and access to leadership roles. The network also marked Carers Week in July with a wellbeing workshop for busy parents led by Dr Caroline Boyd, offering practical tools and support for managing the pressures of combining work and caregiving. Alongside these activities, the network continues to offer peer support, contribute to research culture discussions and advocate for men's involvement in caregiving conversations. By integrating these perspectives into institutional planning, Sussex is seeking to embed a more inclusive understanding of how caring responsibilities affect career outcomes.

Further information

Faculty updates from Associate Deans of Culture, Equality and Inclusion

Tamsin Hinton-Smith, Faculty of Social Sciences

It's been really positive through our first year as a new Faculty in Social Sciences to work together with existing EDI leads from each School to collaboratively develop a forward-facing action plan that represents the priorities from across our Faculty. Initial work this year has included learning from the many colleagues who have contributed importantly to different aspects of EDI focused work within the Faculty's Schools, identifying areas that we want to bring together, scale up and develop.

Colleagues had the opportunity to bid for internal funding to lead research, scholarship and engagement activities including around higher education cultures of belonging. This facilitated a broad range of rich projects that included focus on gender, neurodiversity, carers, care-leavers, and much more.

With all of the Faculty's Schools now having completed their Bronze Athena Swan submissions, we look forward to embarking on our Faculty Athena Swan Silver in the new year. I have also been delighted to participate in University CEI initiatives including the University of Ghana-University of Sussex peer mentoring collaboration.

We ended the year with our first Faculty Away Day, finishing with an afternoon Culture, Equality and Inclusion focused plenary session for all focusing on the imperatives for EDI, excellence, and academic freedom. Four colleagues from across the Faculty presented initial reflections on these intersections, feeding into rich small group discussions around priorities for our Schools that will inform ongoing work through the new academic year.

Sarah Maltby, Faculty of Media, Arts and Humanities

Over the past year, the Faculty of Media, Arts and Humanities has made significant progress in advancing our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion. A key milestone was the successful submission of our first Faculty-wide Bronze Athena Swan application by our Gender Equality Leads, Katie Walter and Flora Derounian. The comprehensive data gathered during this process is also being used to inform and drive our broader EDI strategy.

We have strengthened our work on inclusive curriculum design and delivery. In collaboration with our Race Equity Advocate, Tobey Ahamed-Barke, we have enhanced our decolonised curriculum approach. Our Disability Equality Lead, Em Harrison, has developed a Neurodiversity Pedagogic Toolkit to support staff in effectively engaging with neurodivergence in the classroom which is now being used beyond the Faculty. Both initiatives are now integral to our Inclusive Curriculum Strategy, which considers both the design and delivery of student facing work and will be implemented in the coming year.

In addition, the Faculty has placed greater emphasis on governance and monitoring of EDI initiatives, increasing visibility and transparency. We have increased awareness and engagement across our community in work that embeds EDI principles more deeply into our research and teaching practices. This work will be built on in the forthcoming year, providing a collaborative and meaningful focus for the creation of a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment for all staff and students in the Faculty.

Sarah Guthrie, Faculty of Science, Engineering and Medicine

The Faculty has foregrounded EDI activities in its work and has created five lead roles which have been recruited via competitive process: Gender Equity Lead, LGBTQ+ Lead, Disability Lead, Neurodiversity Lead and Race Equity Lead. EDI leads/champions remain in their roles. The Faculty has created a Culture, Equality and Inclusion committee with representation from these individuals and others across our activities and job families. Members of the Faculty have been involved in a range of EDI activities which include:

- Soapbox Science – showcasing the work of women in STEM
- Women's Leadership academy led by Professor Erika Mancini, Katy Stoddard and Dr Elizabeth Rendon Morales to address issues in the promotion of women Early Career Researchers on the research track
- Event showcasing the work of women in Engineering and Informatics
- Portraits of ECRs taken and exhibited in the Library (led by Elizabeth Rendon-Morales)
- Bystander training run by School of Psychology
- Engineering and Informatics achieved Bronze Athena Swan award
- EDI roadshow run by the School of Life Sciences

Lilith Whiley, University of Sussex Business School

Over the past year, the University of Sussex Business School has deepened its commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion through structural change, strategic leadership appointments, and external benchmarking. The transition to a Faculty structure was accompanied by the appointment of Professor Ingrid Woolard (formerly Dean at Stellenbosch University) as Executive Dean. The School also made significant progress on equity and inclusion goals, including the successful submission of its first Athena Swan application and its inaugural bid to become a PRME (Principles for Responsible Management Education) member. EDI principles have also been further embedded in the curriculum particularly in undergraduate modules focused on Corporate Social Responsibility, sustainability, and business ethics, with strong emphasis on inclusion, diversity, and social accountability. More generally, the School has shifted from awareness-raising to actively measuring and evaluating its EDI and sustainability impact, supported by its engagement with external accreditation bodies including Athena Swan, PRME , EQUIS (European Foundation for Management Development Quality Improvement System), AMBA (Association of MBAs), and AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business). These initiatives support the integration of the UN Sustainable Development Goals across the School's teaching, research, and partnerships.

Other developments include the launch of the Sussex Women in Academia initiative, led by Professor Vasiliki Bamiatzi, aiming to strengthen mentoring pathways and promote gender equity in academic career development. EDI leadership was further enhanced with the appointment of Dr Lilith Wiley as incoming Associate Dean for Culture, Equality and Inclusion. An interdisciplinary researcher in gender, health, and inclusion, Dr Wiley brings critical expertise through feminist, queer, and decolonial pedagogies. Finally, the School extends its sincere thanks to Hengyi Wang, who stepped down this year as EDI Champion after several years of exceptional service. Hengyi has consistently placed students at the heart of her work, reflected by the many who insisted on shaking her hand while on stage during our last graduation ceremony. Her work fully exemplifies the Sussex values of care, community, and inclusion, and her contribution is deeply appreciated.

Staff networks

The University's staff networks are central to delivering the aims set out in the Inclusive Sussex strategy. The University is committed to the networks, stating: "We will actively promote awareness and understanding of a diverse range of groups, giving them a platform to share their perspectives. We are dedicated to working collaboratively and through consultation to make Sussex truly inclusive. The input of staff networks and the Students' Union is valued in shaping policies and procedures that support all staff and students."

The networks enable staff to connect with colleagues from across Sussex and engage in a variety of activities. They are key to representing staff perspectives, influencing policies and procedures that advance equality, diversity, and inclusion, and ensuring the University achieves its objectives in these areas.

Sussex is proud to have the following staff networks, supported by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Unit:

- Ethnic Minority Staff Network
- LGBTQ+ Staff Network
- Neurodiversity Staff Network
- Parent and Carer Staff Network
- Staff Disability Network
- Trans and Non-Binary Staff Network
- Long Covid Staff and Chronic Fatigue Support Network (part of the Staff Disability Network)

Enhancing support for staff networks and network chairs

Each network is run by an appointed Chair and some by Co-Chairs. Over the past year, several key improvements were introduced to strengthen the support available to Staff Network Chairs, reflecting a more strategic and coordinated approach to the development and delivery of network activity. These include:

Termly Network Chairs Meetings with thematic focus

Three termly Network Chairs Meetings were held throughout the year, providing structured opportunities for engagement, collaboration, and knowledge sharing. Each meeting followed a set agenda, with Chairs invited to contribute items in advance to ensure relevance and focus.

The first meeting, held in October, included a dedicated information session led by the GDPR team. This session offered a timely refresher on data protection responsibilities, helping Chairs ensure robust and compliant management of network member data. Subsequent meetings explored topics such as IR35 regulations, EDI workstream updates and staff network governance processes and procedures, equipping Network Chairs with essential information on policy and best practice.

Allocated budget and financial guidance

Each network received a budget allocation from the EDI Unit, enabling them to plan and deliver a range of impactful activities throughout the year. To support effective use of funds, Chairs were asked to re-familiarise themselves with the Staff Network Budget and Expenditure Guidance that was developed in 2023-24 supporting smoother financial administration.

Introduction of an annual planning template

To help Chairs take a more strategic approach to the work of the networks, a new annual planning template was developed and rolled out at the start of the academic year. This resource supported networks in outlining their priorities, aligning with key awareness dates, and mapping out opportunities for collaborative activity across the year. Chairs were asked to submit completed plans ahead of the first termly meeting, helping to enhance visibility, reduce duplication of effort, and enable better coordination across networks.

Consultation and equality analyses

Staff networks have provided feedback and insights on several key policy developments as part of equality analyses, including a proposed new Disability Leave Procedure, amendments to the compassionate leave entitlements, revisions to the Personal Relationships Policy and a new Disability Awareness e-learning module. Such engagements provide insights and feedback as part of the decision-making process and ensure the voices of marginalised and underrepresented colleagues can be heard.

Introduction of new and revised governance and support documents

Towards the end of the academic year, three newly developed and revised documents were shared with Staff Network Chairs for consultation, ahead of planned implementation in the 2025/26 academic year:

1. Updated web page text for the EDI staff network webpages
2. Updated Terms of Reference (ToR) clarifying governance expectations for networks
3. A standardised role description outlining the responsibilities of Staff Network Chairs

These documents were created to establish a shared understanding of the purpose and function of staff networks, clearly outline the responsibilities of Chairs and available institutional support, address the lack of a formal role description, and ensure internal practices align with sector best practice and recognised EDI frameworks.

Taken together the actions above reflect a more considered and supportive approach to empowering Staff Network Chairs. By combining practical tools with clearer structures and governance, the EDI unit in collaboration with the Network Chairs hopes to create conditions for confident chairing, strong collaboration, and impactful network activity. Feedback received throughout the year highlights the value of these developments in clarifying roles, improving planning, and building a strong community of practice among chairs.

Key network activities across the year

Over the past year all networks have been active in holding regular in-person and online meetings with members and in organising events and training activities, some of which have coincided with key awareness dates in the annual EDI calendar.

Network Chairs also attended new staff welcome events to promote their networks and provide information about how new staff can join.

'Spotlight' on staff networks:

This year we ran a number of 'spotlight' news articles on the staff networks to help increase visibility and reach. Please see the linked articles below:

- Spotlight on staff networks: Staff Disability Network
- Spotlight on staff networks: Neurodiversity Staff Network
- LGBTQ+ and Trans and Non-Binary staff networks spotlight
- Athena Swan, Gender Equality Steering Group and Parent and Carer Network update

EDI Champions

EDI work in the University is also supported by a network of EDI Champions, with representatives from every School and Professional Services Division. These Champions play an important role in promoting an inclusive culture by sharing information and examples of best practice, raising awareness of equality and diversity matters that may require attention at an institutional level, encouraging participation in EDI initiatives, and helping to ensure that all staff and students are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect.

EDI Champions come together formally once each term to exchange updates from their respective Schools and Divisions, highlight ongoing EDI projects and activities, and share information about relevant events and training opportunities. These meetings surface the breadth of EDI activity taking place across the University and also help to strengthen cross-campus collaboration and foster a sense of shared purpose.

Use of the term BAME

In a changing environment, clarity on use of the term BAME and how and when it might be used is provided on the EDI webpages, https://www.sussex.ac.uk/equalities/raceequality. However, there is no single universally accepted term and the University will continue to evolve its understanding and approach to this.

Key statistics and publications

The University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, Inclusive Sussex, is available on the University website.

Each year the University publishes equalities information relating to the protected characteristics of its staff and students.

Data relating to pay gaps for disability, ethnicity and gender is also published annually.

You can find more information about the work on each of the equality charters on the EDI webpages.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Unit is responsible for championing inclusivity, diversity, equality, belonging and accessibility across the whole University community. It aims to advance and embed meaningful and effective changes in culture and practice in the University, making it a more inclusive place for all. As subject matter experts, the unit offers best practice, context-specific guidance, and knowledge on University-relevant EDI matters, working collaboratively, maintaining dialogue to raise awareness, develop advocates, foster good relations, and promote EDI accountability. The unit also helps to ensure the University's practices meet legislative compliance.

The unit supports Professor David Ruebain, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Culture, Equality and Inclusion) to implement the Inclusive Sussex strategy and works closely with Faculties, Schools, Divisions, staff networks, EDI Champions and the University of Sussex Students' Union to deliver the strategy.

The unit is part of the Human Resources Division and is managed by Isobel Pearce, Assistant Director, Culture, Equality and Inclusion who reports to Colin Shipp, Executive Director of Human Resources.

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