

UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX



EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



INTRODUCTION FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

I am very pleased to share this report which reflects the breadth and depth of activity at Sussex over the past academic year to progress our ambitions to become *Inclusive Sussex* and to develop and sustain a respectful and inclusive culture.

The acts of terrorism and war and the devastating loss of life and habitats that have been taking place in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, as well as expressions of racism and hatred against Jews, Muslims, Palestinians, migrants, and other minority groups within the UK, have impacted greatly students and staff at Sussex during 2023-4. Across our diverse community, there are many different perspectives on the causes and best ways to respond to these troubling events, and it is our role as a university to create an environment in which respectful discussion and dialogue are able to take place, whilst also ensuring a safe and secure place of study and work for everyone. These times of conflict serve to underline the vital importance of work to embed a culture in which diversity of background, identity, belief and thought are supported, and in which rights to freedom of speech and academic freedom are understood to be foundational. Many people have contributed in a multitude of courageous, generous, and open ways to this work, and I would like to extend my thanks to all of them.

External evaluation of our equality, diversity and inclusion activity includes being placed in the Top 100 Employers in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index for our ongoing work for LGBTQ+ inclusion, while numerous School level Athena Swan awards, including a Gold award for the Brighton and Sussex Medical School, provide similar recognition in relation to gender equality. These frameworks provide structures to drive the improvements that lead to long-term and more substantial change and enable us to track our progress. The gender pay gap has reduced this year, although other pay gaps have not, and we will continue the work needed to see their eventual elimination through increased representation of members of marginalised and minoritised groups throughout the University. Beyond this, there have been developments in governance and policy, as well as specific and targeted initiatives such as the *Open Listening Programme* and *Black at Sussex* activities.

Our work to create a truly inclusive Sussex will continue with renewed commitment and clear priorities in the coming year.

Professor Sasha Roseneil

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



This year, the University made important progress in several of our *Inclusive Sussex* measures of success. We were awarded gold status in the Stonewall UK Workplace Equality Index 2024 and named a Stonewall Top 100 Employer, ranked 30th overall – a key target. The Workplace Equality Index enables employers to measure their progress on LGBTQ+ inclusion and following a review, the University has determined to continue its membership of the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme and continue to participate in the Workplace Equality Index, albeit at a reduced frequency. The LGBTQ+ Self-Assessment Team held a workshop to reflect on achievements and refine aims for the coming years.

We have also recently applied for Disability Confident ‘Leader’ accreditation, the third and highest level of the Disability Confident scheme. The University has already attained Level 2 ‘Employer’ status through self-assessment in 2021.

The University is also a participant in the Athena SWAN Charter to advance gender equality. In addition to an institutional award, the University has a target of every School itself holding an Athena Swan award by 2025. Since 2021, the University has held a Bronze Athena Swan Institutional award and recently underwent a mid-term review with Advance HE, who oversee the award process. Meanwhile, several School awards were achieved across the University this year, including Athena Swan Gold for Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS). Currently, seven of 10 schools also hold awards, with the remaining three due to submit this academic year.

This year’s pay gap data for the University showed improvement in some areas, including a reduction of 2.5% in the mean gender pay gap. However, there is still much work to do to eliminate inequality, which will be supported by an equal pay audit currently underway. We also report on our ethnic minority and disability pay gaps and, for the first time, an intersectional analysis looking at race and sex.

Work also continued other activities which are helping us progress toward our Inclusive Sussex aims. A new Neurodiversity Staff Network was established, alongside actions in support of all our staff network activities. New EDI Disability Essentials e-learning was launched, and we will be providing new antiracism training from Advance HE in autumn 2024. The Black at Sussex programme welcomed a new chairperson and a new project manager, and we are looking forward to building on this year’s activities, which included a poet in residence and series of alumni portraits displayed on campus.

The conflict in Israel-Gaza/Palestine continues to affect communities and individuals in the University. Like other universities, we had an ‘encampment’ which made various demands of the University, some of which we have been able to at least partially meet whilst others would conflict with our values or our commitments to free speech and academic freedom. We seek ongoing, regular engagement with all who are particularly impacted by the conflict. Campus Dialogue events were held for staff and students to speak about the impact of the conflict on them and to listen to the experiences of others. Supporting and advancing understanding across our community remains a key focus and following a series of successful pilot workshops, our Open Listening Programme will continue into a new phase of embedding skills and focusing on particular areas of university life. A new Dignity, Respect and Inclusion policy has also been introduced, incorporating our commitments to freedom of speech and academic freedom. Supporting documentation for the new policy will also be created in the coming year.

Changes to the University’s governance and assurance arrangements this year have included a new

People and Culture Board, CEILT (Culture, Equality and Inclusion Leadership Team) and preparation for an EDI Committee.

Priority areas for the forthcoming academic year include development of a strategic plan to implement the new 10-year strategy - *Sussex 2035*, which includes EDI objectives and success factors. This will build on the framework, aims and achievements from the current *Inclusive Sussex* strategy. We will also seek to support deeper understanding of different types of racism and religious discrimination and explore how we can use calibrated positive action initiatives to address under-representation and disadvantage. Work will continue to deliver on our equality action plans overseen by the respective steering groups and Self-Assessment Teams. We will also be developing guidance on the collection of sensitive EDI data, embedding equality analyses in decision-making and reviewing our approach to exit interviews for departing staff.

Finally, as our new Faculty structures are implemented, we will work closely with new Associate Deans for Culture, Equality and Inclusion, whilst continuing to work collaboratively with campus trades unions and the Student's Union, to synchronise and build activity and progress across the University.

Professor David Ruebain

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* is 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 under-representation 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 or disadvantaged, and others

Pay gaps

In March 2024, the University published its 2023 gender pay gap data. For the fifth consecutive year, the disability and ethnicity pay gaps were also reported, and for the first time, 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.

PAY GAP	Mean	Increase (+) or Decrease (-) on previous year	Median	Increase (+) or Decrease (-) on previous year
Disability	17.4%	+4.0%	11.1%	-2.6%
Disability - Academic	13.9%	+6.4%	15.9%	-8.8%
Disability – Professional Services	13.7%	+1.0%	6.9%	-0.5%
Gender	14.4%	-2.5%	12.5%	+0.1%
Gender - Academic	8.4%	-2.6%	8.3%	-0.5%
Gender – Professional Services	12.0%	-2.0%	8.9%	-2.2%
Ethnicity	-4.6%	+2.9%	-3.9%	+0.9%
Ethnicity -Academic	4.1%	-2.1%	5.7%	-1.4%
Ethnicity –Professional Services	1.8%	-5.5%	2.8%	+2.8%

Vice-Chancellor, Sasha Roseneil said:

“It is vital that we continue our commitment to reducing our pay gaps and making Sussex a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive community, where everyone is able to realise their goals and ambitions and do their best work. We must continue to focus on delivering the aims outlined in our [Inclusive Sussex](#) strategy to ensure all our staff are rewarded fairly.”

EQUAL SUSSEX

Disability pay gap

The key driver for the disability pay gap is the demographic spread of the workforce, with almost three times as many staff declaring a disability in the bottom pay quartile (17%) compared to the top quartile (6%). Disability disclosure rates have consistently increased across the sector including at Sussex, with 12% of staff now declaring a disability.

Hourly Pay Gap Year on Year Comparison (2024 – note years below related to data capture point)							
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Percentage point change since 2022	Percentage point change since 2019
Median	13.7%	11.3%	13.7%	9.5%	11.1%	+1.6%	-2.6%
Mean	15.9%	18.3%	19.1%	13.4%	17.4%	+4.0%	+1.6%

The University remains committed to reducing the disability pay gap and the Disability, Equality and Inclusion Steering Group will continue to review actions to address this, alongside other initiatives including attaining Disability Confident 'Leader' status.

Gender pay gap

In 2018, the University set highly ambitious key performance indicators, including a stretch target to halve the mean gender pay gap to 10.4% by 2024. This has not been met, although the trend is positive with yearly reductions. The principal reason for the pay gap is the unequal distribution of staff across the pay quartile. Addressing this takes some time, so reduction in the pay gap is slow. However, this year, for the first time the academic cohort is split 50/50 male and female and the top quartile of academics has changed from 33% female in the previous year to 41% female.

Hourly Pay Gap Year on Year Comparison (2024 – note years below relate to data capture point)								
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Percentage point change since 2022	Percentage point change since 2019	Percentage point gap from 10.4% KPI target
Median	16.8 %	12.7%	12.0%	12.4%	12.5%	+0.1%	-4.3%	n/a
Mean	21.3 %	18.4%	17.9%	16.9%	14.4%	-2.5%	-6.9%	4.0%

Actions to address pay gaps are coordinated through the Athena Swan action plan. The actions focus on improvements to recruitment and promotion processes, to pay frameworks and to ongoing improvement to other HR policies, with the aim that the University of Sussex will become a leading employer in the sector.

EQUAL SUSSEX

Ethnicity pay gap

The mean ethnicity pay gap for 2024 is –4.6% (median is -3.9%), which indicates a pay gap in favour of racially minoritised staff. However, when the groups are disaggregated between academic and Professional services staff, the mean ethnicity pay gap is 4.1% in the academic staff group and 1.8% in the Professional Services staff group – ie in favour of white staff.

Hourly Pay Gap Year on Year Comparison (2024 – note years below refer to data capture point)							
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Percentage point change since 2022	Percentage point change since 2019
Median	-3.0%	-4.7%	-4.7%	-3.0%	-3.9%	+0.9%	-0.9%
Mean	-6.7%	-2.6%	-2.5%	-1.7%	-4.6%	+2.9%	-2.1%

Academic Staff Hourly Pay Gap 2024	
Median	5.7%
Mean	4.1%

Professional Services Staff Hourly Pay Gap 2024	
Median	2.8%
Mean	1.8%

Overall, 17% of Sussex staff identify as racially minoritised. When disaggregated, 23% of academic staff identify as racially minoritised (compared to 22% in the previous year) and 10% of Professional Services staff (compared to 9% in the previous year). Racially minoritised staff are underrepresented in the bottom pay quartile (13%) compared to the two mid (18%, 22%) and top quartiles (15%), resulting in an overall pay gap favouring racially minoritised staff. The reason for this is that 73% of racially minoritised staff are academics who, on average, earn a higher salary, and are therefore represented in the higher pay quartiles compared to Professional Services staff.

When the groups are disaggregated, mean ethnicity pay gaps in favour of white staff are evident though reducing, with pay gaps of 4.1% in the academic staff group (down from 6.1% last year), and 1.8% in the Professional Services staff group (down from 7.3% last year).

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

"Our disaggregated figures show areas of under-representation of minoritised ethnic staff in some areas of the University which may indicate disadvantage. We aim to tackle racial inequalities through our Race Equality Charter Action Plan published in January 2024 which provides a strong foundation for change. This year, we also published the ethnicity and sex intersectional pay gap to further understand the extent of disadvantage, enabling us to consider how we can address these challenges and work towards eliminating inequality at Sussex."

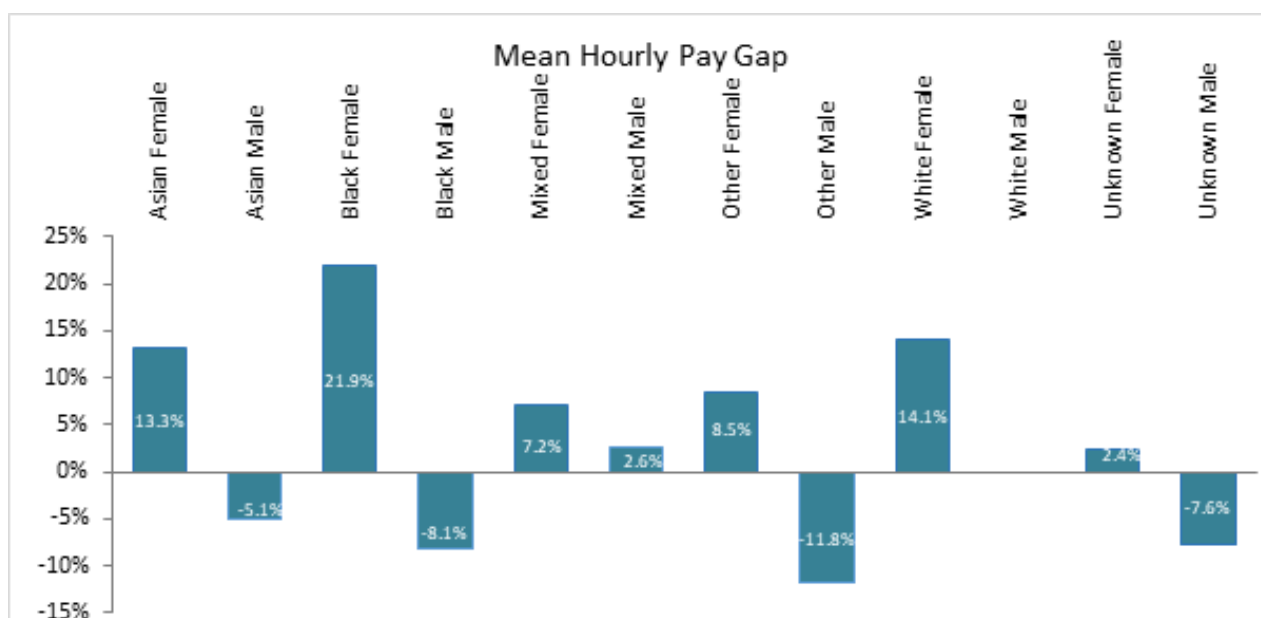
EQUAL SUSSEX

All Staff Hourly Pay Gap Quartile Distribution 2024			
Quartile	BAME	White	Unknown
Top	15%	74%	11%
Upper mid	22%	71%	7%
Lower mid	18%	75%	7%
Bottom	13%	79%	7%
Academic Staff Hourly Pay Gap Quartile Distribution 2024			
Quartile	BAME	White	Unknown
Top	16%	72%	11%
Upper mid	24%	70%	7%
Lower mid	27%	67%	6%
Bottom	24%	67%	10%
Professional Services Staff Hourly Pay Gap Quartile Distribution 2024			
Quartile	BAME	White	Unknown
Top	8%	80%	12%
Upper mid	10%	83%	7%
Lower mid	9%	87%	4%
Bottom	13%	79%	8%

The Race Equality Charter (REC) work provides further qualitative data, and the REC action plan seeks to address the issues which are revealed. Following the Universities successful achievement of a Bronze award, the actions set out in the plan are being implemented, with a key focus on increasing representation of racially minoritized staff particularly in senior roles.

Intersectional sex and ethnicity pay gap data

For the first time this year the University published intersectional pay gap data focused on sex and ethnicity. This illustrates that pay gaps arise for women regardless of ethnicity, with the largest mean pay gap (expressed relative to white males) for Black women at 21.9% and the second largest gap for white women at 14.1%. The University will develop positive action initiatives in 2024/25, to help address this.



EQUAL SUSSEX

Awarding gaps

The latest published data for awarding gaps relates to the 2022/23 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	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
UK White to UK Black	20.1	24.9	19.7	18.0	16.6	18.5	24.5
UK White to UK Asian	17.5	20.8	12.3	4.5	4.2	5.9	9.7
No disability to disability		6.9	5.2	2.4	2.4	1.6	-1.7
- to Cognitive / Learning Difficulties		1.4	6.9	2.0	1.6	2.7	0.6
- to Mental Health condition		10.4	6.6	3.6	3.1	1.2	1.4
- to multiple impairments		4.4	0.7	2.7	4.2	2.4	-4.9
- to sensory, medical / physical impairment		4.0	0.9	-2.2	-0.9	-1.1	-2.3

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. However, the last two years have seen a reversal in the downward trend, with the gap in 2022/23 now 24.5pp.

The Asian heritage awarding gap target is to reduce the gap from 21pp (in 2017/18) to 2.1pp by 2024/25. Similarly, the gap has widened in the last two years and is now 9.7pp.

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

The table above also includes the gaps between students with various disability/impairment types and those with no declared disability.

EQUAL SUSSEX

Targets for the APP were set against a benchmark of 2017/18. Initially there was steady progress in closing the awarding gaps. The Black and Asian heritage gaps have widened slightly in the last two years, which mirrors trends in the sector and is thought to be due to the removal of no-detriment policies impacting these groups more than white students.

The new APP (2025-2029) has been drafted and submitted to the Office for Students for approval. The proposal is to keep targets for ethnicity awarding gaps, using 2022/23 data as the baseline:

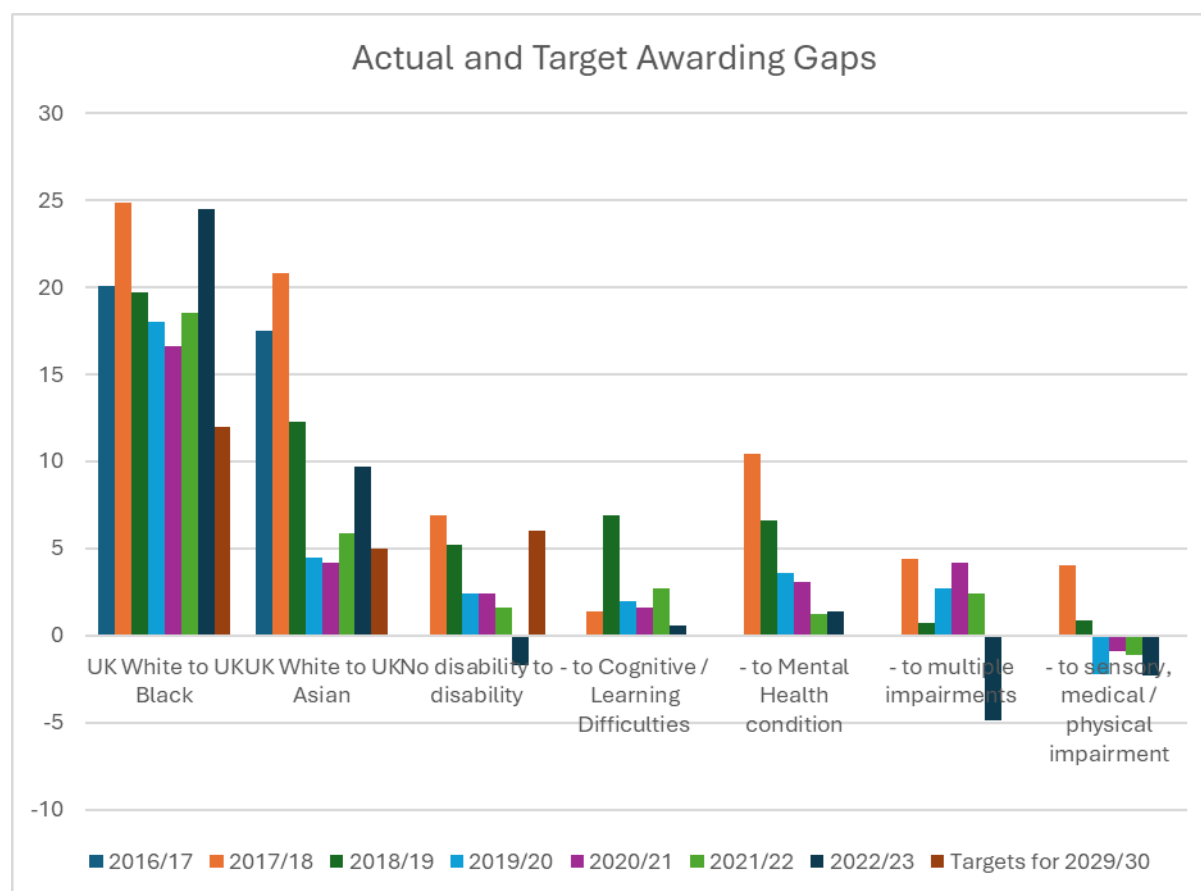
- Black – reduction from 24.5pp to 12pp by 2029/30
- Asian – reduction from 9.7pp to 5pp by 2029/30
- Mixed-heritage – reduction from 12.9pp to 6pp by 2029/30

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

Assessment

In 2020, Sussex undertook work to redesign assessment modes, initially in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, with a focus on ensuring inclusivity in assessment. The analysis has shown a correlation between these new assessment modes and a reduction in the BAME awarding gap in good degree outcomes, particularly in moving away from in-person unseen examinations. This is an important part of the reason for not returning to in-person examinations at scale.

EQUAL SUSSEX



Addressing awarding gaps through Curriculum Reimagined

The University remains committed to reducing awarding gaps, particularly for racially minoritised and international students in part through the Curriculum Reimagined programme, launched in 2022/23 with inclusivity as a core theme. This programme focuses on rethinking curriculum design, delivery, and assessment modes to better reflect diversity, inclusivity, and to reduce disparities in student success.

Key initiatives include race equity action plans in schools such as in Life Sciences, student-led projects auditing and developing modules through a 'decolonising' lens (e.g. in Global Studies and Foundation Years), and efforts within the Business School to address awarding gaps for international students. Additionally, task-and-finish groups are being established to focus on the student experience for UK and international BAME undergraduates, as well as BAME postgraduate taught (PGT) students. These groups will operate over the 2024/25 academic year.

The Universities approach is phased and long-term, with a focus on achieving sustainable reductions in awarding gaps year-on-year. By 2027/28, the Sussex Framework will be fully embedded across all educational programmes, with ongoing reviews of assessment and curriculum design to ensure inclusivity is maintained. Current pilots and initiatives will continue to inform this process, allowing Sussex to monitor progress and adjust as needed to ensure that disparities in student outcomes are reduced.

Moreover, Race Equality Advocates (REAs) in the Business School and Media, Arts & Humanities have helped foster an inclusive learning environment, advocating for curriculum changes and supporting initiatives such as the Decolonising the Curriculum project. These contributions, alongside ongoing development of inclusive assessment practices, continue to support the University's overarching commitment to creating a diverse, equitable educational environment for all.

EQUAL SUSSEX

Access and participation

Work began in 2022/23 to create a new Access and Participation Plan in line with the revised process from the Office for Students (OfS). This requires institutions to look at risks to equality of opportunity and to develop evidence-based interventions to address those risks. The Plan includes interventions focused on closing ethnic awarding gaps and that for students who had been eligible for Free School Meals (FSM). Council approved the new Plan in June 2024 and it was subsequently submitted to the OfS for approval in July 2024.

The Steering Group overseeing the APP is led by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC) for Education and Students and Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (DPVC) for Student Experience and, along with the PVC for Culture, Equality and Inclusion, has representation from the EDI Unit, Faculty, delivery teams and the student community.

Other activities to take forward 'Equal Sussex'

Equality Analysis review

The University uses Equality Analysis (EA) to support its obligations to have due regard for the Public Sector Equality Duty, in respect of major projects and significant policy/business decisions and changes. Equality analysis is one of the measures to support and deliver the University's strategic vision to become 'Inclusive Sussex'. Following the conclusion of negotiations between the University of Sussex and the University and College Union in autumn 2022, work has been undertaken to improve and embed a revised and effective EA process.

A review of existing documentation and resources resulted in recommendations to make further improvements to the guidance and form. Work was undertaken to review the use and quality of EAs, identify and engage with key stakeholders, understand barriers to effectiveness and implement actions to address them. A central storage process has been developed and in addition to the existing e-learning, an option for supplementary learning through online workshops is being explored for the 2024/25 academic year.

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 2016 the University commissioned an external organisation to complete a full equal pay review comparing staff doing equal work, checking base pay and total pay. No systemic equal pay issues were identified with the University's pay system as a result of this audit, though some areas were highlighted for further investigation. In 2022 another review was commissioned; however, the provider failed to meet the contractual expectations or provide a useable output and so the University undertook a high-level internal audit instead. The University has now commissioned another external review to identify discrepancies and develop an action plan to address any high and medium priority concerns. The commitment to commission an equal pay audit is also written into the *Inclusive Sussex Strategy* and the *People Strategy*.

EQUAL SUSSEX

Academic promotions process review

Ensuring equitable promotion is important in supporting representation and distribution through the pay grades of those with protected characteristics which are underrepresented.

Grade 10 pay framework

For senior academic and leadership roles, the University continues to use the University Leadership Framework, implemented in 2021. The framework operates alongside the Professorial Pay Framework, ensuring a structured approach for staff at Grade 10 and above. As part of its ongoing commitment to transparency and effectiveness, a review of the University Leadership Framework is scheduled to ensure it continues to meet its objectives.

Academic promotion process and monitoring

Development of a revised academic promotions criteria has continued this year. The revised process will include an option for candidates to declare circumstances that have prevented them from producing the 'normal' quantity of work required for promotion. Such circumstances may include maternity leave or life-threatening illnesses. These cases will now be reviewed by a central panel, ensuring a consistent approach across the University. This change aims to encourage more staff to share any relevant circumstances that may impact their promotion pathway.

The Ethnic Minority Staff Network, Neurodiversity Staff Network, and Staff Disability Network have been engaged to provide feedback on the proposed criteria.

In addition, a gender bias decoder has been integrated into the promotions process to enhance fairness. Promotion rates by demographic groups will continue to be monitored, with annual reports submitted to the Academic Promotions and Tenure Committee. Current data indicates that promotion rates by sex and disability are broadly equitable. Where discrepancies are identified, further exploration is being undertaken. The University remains committed to fostering a balanced and diverse talent pipeline.

GENDER EQUALITY

Delivering progress on gender equality and inclusion



The University's work towards promoting gender equality was recognised by a [Bronze Athena Swan Institutional award](#) in 2021. Efforts are currently underway to prepare for a renewal application in 2026, with consideration being given to a potential Silver award application (although no firm decision has been made). The University recently benefited from a mid-term review, delivered by [Advance HE](#), to refine thinking in this next phase of gender equality work.

The mid-term review was a facilitated meeting designed to review progress against the [action plan](#), clarify and sense-check priorities, and maintain momentum towards the next submission. Held in April, the session included members of the Institutional [Gender Equality Steering Group](#) and other key stakeholders, such as the PVC for Culture, Equality, and Inclusion (CEI), colleagues from HR, and Student Experience representatives. The review was led by Sally Baden, a consultant at Advance HE, along with Sarah Guthrie, Chair of the Gender Equality Steering Group, and Sarah Law, EDI consultant. The action plan focuses on key areas, including career development and promotion, addressing the gender pay gap, fostering inclusive practices for transgender and non-binary people, wellbeing and work-life balance, and ensuring dignity and respect.

During the review meeting, participants engaged in interactive group work that applied change management theory to evaluate institutional actions and their effectiveness in achieving desired outcomes. Discussions also addressed barriers and enablers, with participants using LEGO to explore creative solutions to challenges and opportunities for progress within the current institutional landscape.

The current Institutional Athena Swan Action Plan includes commitments to several short- and medium-term outcomes, such as:

- Achieving a target of over 70% of female staff reporting that they are treated with fairness and respect.
- Ensuring that 80% of carers feel more supported in their careers.
- Developing initiatives to enhance leadership development at Sussex, such as the re-developed Sussex Leader guidelines.
- Reducing the gender pay gap to 10.4% by 2025 (currently 14.4%).
- Publishing intersectional pay gap data relating to ethnicity and sex (achieved in 2024, with data showing the largest mean intersectional pay gap for Black women at 21.9%).

During the mid-term review, participants considered activities most likely to help achieve these outcomes. Outputs and assumptions underlying current activities were explored, and new activities were identified to strengthen the action plan and support further progress. Examples of these new activities include:

GENDER EQUALITY

- understanding employee experience, including exploring the reasons that people stay at or exit the University
- reviewing returning to work procedures for parents and carers
- examining promotions data with an intersectional lens to uncover any potential blockages so that action can be more targeted
- exploring initiatives to support the career development of Professional Services staff
- recirculating and re-embedding the new Dignity, Respect and Inclusion Policy
- joining up processes to ensure a more consistent approach to leadership, such as promotions criteria being linked to Achievement and Development Review processes.



[View the current Athena Swan Action Plan.](#)

The action plan includes a goal for all Schools to hold an Athena Swan award by 2025. This is a key objective in the Inclusive Sussex strategy and a key measure for success within Schools. Currently seven of schools hold Athena Swan awards, four bronze, two silver and one gold, and all remaining schools have a plan to apply in this academic year 2024/5:

School	Current award
Brighton and Sussex Medical School	Gold (Awarded April 2024)
Life Sciences	Silver (Renewed 2019)
Psychology	Silver (November 2020)
Mathematics and Physical Sciences	Bronze (November 2023)
Engineering and Informatics	Bronze (Awarded September 2024)
Education and Social Work	Bronze (Awarded April 2024)
Business School	Bronze (Awarded September 2024)

GENDER EQUALITY

There is a timetable for School submissions, and each School has an Athena Swan representative who attends the termly institutional Gender Equality Steering Group.

School	Award submission	Date
Life Sciences	Silver	Renewal due Sept 2024
Law, Politics and Sociology	No award	Planned submission Nov 2024
Media, Arts and Humanities	No award	Planned submission March 2025
Global Studies	No award	Planned submission spring 2025
Psychology	Silver	Renewal due May 2025

In 2023 Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS) was recognised for its commitment to gender equality in higher education and research by achieving the Gold Award as part of the Athena Swan Charter. Malcolm Reed, Dean of BSMS, said:

“This award specifically recognises the changes made following our previous Silver Award and strongly encourages us to continue to work hard in order to maintain this progress. A key feature of our submission was the recognition and steps to address the intersectionality of issues relating to gender, ethnicity, disability and other relevant characteristics, and this features strongly in our action plan for future implementation. We will continue to focus on this work, and I recognise that there remains much to do in future to improve the experience of BSMS for our colleagues and students.” [You can read more about this here.](#)

GENDER EQUALITY



[A Women at Sussex exhibition was displayed in the Library throughout March](#) in celebration of International Women's Day 2024. Portraits taken by Sussex photographer Stuart Robinson are still on display in the library, showcasing some of Sussex's amazing women across academia and Professional Services. The portraits are accompanied by encouraging statements to fellow women.



[School of Engineering and Informatics celebrated International Women in Engineering Day](#) by showcasing the diverse [career profiles of academic and Professional Services staff in this Padlet board](#). In addition, research students from the School of Engineering and Informatics contributed by sharing their research projects and inspiring messages in a [showcase for the School](#). A display of the showcase was available to visit throughout June and July in Chichester Foyer.

RACE EQUALITY

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



Race Equality Charter

The University received the Race Equality Charter Institutional Bronze award in September 2023, which acknowledges the University's commitment to eliminating structural and systemic racial inequalities and developing an inclusive culture. The award is valid for five years, and recognises the analysis undertaken by the [Race Equality Charter Self-Assessment Team \(REC SAT\)](#) between 2019 and 2023 to evaluate and understand race inequity at the University. This is not an award for having achieved ambitions but rather for having a credible action plan to get there, both within the University and, as much as possible, beyond. Read the four-year [Race Equality Charter Action Plan](#).

Measuring progress against the REC Action Plan

Progress against target outcomes in the REC Action Plan is reviewed in termly REC SAT meetings. Some of the outcomes identified for the next academic year include:

- working with key external organisations who can support the University's race equity work
- engaging with staff and student networks to identify potential improvements to the University's current approach for reporting racist incidents, bullying and harassment
- improving consistency in how leaders recognise and respond effectively to potential flashpoints
- identifying an appropriate benchmark for the equality characteristics of Senate, Council and University Executive Team

Completed activities include undertaking an audit of key stakeholders and a standing agenda item on REC SAT to support and improve trust in leadership. There has also been SAT membership review to ensure diverse representation, and a revised terms of reference which reflects the current delivery phase of the process.

Raising awareness about discrimination against GTRSB communities

In June, as part of [Gypsy, Roma and Traveller History Month 2024](#), the REC SAT members attended a lunch and learn hosted by the Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showmen and Boaters (GTRSB) Working Group. This raised awareness of the challenges and discrimination experienced by people within GTRSB communities and spotlighted some of the ongoing work that the University is engaged in to support the inclusion of GTRSB staff and students, through commitments outlined in the [GTRSB Pledge](#).

RACE EQUALITY

Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showman and Boater (GTRSB) Pledge

The GTRSB Pledge acknowledges the University's commitment to eliminating inequalities experienced by the GTRSB community and developing an inclusive culture. The University secured the Pledge in June 2023, and have developed several initiatives since:

- January saw a Student Connector led event 'Celebrate Gypsy, Roma and Traveler Heritage and Culture' which was an opportunity to try authentic 'tea and chat', increasing visibility for students.
- In February, the GTRSB Steering Group hosted an exhibition on 'Remembering the Roma Holocaust'; which then moved onto public space in Brighton Library.
- In February, Professor Roberta Piazza organised a symposium on '*Deemed Dirty: Are current representations of Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities as an environmental problem based on facts or myths? Transformations in the lives of Gypsies and Travellers in present day neo-liberalism.*'
- In March, Romani storyteller, author and playwright Richard O'Neill gave a seminar to students organised by the Belong at Sussex team; this was followed by an Introduction to Romani Language workshop.
- In April, the Sussex Law School clinic Street Law was shortlisted for a national award. One aspect of their work this year, led by Jeanette Ashton, is supporting GRTSB communities in partnership with [Friends, Families and Travellers](#).
- Throughout the year the Widening Participation team led by Chris Derbyshire has been supporting learners with GTRSB heritage in their primary and secondary school environments – focusing on attainment and progression. Students on Media, Arts and Humanities undergraduate courses have also contributed to activity in this area.

The University's commitment to the work was signified by Professor David Ruebain (PVC for Culture, Equality and Inclusion) welcoming the loan of the Gypsy cob-horse sculpture from the [National Trust 'Changing Chalk Partnership'](#), currently stabled outside Jubilee Building.



RACE EQUALITY



Other activities to advance race equality

[Throughout October 2023, Sussex celebrated Black History Month.](#) The theme was ‘**Saluting our sisters**’ which acknowledged and celebrated the experiences and work of Black women. Sussex delivered a programme of events on and off campus, to celebrate and acknowledge Black history and the Black experience. These included a poetry workshop, film screenings, discussions and a walking tour of Brighton. The Black History Month flag was flown above Sussex House for the duration to show solidarity.

The University continues to mark awareness events in support of race equality throughout the year, including:

- [Windrush Day](#)
- [Stephen Lawrence Day](#)
- [International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#)
- [Race Equality Week](#)

These events are extremely important for certain members of the community and play a valuable role in supporting learning and raising awareness for everyone

DISABILITY EQUALITY

Progress in delivering disability equality and inclusion work

Disability Equality and Inclusion Steering Group

The Disability Equality and Inclusion Steering Group strategically steers and works collaboratively with teams across the University to address barriers and disadvantages experienced by disabled staff, students and visitors at Sussex.

The steering group, which restarted in 2023, supports and progresses key *Inclusive Sussex* activities. It includes representation from key stakeholders in Human Resources, the Division for the Student Experience, and Estates and Facilities to drive forward improvements in these areas. Membership also includes Disabled Student's Officers, and Staff Disability Network and Neurodiversity Staff Network members to ensure opportunities for feedback and to influence the work.

The steering group meets termly, and its work is reviewed and monitored through the group action plan.

Disability Essentials e-learning

The Disability Essentials e-learning [course](#) by AccessAble was introduced in consultation with the steering group in autumn 2023.

The content supports improving understanding and knowledge for those in staff and student facing roles across the University and is designed to ensure that people are confident and comfortable talking about disability and understanding the social model of disability. Content combines legal expertise with the lived experience of disabled people to support staff in their knowledge of disability and engagement with disabled staff and students.

It is highly recommended for all staff to complete this introductory course.



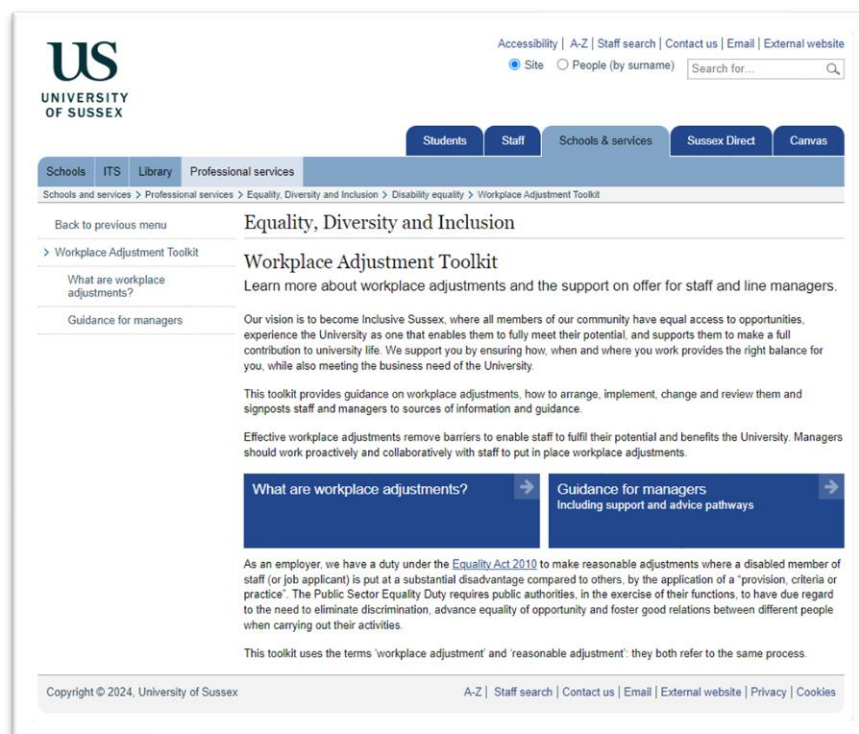
Disability Confident

The University has committed to becoming a Disability Confident Leader (Level 3) by 2025 as one measure of success in improving practice and experience for disabled employees and applicants. The University joined the Disability Confident scheme in May 2019 with the aim of using it as a framework to shape an approach to best practice, procedures and experiences in the recruitment and retention of disabled staff. Disability Confident Employer (Level 2), was attained in December 2021. Disability Confident is a three-level government scheme aiming to help employers make the most of the opportunities provided by employing disabled people. It is voluntary and has been developed by employers and disabled people's representatives.

DISABILITY EQUALITY

Collaborative work has been undertaken to develop the submission, collate evidence and action changes required. Key stakeholders including Human Resources teams, Procurement, Estates and the Staff Disability network were engaged.

The submission was sent to external validators: Business Disability Forum at the start of the 2024/25 academic year, prior to submission. The University continues to utilise membership of the Business Disability Forum to inform and support best practice and obtain tailored advice.



Workplace Adjustments Toolkit

In response to feedback including from staff networks, the University's online Workplace Adjustment Toolkit for staff and managers has been reviewed to improve clarity and accuracy of information and to update signposting information to teams and processes (e.g. Estates and Facilities, IT Services, HR, Procurement, Occupational Health).

The Reasonable Adjustments Working Group led the collaborative review and included representation from HR teams and the Staff Disability Network. Additional contributors included Finance, Procurement, IT Services and Estates and Facilities.

The revised Toolkit was launched in August 2024 and the group will continue to work on communicating and embedding it, work with Finance and Procurement to improve related processes, add in new supporting documentation, and introduce an annual review date for general updates.

The toolkit now contains two key documents:

- **What are workplace adjustments?** A resource for both staff and managers with information about reasonable adjustments and the legal framework, types of workplace adjustments and relevant policies to enable understanding.
- **Guidance for managers including support and advice pathways.** A resource for managers which includes a step-by-step approach for determining what is reasonable, and clear direction for when to involve HR, Finance, Procurement and other teams across the University.

DISABILITY EQUALITY

Other activities to take forward disability inclusion

Disability History Month

The University, and Staff Disability Network, led events to mark [Disability History Month](#) (16 November – 16 December 2023). The theme of Disability, Children and Youth focused on the experience of disabled children and young people in the past and present and hopes for the future, highlighting and seeking to change social exclusion arising through stigma, stereotypes, negative attitudes and socially created barriers. Events included information sessions on Access to Work and reasonable adjustments, and a screening of the award-winning documentary, *Crip Camp*, which documents disability activists who attended a revolutionary summer camp for disabled young people in 1970s America that helped build a movement.

"I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed the screening of Crip Camp last week – what a fantastic experience as part of Disability History Month. The documentary itself was incredibly interesting, moving and poignant. Despite being historical, the documentary is a great way to contextualise equality and inclusion for present day. It felt very relevant to the world of work, and how we should work with our colleagues and students.

I am pleased that staff were encouraged to see this – I have told so many other colleagues, friends and family to see it if they hadn't already!"

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

- [Dyslexia Awareness Week](#)
- [Neurodiversity Celebration Week](#)
- [Sign Language Week](#) including the Department for Language Studies hosting an 'Intro to BSL and Deaf Culture' workshop as part of Sign Language Week
- [Deaf Awareness Week](#)
- [International Day of Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [World Autism Acceptance Week](#)

The Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) process is becoming more effective

The Housing Team, Students' Union and the Health and Safety team have worked together to actively support and improve the PEEP process prior to students being provided with adapted accommodation. Based on best practice, a preliminary PEEP is now generated prior to arranging a meeting with the student to instigate any safety measures as soon as practicable, and improve information available about PEEPs at events such as transition day.

Where possible the Disability Advisory team support the student in a guided visit to timetabled areas to ensure that the facilities within the teaching areas (not covered by the PEEP process) are sufficient for a good student experience.

DISABILITY EQUALITY

Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEPs) data

During the 2023/24 academic year 94 PEEPs were carried out with students and staff. This is a 61% increase on the 36 carried out during the 2022/23 academic year.

To ensure good engagement and continuous improvement over the coming academic year, a PEEP Group has been established, meeting quarterly to ensure that the University is doing all it can for students and staff with a specific need in relation to evacuation. The group will be led by the Health and Safety Team, with representation from the Housing and Disability Advisory teams.

LGBT+ EQUALITY

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



Stonewall Workplace Equality Index

Inclusive Sussex set a target of achieving a top-100 ranking in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index (WEI) by 2025. The University's first application to the 2020 WEI resulted in a ranking of 407th, followed by an improved ranking of 264th in the 2022 WEI.

This year, Sussex submitted its third application to the index and was awarded gold status, ranking 30th and placing the University within the top 100 employers, successfully achieving the Inclusive Sussex target. This recognition highlights Sussex's commitment to eliminating inequalities for LGBTQ+ staff and fostering an inclusive culture.

The Workplace Equality Index serves as a benchmarking tool for employers to measure progress on LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workplace. Rather than prescribing specific policies or approaches, organisations must demonstrate their efforts across 10 areas of employment practice and policy, ranging from HR policies to the visibility of LGBTQ+ role models.

The gold award recognises the work undertaken by the LGBTQ+ self-assessment team to develop and progress an LGBTQ+ Inclusion Action Plan since the University's first application. [The action plan](#) supports steps that contribute to the index and includes work relating to studying at Sussex and actions based on feedback from LGBTQ+ staff.

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

"The ranking marks an important milestone for Sussex, providing independent recognition of our efforts toward achieving LGBTQ+ equality and inclusion. We have some way to go, but our LGBTQ+ Inclusion Action Plan gives us a solid foundation upon which we can move forward and deliver on our inclusion aims. I would like to thank the LGBTQ+ Self-Assessment Team and members of our wider University community who have supported our journey so far."

LGBT+ EQUALITY

Stonewall membership

Participation in the Workplace Equality Index enables the University to measure progress in supporting LGBTQ+ inclusion and provides a robust external benchmark. Stonewall offers valuable feedback on how Sussex compares to other employers, along with guidance and support. Membership does not require alignment with Stonewall's policies or campaigning activities. The University ensures that all related work aligns with commitments to equality and inclusion for all protected characteristics, freedom of speech, academic freedom, and opposition to bullying and harassment.

Following a review, Sussex will continue its membership in the Stonewall Diversity Champions programme and participate in the Workplace Equality Index every four years. This approach reflects the resource-intensive nature of submissions and allows sufficient time for implemented actions to have an impact. It also aligns with the timing of submissions to other systemic change initiatives. The University has decided not to renew its membership in the Global Champions scheme, opting to reallocate resources to other internally managed LGBTQ+ projects.

Meanwhile, Stonewall is currently undertaking a review of its benchmarking tool, and the higher education sector agency Advance HE is also developing a kitemark approach for the sector which may include LGBTQ+ inclusion, building on Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter. Both of these initiatives will in turn inform further reviews of University membership of Stonewall.

LGBT+ EQUALITY

Brighton and Hove Pride

Joy, colour and celebration were the order of the day at Brighton Pride on Saturday 3 August and the University of Sussex was a proud partner of Pride for the seventh consecutive year. The sun shone on 60 staff, students and alumni who joined the community parade as part of the University walking group.



Thousands of people lined the streets of Brighton & Hove on the day, showing their support, solidarity and allyship for charities, community groups, organisations and businesses taking part in the parade. The University was honoured to be part of Brighton Pride once again, reflecting its [commitment to inclusion and equality](#) for LGBTQ+ people including staff, students and members of the wider community.

Staff and students who took part shared their feedback about being part of the parade:

"Brighton Pride parade is more than just a celebration: it's a reminder of how far the LGBTQ+ community has come in fighting for our dignity and equality, and a spur to keep fighting. With anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric ramping up across the country, it's so important that we are visible in support of the queer community - that's why I was so proud to march with the University of Sussex contingent."

Staff member

"Being in the parade was the best Pride I have ever had. I got to meet some new people from the University and be proud and dance my little heart out... I loved being a University of Sussex rainbow unicorn. Always here to represent the mature, autistic, non-binary people. Many thanks for letting me be involved and making people smile for the day." **Staff member, School of Life Sciences**

"As a queer-identifying international student from the Philippines, the opportunity to attend the Pride parade with the University of Sussex has been both a humbling and reflective experience. Seeing other people walk with us and celebrate with us is a reminder that the struggle for LGBTQIA+ rights and inclusion has progressed beyond tolerance. However, the march remains a protest of visibility and solidarity so long as there are people who cannot live their lives truthfully and authentically."

Student, School of Media, Arts and Humanities

"For me Pride is about being who you are, accepting who you are, and being proud of who you are. It's about saying this is me, and I'm proud to be me. At the Pride parade you can meet LGBT+ colleagues and celebrate together. Put on your plumage, strut your stuff and feel free - but make sure you've broken in your new boots first." **Staff member, School of Law, Politics and Sociology.**

LGBT+ EQUALITY

Other activities to support LGBTQ+ inclusion

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

Bi Visibility Day September 2023

Bi Visibility Day raises bi awareness and challenges bisexual and biromantic erasure. Sussex flew the bi flag over Sussex House, shared information about the terms 'Bi' or 'Bi+' (which can be used to recognise that there is a range of identities and experiences that fall under the Bi umbrella, including bisexual, pansexual, biromantic, and m-spec - multi-spectrum - attraction), and shared links to relevant resources and articles.

The LGBTQ+ Staff Network also put together a platform to collate and celebrate Bi representation in media, and support and resources relating to bisexuality and Bi+ identities.

A LGBTQ+ Staff Network member said:

"Bi Visibility Day each year reminds me of why I vocalise my bisexuality and of how valid I am. As an adult I noticed a sense of grief triggered when people around me came out as gay, sharing their queerness openly in a way I didn't think that I ever could. I started looking for bi content online, searching for blogs to educate myself and find others like me. I realised I had to remind myself of a few things:

- *Bisexuality isn't defined by your current relationship, however long that relationship has been.*
- *Bisexuality means being attracted to more than one gender, not necessarily at the same time, in the same way, to the same degree.*
- *There is no amount of 'experience' needed for your sexuality to be valid.*

Educating myself and feeling empowered enough to share my bisexuality has been a freeing experience for me."

Intersex Awareness Day October 2023

Information was shared with the community to raise awareness of intersex people (those who are born with sex characteristics that do not fit typical definitions of male or female bodies and may also be described as people with sex characteristic variations). While not all intersex people identify as LGBTQ+, increasingly LGBTQ+ activism and advocacy work has moved towards being inclusive of intersex people, their views and issues, in recognition of significant shared and overlapping experiences.

Transgender Day of Remembrance November 2023

This annual observance honours the memory of transgender people whose lives were lost due to acts of anti-transgender violence. Sussex marked both Trans Awareness Week and Transgender Day of Remembrance by flying the trans flag over Sussex House.

LGBT+ EQUALITY

LGBT+ History Month February 2024

This is celebrated in schools, universities, workplaces and communities across the UK every February. Launched in 2004, LGBT+ History Month holds space for claiming the past, celebrating the present and creating futures. The theme for 2024 was 'Under the Scope' and focused on LGBT+ peoples' contribution to the field of medicine and healthcare, both historically and today.

Sussex flew the Pride flag over Sussex House throughout February to mark LGBT+ History Month and there were numerous events for staff and students including a visiting speaker.

Transgender Day of Visibility March 2024

This takes place every 31 March and marks a time to celebrate and highlight the achievements of trans and non-binary (TNB) people, and to raise awareness of discrimination faced by trans people worldwide. The University flew the trans flag over Sussex House. Trans and non-binary inclusion is central to the University's organisational LGBTQ+ Inclusion Action Plan.

The Chair of the Trans and Non-Binary Staff Network said:

"When the topic of being trans comes up, it is often mentioned alongside "choice". Being trans isn't a choice, but being visible – being out – should be. We get to choose who knows us. However, this is not the easy choice it should be. Instead, all trans people must make a hundred choices a day about being visible, mostly based on safety.

It is a good opportunity today to consider, what choices trans allies are making. Some of these choices are easy to make, such as correcting yourself quickly on a wrong pronoun or accepting a name change on a register.

Some of them are perhaps more difficult, such as gently correcting a colleague who misgendered someone, or talking to someone about how you can make their lives a little easier that day. Try and take a moment today to consider – how can I be someone who trans people feel safe being visible around?"

Lesbian Visibility Week April 2024

This is an annual awareness event celebrating LGBTQIA women and non-binary people. The focus of this year's Lesbian Visibility week was 'Sisterhood', putting the focus on unity and solidarity. The Co-Chair of the LGBTQ+ Staff Network, Keira J Thomas, shared a poem for Lesbian Visibility Day:

*"This is what being a lesbian means me:
Love of varieties - gentle and kind,
Ecstasy and whirlwinds colonise the mind.
Sexuality questioned - doubts did rise,
Bisexuality led to an identity that's mine.
Indescribable as a journey that is my own,
A feeling of belonging. A feeling of home.
Natural connections and feeling free,
Connecting with myself - I am proudly me."*

LGBT+ EQUALITY

International Asexuality Day April 2024

To raise awareness of asexuality, including demisexual, grey-asexual and other asexual identities.

Marking International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT) May 2024

IDAHOBIT provides an opportunity to acknowledge the need to challenge homophobia, lesbophobia, biphobia and transphobia all year round. It is a worldwide celebration of sexual and gender diversities to raise awareness of the ongoing discrimination, violence and marginalisation faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans people and all of those with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions, and sex characteristics.

The theme of this year's IDAHOBIT was 'No one left behind: equality, freedom and justice for all.' Sussex flew the progress pride flag over Sussex House to mark the date.



World Pride Month June 2024

Sussex shared information and a national calendar of events while preparing for Brighton & Hove Pride as a corporate sponsor later in the summer. Being part of Brighton Pride reflects the University's commitment to inclusion and equality for all LGBTQ+ people including staff, students and the wider community.

Trans Pride Brighton July 2024

Brighton Trans Pride is the longest-running Trans Pride event in the UK, and is a grass-roots, community-led organisation run by a team of volunteers whose aim is *"to inspire all trans, intersex, gender variant and queer people to help make a real difference by celebrating trans lives and gender diversity. We aim to educate and eliminate discrimination by promoting equality and diversity through visibility, while also celebrating our unique history."*

At Sussex, as part of the All-Staff Wellbeing Festival on 17 July, the LGBTQ+ and Trans and Non-Binary Staff Networks hosted a Trans Pride picnic, which was open to all staff. The trans flag also flew over Sussex House for the duration of the weekend.

Non-Binary People's Day July 2024

This day is aimed at celebrating the people worldwide who identify as non-binary, whilst highlighting the issues they face. To mark the date, the University of Sussex flew the non-binary flag over Sussex House.

DIVERSE SUSSEX

Be a place that celebrates and proactively supports and encourages diversity

Exit interviews project

The plan is to pilot a new approach to exit interviews by February 2025, a piece of work which was paused last year.

The aim is to design and implement a structured process for conducting, managing, and analysing exit interviews. Some of this requires wider involvement and work with different areas/teams.

The current phase involves data and information gathering, looking at best practice, aligning with wider pieces of work, and developing initial recommendations.

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.

Several campaigns have taken place this year to encourage staff to share their equality data through the online HR portal [My View](#).

Diversity in Governance: Council, Senate, and Committees

As part of the Race Equality Charter Bronze Action Plan, the University has identified the need to review the diversity of its governance structures, including Council, Senate, and various committees. This action aims to create a more inclusive environment at all levels of decision-making.

To support this work, members of the Race Equality Charter Self-Assessment Team (RECSAT) have begun identifying benchmarks and setting targets using sector data, local population demographics, and internal staff data. This data-driven approach provides a clearer understanding of the University's position relative to the higher education sector and the diversity of the local community.

Over the coming year, the RECSAT will focus on establishing formal processes to regularly review the composition of governance bodies. These processes will enable progress to be tracked against targets and ensure diversity is embedded into recruitment and succession planning practices.

The University aims to integrate these processes into governance frameworks, promoting transparency, accountability, and sustained progress towards achieving diversity goals.

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 University has held two 'Inclusive Sussex: In Conversation with...' events this year. The event series supports the *Inclusive Sussex* strategy by exploring issues of liberation, equality, diversity and justice with voices from different walks of life, bringing expertise and lived experiences to the fore.

Inclusive leadership is top of the agenda at 'Inclusive Sussex: In Conversation with' event

The University of Sussex welcomed Lela Kogbara and Jane Farrell, specialists in inclusive leadership, to the 'Inclusive Sussex: In Conversation with' event on 18 October 2023.

Lela and Jane joined a panel featuring [Professor David Ruebain](#), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Culture, Equality and Inclusion) and senior lecturers from the University of Sussex Business School, [Dr Benjamin Everley](#) and [Dr Zahira Jaser](#), who is also Director of the MBA Programme.

During the event, discussion focused on marginalised identities at work, gender and leadership and the positive and negative consequences of workplace equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) programmes. The panellists also explored the extent to which EDI is compatible with profit-driven organisations.

David Ruebain said: *"We were delighted to welcome Lela and Jane to campus to explore inclusive leadership with Zahira, Ben and me. Inclusive leadership is not only about understanding the breadth of diversity of individuals within a team and building relationships across identities but also about authenticity and practice."*



Jane Farrell, Lela Kogbara, Dr Zahira Jaser and Dr Benjamin Everley

The panellists explained the impact of concealing and revealing their identities at work during their career, sharing some of their own experiences and reflecting on the importance of context.

The panel talked about how leaders can change cultures and organisations if they are willing to help dismantle how privilege plays out.

More details about the event can be found here: <https://staff.sussex.ac.uk/news/article/62541-inclusive-leadership-is-top-of-the-agenda-at-inclusive-sussex-in-conversation-with-event>

CONNECTED SUSSEX

Generational inequalities in focus at 'Inclusive Sussex: In Conversation with' event

The University of Sussex welcomed key figures in higher education and equality, Professor Nicola Dandridge and Dr Omar Khan, to the 'Inclusive Sussex: In Conversation with' event on 28 February 2024.

After a career as an equalities lawyer and as Chief Executive of the Higher Education (HE) sector's Equality Challenge Unit, Nicola was Chief Executive of Universities UK. She then became the first Chief Executive of the OfS (Office for Students). Nicola is now Professor of Practice in HE Policy at Bristol University. Omar was formerly Director of the Runnymede Trust, Britain's oldest race equality organisation, and is now Chief Executive of TASO (Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education).

Together with a panel of Sussex staff and student voices, Nicola and Omar explored intersectionality and generational difference in the way people think about society. They discussed race, ethnicity and regionality, the role of policy and regulation, and equality of access to university before taking questions and comments from the audience of staff, students and the wider community.

Nicola and Omar were joined by Professor David Ruebain, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Culture, Equality and Inclusion). Completing the panel were voices from the School of Education and Social Work, Dr Emily Danvers (Senior Lecturer in Higher Education Pedagogies), Professor Janet Boddy (Professor of Child, Youth and Family Studies), and Matt Johnson (postgraduate researcher and Head of Research at the Runnymede Trust).

David Ruebain said:

"It was fantastic to welcome Nicola and Omar to our panel to talk about the structural nature of some of the challenges young people face, and how justice and equality are viewed differently across generations. Young people often face more uncertainty and precarity than ever before. Policymakers and universities may be able to play a role in reducing inequality but societal understanding on the importance of equality across generations will be one of the biggest drivers for change."



L-R: Professor Nicola Dandridge, Dr Emily Danvers, Professor David Ruebain, Dr Omar Khan, Matt Johnson and Professor Janet Boddy

The panel reflected on perceptions of how freedom of speech impacts equality. Younger people are more likely to feel that free speech cannot be achieved without equality, because those marginalised are likely to feel constrained. The group discussed how feeling unsafe is closely correlated with loneliness and anxiety and it remains the case that around one in five students say that they feel lonely every day.

The panel talked about whether universities are increasingly for the elite, with 55% of students now having to work to fund or to partially fund their degree.

CONNECTED SUSSEX

Seeing increasing levels of precarity, anxiety and uncertainty, the panel considered whether the government is addressing the challenges. They discussed the importance of voter base and election turnout, which no doubt impacts policymaking.

[More details about the event can be found here: Generational inequalities in focus at 'Inclusive Sussex: In Conversation with' event : Broadcast: News items : University of Sussex](#)

Black at Sussex

Black at Sussex aims to improve the experience of Black students and staff at Sussex by celebrating Black alumni and their contributions to British culture and art, as well as to the University. The programme also works to highlight and tackle inequalities, by encouraging critical discussion of the Black experience and concerning decolonising curricula.

University of Sussex alumna returned as Poet-in-Residence



[Jenny Mitchell](#), an alumna of the University of Sussex, who has earned recognition and multiple awards for her contributions to the world of poetry, returned to Sussex this year as a Poet-in-Residence as part of the Black at Sussex project.

Jenny was awarded the Gregory O'Donoghue Prize in 2023 for a single poem. Her second collection, *MAP OF A PLANTATION*, received the Poetry Book Awards in 2021, and is now part of the syllabus at Manchester Metropolitan University. Jenny's best-selling debut collection, *HER LOST LANGUAGE* was featured in the Poetry Wales list of 44 Poetry Books for 2019. Her latest work, *RESURRECTION OF A BLACK MAN*, has received widespread acclaim, with three prize-winning poems and a feature on the U.S. podcast *Poetry Unbound*. Jenny recently became a winner of the Bread and Roses Poetry Award 2023, and has performed at the Houses of Parliament.

As a Poet-in-Residence, Jenny facilitated a series of roundtable discussions with students from schools across the University, staff and members of the public. These events, entitled *The Wicked Problems Series*, opened up conversations around 'race', identities and experiences within the realm of higher education. The series is influenced by the [concept](#) of a 'wicked problem', socially or culturally driven problems that have no solution, but can be tackled in ways that mitigate the impact they have.

The Wicked Problems Series was followed by creative workshops, again facilitated by Jenny, that brought together the themes of Black Resistance and Agency through the power of language. Participants were encouraged to dive into the world of poetry, exploring the use of language as a conduit to discuss the themes explored, as well as their own experiences and understandings.

CONNECTED SUSSEX

Here is one of Jenny's recent [poems](#), *The Day Mr Zephaniah Died*, commissioned by *Culture Matters* in 2023, in tribute to the late-British poet Benjamin Zephaniah. The poem is now on the British Literature syllabus at the University of Connecticut.

Celebration event with Jenny Mitchell highlights the power of poetry in tackling 'wicked problems'
The [Black at Sussex programme](#), in partnership with the Library, held a celebration event on Wednesday 8 May to mark Jenny Mitchell's Poetry Residency as it drew to a close. [View more photos from the event](#).

Hosted by [Gavin Mensah-Coker](#), co-founder, steering committee member (and now Chair) of the Black at Sussex programme, the celebration event on 8 May focused once again the power of poetry to tackle the 'wicked problems' of our time. [Professor Allan Lester](#), [Dr Alice Corble](#) and [Nadia Pattenden](#) joined Jenny in reflecting on the residency, before Jenny shared some of her poetry and invited others to take part in an open mic. A Q&A session also gave the community the opportunity to share their thoughts and questions.

Following the event, Jenny said: *"The closing celebration was a complete joy, especially because the Library organised it so well, and the people who read in the open mic were overwhelmingly good. I loved hearing their amazing poems on the theme of 'wicked problems', and the packed audience were also quick to show their appreciation.*

"As an alumna, it was wonderful to perform three of my poems and to get such generous feedback. I couldn't have asked for a better end to my residency."

[Professor David Ruebain](#), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Culture, Equality and Inclusion) said: *"It was an honour to welcome Jenny to campus as Poet-in-Residence and we were delighted to celebrate her work at the celebration event. Over the past months, through creative and powerful roundtables and workshops with our University community, Jenny has helped us explore how poetry and language can support understanding and dialogue around 'wicked problems', helping to mitigate their impact."*

Hear more from Jenny Mitchell about why poetry matters on the [Culture Matters website](#).



Photo credit: Diensen Pamben.

CONNECTED SUSSEX

Black at Sussex website launched

This year a new web presence (<https://www.sussex.ac.uk/about/culture-equality-and-inclusion/black-at-sussex>) for the programme was launched, Succeeding [Professor David Ruebain](#), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Culture, Equality and Inclusion) Gavin Mensah-Coker was appointed as new Chair of the Steering Group and a new project manager will be joining in September 2024.



Showcasing the wonderful and varied legacies... enhances that sense of belonging, providing inspiring examples of what can be achieved by Black Sussex graduates.”

VALERIE KPORYE

Literature and Philosophy alumna

CONNECTED SUSSEX

Religion and Belief Forum

The Equality Act 2010 provides protection against discrimination, harassment and victimisation of staff, students, or visitors on the grounds of religion or belief. These protections apply to employment, education (including higher education) and the provision of goods and services. The University, as a public body also has proactive obligations through the Public Sector Equality Duty including in respect of religion and belief.

To help meet these obligations the University established a [Religion and Belief Forum](#) in 2023 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 of all are respected, and where the values of open and respectful debate are upheld.

This year the forum met to discuss key topics including:

- relevant case law on belief
- community cohesion
- open listening and Campus Dialogue events
- approaches to antisemitism and Islamophobia

The EDI team also publicised several key multi-faith holy days, observances and awareness dates in 2024 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. Collaborative work with the EDI Unit, the Chaplaincy team and the Religion and Belief Forum continues to strengthen this approach and highlight additional key dates over the coming year.

[Hanukkah Sameach \(Happy Hanukkah\)](#)

[Eid Mubarak \(Happy Eid\)](#)

[Ramadan Kareem \(Happy Ramadan\)](#)

[World Religion Day](#)

[Islamophobia Awareness Month](#)

EDI e-learning provision

Following a review in the previous academic year, the EDI Unit has established termly review meetings to maintain and further develop core training (LearnUpon e-learning) and supplementary training and resources. The meetings enable consideration of any feedback from the wider University community and changes in practice impacting on current course content, gaps in provision, and completion rates and opportunities to raise awareness of existing courses.

Criteria has been developed for introducing new EDI e-learning to ensure consistency of approach in aligning to university policy and compliance requirements, content review and key stakeholder engagement.

The University has committed to reviewing all EDI e-learning content every three years, with the next review due in January 2026.

CONNECTED SUSSEX

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

A review of the policy framework was undertaken during the year, leading to the development and launch of a new Dignity, Respect and Inclusion (DRI) Policy. With input from stakeholders across the University, the DRI Policy unifies the approach to dignity, respect, equality, diversity, and inclusion. It merges the previous Dignity and Respect Policy and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, while also incorporating commitments to freedom of speech and academic freedom, reflecting best practice. This work aligns with the University-wide aim to streamline policies, making them clearer and more accessible.

The new policy applies to all staff, students, and visitors and is underpinned by the University's values. It aims to ensure that everyone at Sussex feels a sense of belonging and can contribute and thrive. Further supporting documents, including detailed guidance and processes, are planned for development during the 2024/25 academic year.

EDI governance review

Following a review undertaken by the Halpin Partnership, changes to the University's governance and assurance arrangements this year have included a new People and Culture Board (where executive decisions relating to EDI, People and Culture matters are decided), supported by plans to introduce an EDI Board with a wider membership. Oversight of operational implementation will be provided by a leadership team, (CEILT: Culture, Equality and Inclusion Leadership Team).

CONNECTED SUSSEX

Open Listening pilot programme

The ambition to develop a programme of allyship work has evolved into an Open Listening programme, with successful initial pilot phases.

Passions and deeply held values are one of the University's great strengths and can sometimes result in conflict between colleagues. Conflict is part of life, and has the potential to cause harm, however it can also lead to understanding, stronger relationships and positive change. The programme seeks to embed tools of listening to promote 'disagreeing agreeably'.

Further pilot workshops were offered during the 2023/24 academic year, with some being run for specific leadership teams including ULT and the HR leaderships team. The programme was also extended into two Campus Dialogue events focused on the conflict in Israel-Gaza/Palestine.

The results of the pilot were overwhelmingly positive – here's a selection of feedback from the pilot sessions:

'I felt very heard and noticed the difference between this process and a typical conversation. I liked the focus on purposeful listening'.

'It was valuable. It got me thinking about a lot of things, and even a day later, I would say, resulted in my operating differently with those I was around'.

'Certain parts of the session were very revelatory'.

'Quite searching exercises but very well managed to create a supportive environment'.

'I think this could be very useful for bringing about positive change at Sussex in a meaningful way'.

'It was a very powerful session'.

The pilot programme was reviewed, and next steps agreed. This will comprise two elements: a series of workshops for small groups focussed on specific themes and the possibility of some further skills development with those interested in getting more involved in the work.

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

Display screen equipment (DSE)

The Health and Safety team is reviewing the systems in place for DSE assessments. This work is focusing on making sure that staff can use DSE safely, taking into consideration additional needs that individuals may have. One area of focus is DSE in relation to home working, particularly the Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a significant move to hybrid working.

For the coming academic year, the team will publish and promote DSE policy and guidance to support other teams in rolling this out. A training programme will be implemented to increase the number of DSE Assessors to support staff who have identified DSE setup issues. This early identification of issues will promote better health in relation to DSE use and may reduce the need for occupational health referral.



Accessibility on campus

The Space Management team has undertaken a full accessibility review of all general teaching spaces to identify layout or capacity issues that need to be immediately addressed, and to support the development of a proposed future programme of improvement works.

Projects in 2023/24 include:

- John Maynard Smith (JMS) access: repaved and renewed pavement outside JMS building at the School of Life Sciences to improve wheelchair user accessibility of the area, lecture theatre and nearby facilities.
- Eat Central renovation - the design has incorporated accessible seating arrangements and counter service.
- Ongoing West Slope development: throughout the enabling works phase, a new pedestrian route is in place with tactile paving, wider pathways and signage. Noise monitoring has been in place throughout the duration of the enabling works and will continue into the main development.
- Accessible Library entrance: the existing accessible entrance to the Library will be improved to bring it in line with modern standards and expectations.

FLEXIBLE SUSSEX

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

Accessible technology, infrastructure and systems

The [telephony modernisation project](#) to introduce MS Teams Calling, allowing staff to make and receive telephone calls using existing Microsoft Teams software, was implemented in Schools in 2023/24. One of the benefits of Teams Calling is to provide a more inclusive workplace with tools that can be adapted to suit the needs of every individual – students and staff alike.

It improves accessibility by users being able to access their University extension from wherever they are, provided they have a PC, laptop, tablet or mobile phone as well as a network connection, be that a fixed cable, Wi-Fi or mobile data. Staff members working in offices can sit at any desk, switch on their laptop and be ready to make and receive calls. Hybrid workers can use their University extension number from home and academics who travel can do the same from wherever they are in the world.

Development and publication of inclusive estates policy core principles

It has been agreed to engage design consultants to support in developing Inclusive Design Principles. A series of design guides will be produced, including inclusion and accessibility design guides. Commissioned work for this will begin towards the end of 2024.

Until the design guides are published, Estates and Facilities are adopting the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) overlay for all current building work which requires consultancy involvement in accessibility matters. The University are also using a Publicly Available Specification (PAS) guide which is an industry standard guide on neurodiversity.

Other activities to support Flexible Sussex Carers Week 2024

In June the University highlighted Carers Week, an opportunity to increase the visibility of caring, by exploring the challenges unpaid carers face and recognising the contribution they make to families and communities. The Sussex Parent and Carer Staff Network hosted an online talk followed by a community space.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Staff networks

The University's staff networks play an important role in achieving the goals outlined in the Inclusive Sussex strategy. The University makes a direct commitment to these networks: "The University will actively promote awareness and understanding of a wide range of groups, giving them a voice to share their perspectives. The University is committed to the principle of collaboration and consultation to make Sussex truly inclusive. The contributions of staff networks and the Students' Union are valued in shaping policy and procedures to support all staff and students."

These networks provide opportunities for staff to connect with colleagues from across Sussex and participate in various activities. They play an essential role in representing the staff voice, helping to shape policies and procedures that support equality, diversity and inclusion, and ensuring the University meets its goals 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 Support Network (part of the Staff Disability Network)

Each network is run by an appointed Chair and some by Co-Chairs. Over the past year all networks have been active in holding regular in-person and online meetings with their 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 attend new staff welcome events to promote their networks and provide information about how staff can join.

The staff networks contribute input and responses as part of consultation processes and to equality analyses, such as consultation about reviewing the institutional membership of Stonewall, and feedback on the draft Dignity, Respect and Inclusion Policy.

Here are two examples of network activity this past year:

Neurodiversity Staff Network

[The Neurodiversity Staff Network](#) formerly sat under the umbrella of the Staff Disability Network but with its ever-increasing membership and range of activities over the past year has recently been recognised as a its own network.

In the last year the network has developed a programme supporting staff experience and neurodiversity as a culture. Activities have included monthly online themed meetings, in-person catch-ups with the In-Sync Café, and events such as a self-advocacy workshop delivered by Diversity and Ability, a neurodivergent comedy night and a neurodiversity, ethnicity and race online workshop.

FURTHER INFORMATION

LGBTQ+ Staff Network

A new [LGBTQ+ Staff Network committee](#) was established with the aim of continuing the significant work of previous Network Chairs. The network believes that everyone should feel safe, supported, and comfortable at work, and can be themselves without experiencing discrimination or harassment. The work of the network over the past year reflects these values, including in-person and online workshops, celebration and awareness-raising events for significant LGBTQ+ occasions throughout the year and social activities for LGBTQIA+ staff members to come together as a community. This was highlighted by taking part in the [Brighton Pride parade 2023](#), alongside other Sussex staff and students.

The network has developed a monthly newsletter for members to update them on internal and external LGBTQ+ news and events. Since starting the committee, membership numbers have grown significantly.

This network works in close collaboration with the [Trans & Non-Binary Staff Network](#) to deliver events such as [Celebrating Trans Pride at Sussex 2023](#) and is also beginning to collaborate with other staff networks to support staff with several identities. The network has engaged with the *Lesbian Gay, Bisexual, Trans & Queer Student Society* to share best practice and support both staff and students and is also engaging with other individuals and teams at Sussex as well as external LGBTQ+ businesses, not-for-profit organisations, and charities.

EDI Champions

The University has a strong network of EDI Champions representing each School and Professional Services Division across the University. The Champions disseminate information and best practice, raise awareness of equality and diversity issues that may require institutional level action, encourage involvement in initiatives and help promote a culture where staff and students are treated fairly and with dignity and respect.

The EDI Champions meet formally once a term to share their School/Divisional updates and to highlight EDI related work, events and training activities. This not only helps to raise awareness of the work that goes on across the University but also encourages partnership and collaboration. This year a dedicated Microsoft Teams channel has been used to good effect in supporting more efficient and effective communication within the group. The sharing of best practice and information in this way has further helped to champion, foster and embed a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion across the organisation.

FURTHER INFORMATION

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 one 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 promoting, co-ordinating and embedding equality, diversity and inclusion across the whole University community. The EDI Unit supports Professor David Ruebain, PVC (Culture, Equality and Inclusion) to implement the *Inclusive Sussex* strategy. The Unit works closely with Schools, Divisions, staff networks, EDI Champions and the University of Sussex Students' Union to deliver the University's EDI 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, Director Human Resources.

Contact Us

Email: edi.unit@sussex.ac.uk

Twitter: [@InclusiveSussex](#)

Web: www.sussex.ac.uk/equalities