University of Essex

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual report 2019-20

Table of Contents

Introduction

This report sets out our institutional commitment and aspiration to build an inclusive and enabling environment for all our members; an underpinning principle of all we do. It documents our progress towards delivering this shared ambition seen through the lens not only of reporting information but also through the lived experience and voices of our community which we have been capturing through listening exercises and the work of our equality networks. For example, we are taking steps to support the experience of Jewish staff and students, actions to tackle racism on our campuses, actions to tackle sexual violence, and to strengthen the relationship with our LGBTQ+ community following the publication of the Reindorf Report in May 2021. These commitments go beyond the annual equality and diversity reporting cycle and will continue as priority actions in the People Supporting Strategy to 2025.

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

This report is for the academic year 2019-20. It summarises the work carried out in the academic year 2019-20, highlighting achievements and identifying emerging themes. It recognises that we are on a journey, that work continues outside the annual reporting cycle, and that significant further work during academic year 2020-21 has developed our approach to the delivery of our equality diversity and inclusion objectives. Where data is used to support the narrative it is provided either by academic year, the latest year being 2019-20, or as point-in-time data which uses the latest available data at the time of writing the report (May 2021).

Our commitment to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy 2019-25 provided below sets out our approach, in the context of our institutional mission, values and objectives as stated in our University Strategy, People Supporting Strategy to 2025, Education and Research Strategies and equalities legislation. It applies to all employees, workers, contractors, students, and visitors and is a means to ensure that every member of our community is aware of their rights and responsibilities. It is included in all key University documents including student prospectuses and handbooks, student admissions policies, staff recruitment literature and employment policies.

The University is committed to eliminating all forms of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation in its community. We encourage reporting of inappropriate behaviour and we have a zero tolerance approach to any form of harassment, bullying, sexual violence or hate crime which means that (i) we will take action and (ii) the action will be proportionate to the circumstances of the case.

University Policy Statement on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion[1]

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

We expect all members of our communities, employees, workers, contractors, students and visitors to be treated, and to treat others, with dignity and respect. We do not tolerate discrimination against any individual or groups of people because of their age, gender identity,[2] marriage and civil partnership status, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, because they have a disability, or because they are pregnant, breastfeeding or have recently given birth.

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

---

[1] Our policy statement on Equality Diversity and Inclusion will be revised as an action arising from the recommendations contained in the Reindorf Report. The revised statement will be published in October 2021.

[2] The protected characteristic in the Equality Act 2010 is gender reassignment. The University's policies go beyond the requirements of legislation and protect a broader group of people than those covered by the term 'gender reassignment'. Our policies cover all trans people, including those with non-binary gender identities.

Our legal obligations

Equality Act 2010

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

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;

- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;

- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

In addition, as a public authority, we must:

- Publish information to demonstrate our compliance with the General Equality Duty across our functions;

- Prepare and publish equality objectives.

Discrimination, as defined by the Equality Act 2010 covers:

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

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

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

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

Gender pay gap reporting regulations

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

- Mean gender pay gap in hourly pay

- Median gender pay gap in hourly pay

- Mean bonus gender pay gap

- Median bonus gender pay gap

- Proportion of males and females receiving a bonus payment

- Proportion of males and females in each pay quartile

Equality, diversity and inclusion-related training and awareness raising

We aim to support members of our community to behave in ways that comply with the law and with our own expectations. We provide essential training and awareness-raising activities that include for example, staff induction events and Welcome events for students, targeted communication campaigns, and engaging in external charters that seek to remove barriers to participation and progression for various groups of people.

Essential Training is Essex-specific training that ensures all employees are made aware of and can meet their statutory obligations, professional standards, and are fully supported to deliver the University Strategy. Employees are required to complete Essential Training as are students undertaking specific roles (e.g. Frontrunner, Student Ambassador, students for whom their professional body requires equality training, Residence Life Coordinator and Assistant).   There is additional Essential Training for managers, University committee members, members of Council, University Steering Group, and Strategic or Future Leaders participants. Additional training is also completed by those who are involved in supporting the Code of Student Conduct or specialist support staff who may be required to respond to reports of sexual violence, harassment and hate crime.

Essential Training must be completed within the first six months of appointment or within an alternative timeframe agreed with the reporting manager. Termly reports are produced for managers, showing whether their direct reports have completed their essential training, to enable managers to ensure that all essential training is completed within the required timeframe.

Equality objectives

We seek to embed equality, diversity and inclusion within every decision we make and every action we take across the range of the University's activities. This ambition is set out in the context of our University Strategy, Education Strategy and Research Strategy. Equality objectives and performance indicators have been agreed and included within the People Supporting Strategy to 2025. The following five objectives and related performance indicators are those that have significant potential to contribute towards sustainable, cultural change.[3]

Equality Objective 1

Continue to monitor, analyse and publish gender and ethnicity pay gaps. This will be used to make positive recommendations for adjustments as required to close them. (People Supporting Strategy to 2025).

Performance Indicator: To reduce our institutional mean gender pay gap from 17.6% as at March 2018 to under 5% by 2025 and to have no significant pay gaps (<5%) in relation to other protected characteristics.

Table 1: Institutional mean and median gender pay gaps 2017 - 2021

Date	Mean gender pay gap	Median gender pay gap
31 March 2017	18.6%	18.6%
31 March 2018	17.6%	18.6%
31 March 2019	16.5%	16.2%
31 March 2020	16.1%	18.6%
31 March 2021	15.9%	18.6%

Our institutional mean gender pay gap has been decreasing slowly year-on-year over the last five years signalling that the measures we have put in place to date are having an impact, but that we are still on

---

[3] Progress was reported in the Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2018-19.

a journey. While continuing to reduce the gender pay gap is an ongoing commitment, we recognise that the pace of change will need to quicken if we are to deliver our strategic target of no significant pay gaps (<5%) by 2025. We are taking further steps to grow our female staff in the upper pay quartile, and to create a better gender balance between women and men in the middle and lower pay quartiles. Some measures that have been actioned have not yet had time to influence the pay gap. For example, we have set bold actions for (a) recruitment, (b) progression, and (c) flexible working that will underpin the changes necessary for a long-term, sustainable reduction in the gap between male and female pay.

Recruitment

Since January 2020, academic departments have been supported to achieve at least a 60/40 gender distribution in every grade in line with the current pattern of gender distribution by 2025. If every department had at least a 60/40 gender distribution in every grade (in line with the current pattern of distribution), the mean gender pay gap would potentially reduce to 9.3% and the median to around 11.1%. To help us to achieve this we regularly review and adapt our approach to recruitment of academic staff, as set out in the People Supporting Strategy to 2025. For example, all job roles can be considered for flexible working arrangements and we offer maximum flexibility, including part-time career academic posts, when advertising to attract the broadest pool of candidates. We routinely advertise all jobs as available to be worked flexibly and we support recruiting colleagues to be aware of the potential for bias in recruitment campaigns.

A temporary hold on recruitment during the exceptional circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic limited our ability to affect the gender pay gap as planned through targeted recruitment activities, and there have been limited appointments offered from April 2020 through January 2021. Recruitment will continue to strengthen again during 2021/2022.

Progression

The University continues to support development in the workplace and encourages people to progress whether that be through: facilitating networking opportunities; providing access to role models and mentorship; supporting networks; and workplace coaching. To support leadership development, we have introduced inclusive leadership content to our existing leadership programmes, and we have reviewed the nominations process to build confidence that the decision-making is as inclusive as possible. We have expanded the number of programmes delivered each year to provide more opportunities for colleagues to take part in development opportunities. Where capacity limits mean we are not able to offer places (e.g. to applicants to our leadership programmes), they are offered the opportunity for further development, including coaching, committee observation or alternative internal programmes such as Chrysalis.

Promoting flexible working

In 2019/2020, we introduced a new Flexible Working Policy that placed greater emphasis on the importance and benefits of day-to-day flexibility and local decision making. Through our new policy everyone is encouraged to consider how flexible working can support delivery of the University Strategy and we are monitoring our progress annually through People Culture and Inclusion Advisory Group. We have also made stronger connections between flexible working and our ecological and climate emergency commitments as set out in our Sustainability Sub Strategy to 2025.

Since the new policy was introduced the external environment has changed considerably and the speed with which we have attained the level of flexibility and agility across the University is unprecedented. As we continue to navigate through the pandemic and beyond we will work together to strengthen our flexible working environments and build a shared confidence that they remain inclusive in line with business needs. Through our approach to working with Heads of Departments and Sections to support them in planning for future workforce needs ('People Landscapes') we are supporting managers in their application of the University's flexible working policy.

Equality Objective 2

To ensure equality and diversity in all student outcomes and measures of student success (Education Strategy E02)

Performance Indicator: By 2022, to have no significant (> 5%) equality awarding gaps for measures of student success at institutional level; and to maintain this through the period 2022-25 (University Strategy KPI 6)

Table 2: Undergraduate student good degrees[4] over 5 years (data source: internal source)

	2015-16		2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2019-20	
Characteristic	Good degrees		Good degrees		Good degrees		Good degrees		Good degrees	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
University	1,671	76.3%	2,078	76.7%	2,161	77.0%	2,210	77.2%	2,565	82.20%

---

[4] A good degree is a first or upper second degree classification

Characteristic	2015-16 Good degrees		2016-17 Good degrees		2017-18 Good degrees		2018-19 Good degrees		2019-20 Good degrees	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Mature[5]	164	75.9%	190	68.6% -9.1%	212	71.9% -5.7%	234	71.3% -6.7	303	75.2% -8.1%
Young	1,507	76.3%	1,888	77.7%	1,949	77.6%	1,976	78.0%	2,262	83.3%
Declared Disability	153	80.1%	170	83.3%	227	84.1%	215	78.2%	284	83.3%
No Declared Disability	1,518	75.9% -4.2%	1,908	76.2% -7.1%	1,934	76.3% -7.8%	1,995	77.1% -1.1%	2,281	82.1% -1.2%
Female	989	78.5%	1,203	79.7%	1,245	80.2%	1,246	80.1%	1,391	83.2%
Male	682	73.3% -5.2%	875	73% -6.7%	915	73.1% -7.1	964	73.9% -6.2%	1,173	81% -2.2%
Prefer not to say					1	100.0%			1	100.0%
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (All)	560	66.3% -16.6%	743	66.5% -18.2%	812	68.9% -14.8	888	69.3% -14.8%	1,144	79.5% -5.2%
White (All)	1,064	82.9%	1,294	84.7%	1,310	83.7%	1,274	84.1%	1,371	84.7%
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (UK)	330	73.7% -13.7%	410	68.2% -18.4%	502	71.1% -13.7%	508	68.6% -16.6%	760	79.2% -6.2%
White (UK)	784	87.4%	967	86.4%	997	84.8%	925	85.2%	972	85.4%

[5] According to HESA, undergraduate students are classed as young if they are under 21 years of age on entry, and mature if they are over 25.

Characteristic	2015-16 Good degrees		2016-17 Good degrees		2017-18 Good degrees		2018-19 Good degrees		2019-20 Good degrees	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (Non-UK)	230	57.9% -14.6%	333	64.5% -15.5%	310	65.7% -14.8%	380	70.1% -11.4%	384	80.2% -2.8%
White (Non-UK)	280	72.5%	327	80.0%	313	80.5%	349	81.5%	399	83.0%
POLAR Q4[6]	132	83.5%	197	79.1%	205	77.7% -3.3%	183	74.7% -4.6%	221	77.3% -7.6%
POLAR4 Q5	305	85.0%	332	79.0%	375	81.0%	382	79.3%	426	84.9%

The gap in good degrees between our White and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students decreased slowly from 2016-17 to 2018-19, from 18.4% to 14.8%, and then sharply in 2019-20 to 5.2%. For non-UK Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students, the gap in 2019-20 was 2.8%, compared to 11.4% in the previous year. For UK Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students, the gap in 2019-20 was 6.2%, compared to 16.6% in the previous year. In December 2020 Education Committee evaluated the use of online assessments introduced in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and found that this has had a positive impact on outcomes for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students.

Mature students are less likely to obtain a good degree than our young students, and our male students are less likely to obtain a good degree than our female students.

Although the gap is not significant, students from a POLAR4 Q1 area are less likely to obtain a good degree than students from a POLAR4 Q5 area.

Students with a declared disability are slightly more likely to obtain a good degree than students with no declared disability, although the gap has reduced by 6.6% over the last 3 years. Postgraduate Taught students who declared a disability saw an increase in fail rates from 3.7% to 5.8% (+2.1%) increasing

---

[6] POLAR4 is defined as the proportion of young students across the UK that participate within higher education. Where Q5 represents areas with a higher proportion of higher education participation, and Q1 represents areas with a lower proportion of participation.

the fail gap to 2.8% (+4.6%). Education Committee is investigating this emerging pattern and will outline the support available at the beginning of the academic year 2021/22.

Equality Objective 3

Benchmark our inclusive environment against internal and external recognition frameworks including Vitae, Advance HE, Stonewall, University of Sanctuary, Athena SWAN, Race Equality Charter and Mental Health Charter (People Supporting Strategy to 2025)

Performance Indicator: Sustain our position as a Top 100 Stonewall Employer.

Table 3: Stonewall rankings 2015 - 2020

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

We have achieved Stonewall Top 100 Employer status in four of the last five years with the ranking fluctuating between 194 in 2015 and 57 in 2020[7]. Members of the new Inclusion team, Chairs of the

7 The Stonewall WEI was suspended during the 2020/21 and will be available in 2021/22.

LGBTQ Forum and Essex LGBT Alliance, and our Trans and Sexual Orientation Inclusion Champions meet regularly to discuss and take forward actions to support LGBTQ+ inclusion. This has included for example, purchasing a new Progress Pride flag to be flown during Pride Month in June 2021. The flag includes black and brown stripes to represent Black Asian and Minority Ethnic LGBTQ+ people, along with the colours pink, light blue and white, which are used on the Transgender Pride Flag.

We recognise the impact of the Reindorf Review and Report on our relationship with our LGBTQ+ community. The University's Senate and Council agreed a set of actions in response to the review, including Action 10: To consult with the community and to devise and ensure implementation of a strategy to repair relationships amongst community members; and Action 15: Stonewall has been a valued University partner. We will review how we address the specific issues raised in the report. We want to work with Stonewall and other partners within the context of action 10 to repair relationships.

Table 4: Athena SWAN awards

Bronze	Silver	Applications in Progress	
CSEE	Health and Social Care	SRES	May 2021
EBS	Life Sciences	E15	January 2022
Government	Psychology	ISER	January 2022
Languages and Linguistics		Law	April 2022
Mathematical Sciences		SPAH	April 2022
Sociology			
Economics			
History			
PPS			

Departments that are eligible to hold an Athena SWAN award are supported to apply for recognition by People and Culture, and the University's Athena Swan Peer College Network. Twelve departments have achieved Athena Swan status to date. Five departments have a planned submission date within the next 9 months. Three departments that are not applying for the Athena SWAN award will be participating in the University's internal Diversity Impact Awards scheme: Edge Hotel School, Essex Pathways, and UK Data Archive (UKDA). The scheme, currently paused, recognises a

Department's/School's commitment to addressing inclusivity challenges specific to their area. The Institutional Athena SWAN award is Bronze; work to achieve an Institutional Athena Swan Silver award by 2025 is continuing.

Performance Indicator: To achieve an Institutional Bronze Race Equality Charter award by the end of 2022.

The University signed up to the principles of the Race Equality Charter in May 2017 and we have spent time since then analysing our performance and gathering supporting information before submitting for the award. Our institutional Self-Assessment Team (SAT) and work stream leads are currently leading the preparation of our application and we are on track to apply for a Bronze award in July 2022.

Equality Objective 4

Increase diversity of representation at all levels of the organisation so that the University represents the community its serves and encourages these communities to reach their potential. (People Supporting Strategy 2025)

Performance Indicator: An increase in disclosure rates (target 90%) for all protected characteristics by 2022 and for this to be maintained throughout the period 2022/2025.

Table 5: Disclosure of information by staff as at 13 May 2021

	Sexual orientation	Religion	Race	Disability
Academic staff	39.35%	40.92%	88.39%	68.66%
Professional Services staff	45.84%	46.78%	88.99%	71.28%
Total	**43.08%**	**44.29%**	**88.73%**	**70.16%**

The University asks its community to provide information about themselves to help us to understand the impact of our actions on different groups of people. For legal reasons we have a full dataset of the protected characteristics age and sex. Relatively high rates of non-disclosure for the remaining protected characteristics mean it is difficult to determine where significant under-representation or differential outcomes exist with some disclosure rates being too low to be able to publish meaningful data.

A 'Your Profile Counts' campaign was launched in January 2021 to highlight why disclosure is important, and to encourage staff to do so. Information about Your Profile Counts is now included in

our contracts, pay slip emails and our essential training. Work is also underway to update our recruitment processes; applicants need to complete this information before applying for a vacancy and additional questions will help us to understand their reasons should they choose the option 'prefer not to say'.

Equality Objective 5

Promote our institutional commitment to an inclusive working environment to every member of our community so that we can create a workplace which enables its people to do their best. (People Supporting Strategy to 2025).

Performance Indicator: Evidence 100% completion of new equality, diversity and inclusion training (How We Work at Essex) delivered through induction and annual refresher training for all staff and role holders. This will help colleagues to understand our values, shared responsibilities and to meet legislation requirements.

In 2019-20 the Essential Training policy was revised, and a new consolidated essential training package was launched in December 2020: How We Work at Essex. This is a scenario-based training package which brings together previous stand-alone content and frames it within everyday decisions, experiences and contributions. There is a strong focus on equality, diversity and inclusion recognising the role each of us plays in creating the environment we aspire to provide and be part of.

As part of the changes to our Essential Training policy we recognised that essential training needs to be refreshed and key information updated regularly. The University Steering Group has approved a revised approach to Essential Training from 2020/21. All staff will complete a short booster module each academic year. This will ensure that people remain aware of changes in law and policy and understand their requirements whilst working at Essex, the behaviours expected of them, and the support available to help them to be successful.

Current completion data for Essential Training is provided below with full completion required by all staff by September 2021. We are on track to deliver this target and have had positive feedback from our community about the new essential training.

Staff Group	% of the Essential Training components that have been completed	% of staff who have completed every component of Essential Training.
All Staff	83.88	75.56
Professional Services	96.84	91.95
WHH and UECS	96.91	94.88

Staff Group	% of the Essential Training components that have been completed	% of staff who have completed every component of Essential Training.
All Academic	74.3	62.93
Humanities	66.64	53.83
Social Sciences	74.93	63.11
Science and Health	78.81	68.93

Mechanisms for Identifying and addressing discrimination

We identify potential discrimination in two main ways: proactively through our governance structures; and reactively by responding to issues raised directly by members of our community.

A. Our Education Committee is responsible for overseeing our performance in equality and diversity in respect of student admission, continuation, degree outcomes, student satisfaction and development, and for recommending appropriate and timely actions to University Steering Group (USG), Senate and Council.

B. Our Research Committee is responsible for overseeing our performance in equality and diversity in respect of the research environment, and for recommending appropriate and timely actions to University Steering Group, Senate and Council.

C. The People, Culture and Inclusion Advisory Group (PCIAG) is an advisory group to University Steering Group (USG) and monitors the performance of the University in relation to the equality, diversity and inclusion performance indicators in the People Supporting Strategy, and is responsible for monitoring the impact of the University's budget decisions and financial plans on equality and diversity.

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

E. Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) are completed for University policies and activities to ensure that we are upholding our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion and being ambitious as we strive for change.

F. Engagement with institutional support systems, policies and processes identifies potential discrimination and supports action to address it where appropriate. This includes for example, our Report and Support service, staff and student surveys and representation, EDI charter marks and accreditation.

G. Information and feedback on the staff and student experience is captured through staff networks/forums, student societies, USG Inclusion Champions, Inclusivity Leads, SWIS and People and Culture.

Inclusion Champions

Inclusion Champions are members of USG and have individual action plans setting out the activities and objectives in three main areas: engagement activities, knowledge-building activities, leadership activities. As a part of their development, Inclusion Champions have been engaging with staff across the University in informal, diversity-based, reverse mentoring. This places the Champions as mentees who are mentored by members of our community who are underrepresented or from marginalised groups, providing an opportunity for members of USG to see things from a different perspective. An inclusive leadership programme will be introduced from 2021-22.

USG Inclusion Champions aim to:

- Increase engagement of USG members with under-represented or marginalised groups of staff and students.

- Increase understanding at the senior level of the challenges facing staff and students from under-represented or marginalised groups.

- Support USG members to be active role models for equality, diversity and inclusion within the University community.

- Support USG members to promote the University's equality, diversity and inclusion-related priorities within the University community.

Increase USG support at equality, diversity and inclusion-related events and activities through attendance, welcoming participants, speaking, or engaging in debates/discussions

Inclusivity Leads

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

Inclusivity Lead role includes the following responsibilities:

- be a champion for, and to support the Head of Department in embedding, inclusive practice within the department/school;

- be a central point for information, good practice, and promotion of inclusive practices across the Department/School;

- help students and staff to develop and implement inclusion-related initiatives within the Department/School; and

- share information about what relevant activities and initiatives are taking place across the rest of the University.

Key work and achievements 2019-20

In 2019-20, work to embed equality, diversity and inclusion across University activities continued at pace. Several existing strands of activity were strengthened, and new ones developed and introduced. Progress towards equality objectives has been referred to earlier and further examples are highlighted below

Inclusion Team

In 2019-20 the University reviewed its approach to managing equality, diversity and inclusion and established a new team within People and Culture to reflect the scale of ambition and the pace of change. The team will coordinate the staff and student experience for the first time. The team comprises a Director of Inclusion, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, two Inclusion Managers and the YUFE Strategic Lead (Diversity and Inclusion). It brings together equality, diversity and inclusion expertise in study and work environments, championing our commitment to celebrate diversity, challenge inequality and build an inclusive and diverse environment for every member of our community. The team will be fully operational from August 2021.

Tackling racism

Following the murder of George Floyd in May 2020 and the subsequent global resurgence of Black Lives Matter, the University took a new approach to tackling racism on its campuses in all its forms. A Listening Exercise was launched which asked our current staff, students and alumni about their experience of racism at the University, and what actions they thought were needed to strengthen our inclusive community. An institutional Tackling Racism Working Group (TRWG) has taken a lead role in the University's response to the Listening Exercise and includes representation from the staff and student communities. The TRWG has been instrumental in completing the immediate actions identified through a University Anti-Racism Action Plan and continues to address medium, and long-term actions. For example the Anti-Racism Action Plan includes actions to: address our institutional awarding gap between Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and White students; tackle racist incidents by improving our Report and Support service; decolonise our curriculum; increase access for Black students to postgraduate research opportunities; improve representation within senior leadership roles; diversify recruitment practices; provide comparable equality, diversity and inclusion data sets on an annual basis; and design anti-racism training for all our community.

In support of the TRWG the University sought external perspectives and expertise on the extent to which our current policies, processes and support systems equip us to address experiences of racism when they are reported or identified. For example the University invited Professor Kalwant Bhopal, MBE, Professor of Education and Social Justice and Director of the Centre for Research in Race and Education, University of Birmingham to provide advice to the TRWG on the development of its action plan. The University has engaged with partner institutions through an Equality and Diversity Conference held in March 2021, which specifically focussed on ensuring a joined-up approach to tackling racism in and across our communities. The University is working with several local organisations within the "One Colchester Tackling Racism Sub-Group" to make connections, share best practices and organise community activities.

Departments put in place additional support where a specific need was identified. For example, East 15 Acting School has developed a School Anti-Racism Action Plan, and the School of Health and Social Care has set up a working group to open sensitive, transparent and honest dialogue and identify clear actions in three main areas of health and wellness, education and curriculum, and placement and racism.

Our work to tackle racism aligns with our institutional Race Equality Charter application, and the Race Equality Charter Self-Assessment team works closely with the Tackling Racism Working Group to ensure sustainable change.

Tackling sexual violence

Our work to tackle sexual violence continued. People and Culture, Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service (SWIS), Student Conduct, the Students' Union, and the Centre for Action on Rape and Abuse (CARA) worked in collaboration to devise consent training for all students. We reviewed and updated our Code of Student Conduct, putting in place a full training programme plan for staff with role responsibility, including Harassment Support Workers, or involvement with the Code of Conduct to ensure that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge to undertake their role. This training plan includes training by CARA and Essex Police about responding to disclosures of sexual violence. SWIS has continued to deliver bystander intervention training to staff and students and our Bystander training has been made available as an online resource through Moodle. Communications and External Relations advertises Report and Support to our community through Essex Weekly and Essex Spirit.

Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic

Since March 2020, the University has been operating in the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic with business continuity managed according to three levels of protection; sustained, enhanced, and advanced.

Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) were completed for each stage of protection and the financial sustainability modelling undertaken from March 2019. The EIAs considered possible negative and positive impacts on staff and student groups and where any potential negative impacts were identified, mitigating actions were put in place. The Equality Impact Assessments were developed with input from across the University, including the Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service (SWIS), our staff networks and forums, and Trade Unions. An institutional survey on the changes to working practices captured the early experience of colleagues working remotely, on campus or those on furlough. The feedback from colleagues helped us to put in place more support including access to equipment, support for managers, and wellbeing support.

Policy Development

A new suite of policies is being developed which will focus on the body at work and how we can put in place timely support and guidance for members of our community. For example, we have developed policies for Miscarriage, Stillbirth and Infertility policy; Alcohol Drug and Substance Misuse policy; and Family Leave. New guidance has been developed on the Menopause and on Supporting staff with health conditions and impairments. Future policies will explore age in the workplace and neurodiversity.

University of Sanctuary

In December 2020 the University was recognised as a University of Sanctuary which recognises our commitment to promoting a culture of welcome, safety and inclusion across our campuses and their wider communities. Universities of Sanctuary are part of the UK's City of Sanctuary initiative to ensure our nation is a welcoming place of safety for all. We have committed to funding two Sanctuary Scholarships per year over three years from 2020-21, providing named members of staff in our Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service to initiate contact with sanctuary seeking students. We have a dedicated Student Action for Refugees (STAR) group that campaigns for equal access to higher education and works closely with Refugee Action Colchester to volunteer in the community, and we were commended for our initiatives, teaching, and research that exposes the wider University student body to sanctuary issues and engages them directly with the work of local organisations in the sector.

We have a long-standing commitment to supporting the Council for At Risk Academics (CARA) and are continuing to use our staff and student networks to enable our community to help CARA scholars and their families. We encourage our community to get involved by contributing time, energy and expertise to CARA as an Adviser, Champion, Student Ambassador or volunteers.

Gypsies, Travellers, Roma, Showmen and Boaters into Higher Education Pledge

In April 2021, we signed the Gypsy, Traveller, Roma, Showman and Boaters (GTRSB) into Higher Education Pledge to encourage more young people from these communities to come to Essex. The Office for Students has highlighted that pupils from Gypsy, Traveller and Roma backgrounds (which includes New Traveller, Showmen and Boater communities) do least well at school compared with all other ethnic groups and in turn this reduces their chances of going on to Higher Education.

We have committed to the following actions:

- Raising awareness of the history and culture of the different groups to help counteract stereotypes and break down barriers.

- Providing advice to teachers on how to support students from the GTRSB communities into Higher Education.

- Appointing a Student Ambassador to act as a role model and mentor.

- Having a member of staff specifically responsible for supporting students from the GTRSB communities.

- Collaborating with the 'Make Happen' team, whose role is to inspire young people to consider Higher Education or a Degree Apprenticeship.

YUFE

We have continued to lead the Diversity and Inclusivity taskforce in YUFE (Young Universities for the Future of Europe) during the pilot phase (December 2019 – November 2022).

The YUFE D&I Strategy, developed over a six-month period between December 2019 and May 2020 (Months 1 – 6) through a series of WP7 (Diversity and Inclusivity) taskforce meetings and consultation across all YUFE work packages, seeks to provide all YUFE partner institutions with a clear vision for working towards creating truly inclusive environments for all. It is ambitious and challenging and requires institutions to be open to change, to prepare themselves for having difficult conversations and to be resilient in the face of resistance to change.

Throughout the development phase, it became clear that every YUFE institution is at a different point in their journey in relation to embedding diversity and inclusivity and institutions would need to work towards delivering the strategy in a way, and at a pace, that suits their own institutional context and setting. The action plan that accompanies the Strategy was developed with this in mind and provides a flexible roadmap for institutional change.

Following approval of the YUFE D&I Strategy by the Strategy Board on 9 July 2020, WP7 started to work on developing the YUFE-level actions identified in the action plan and WP7 taskforce members started conversations within their own institutions about which actions to prioritise and how to go about delivering them.

The Strategy has five over-arching objectives, developed from the WP7 aims and objectives as stated in the original YUFE proposal. They are:

I.   To build cultural intelligence and knowledge of diversity and inclusivity across all YUFE partner institutions

II.   To create structures and policies across the YUFE network that support delivery of systemic change

III. To create a YUFE diversity and inclusivity profile

IV. To create truly inclusive environments in which the lived experience of staff and students matches the YUFE values

V.   To ensure that all staff and students have an equal opportunity to participate and develop into role models and mentors

The Work Packages led and co-led by Essex are making good progress, despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, and there is emerging evidence of the impact of their work on both individuals and institutions.

Engagement with staff and students

Listening to and engaging with our communities is at the heart of inclusion, and we will continue to work closely with our members to understand the current issues and challenges facing them. Our employee voice and student voice have continued to develop particularly throughout the pandemic, providing vital feedback on the staff and student experience and enabling us to act when needed. A priority in the People Supporting Strategy and the Education Strategy is to find ways to strengthen engagement even further, working with our staff and student networks and the Students' Union, and drawing on external expertise. For example, we are engaged in discussions that are taking place across the sector on the role of network Chairs and members.

Emerging challenges and trends

In addition to areas already covered in this report there are a number of emerging issues and challenges that we are currently addressing so that we can be confident that we are compliant with the law, that we are living our values, and that, where appropriate, we are responding in a timely way to changes in the external environment. Future actions are set out in our institutional-level action plans and progress will be reported and reviewed regularly through our committees.

Accessibility

Accessibility regulations for public sector bodies (2018) require us to take reasonable steps to ensure digital interfaces, printed materials and marketing activities are accessible to people with disabilities, and as many people as possible. We have published our compliance statement on our Diversity and Inclusion directory pages, and work continues through our Professional Services teams to support colleagues to make materials and content accessible. For example, we are producing guidance documents, templates and information webinars for our community as well as developing our use of technologies. This area of work is ongoing, and as we develop new approaches to how we use our campuses ('Smart Working at Essex') we will need to continue to work with staff to ensure that the content we produce as a University is as accessible to as many people as possible.

Domestic abuse

In October 2020 Universities UK published 'Continuing the conversation: responding to domestic violence and technology mediated abuse in higher education communities during the Covid-19 pandemic' and called upon universities to implement effective prevention and support for survivors of domestic abuse. This includes having policies and procedures in place to respond to domestic abuse, having champions within senior leadership, engaging men in the conversation and effective campaigns to enhance awareness and support survivors. We will need to consider how we ensure our policies

and procedures are equipped to respond to the needs of survivors of domestic abuse, and to learn from others in the HE sector as to how they are addressing these issues. (PSS01)

Academic freedom and freedom of speech

The Law requires all those concerned in the governance of universities to take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech within the law is secured for members, students, employees and visiting speakers. (Section 43 of the Education (No.2) Act 1986).   The publication of the Review of the circumstances resulting in and arising from the cancellation of the Centre for Criminology seminar on Trans Rights, Imprisonment and the Criminal Justice System, scheduled to take place on 5 December 2019, and the arrangements for speaker invitations to the Holocaust Memorial Week event on the State of Antisemitism Today, scheduled for 30 January 2020 has brought these issues to the fore, as well as the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill introduced to Parliament in May 2021.

The University's Senate and Council agreed a set of actions in response to the Reindorf Review. These include the following actions:

Action 4. Implement a range of communications (including an email sent to Heads of Departments and Heads of Sections, Monday Management Meeting members and all staff) to reiterate the importance, and mandatory nature, of the University's external speaker notification procedure. Ensure this is included in all relevant essential and additional training. All staff to confirm via iTrent (or suitable alternative mechanism) that they have understood the requirement and whether they require further clarification or training. Work with the Students' Union to extend training to students where appropriate. Review existing procedure to ensure it is explicit in relation to blacklisting/noplatforming

Action 5. Review and amend as necessary: a. the External Speaker Code of Practice; b. the external speaker notification form and review process; and c. the system of block-booking rooms Secure specialist professional legal advice as necessary to assist in complex or difficult external speaker reviews and compliance requirements in relation to any proposal to rescind an approved invitation to an external speaker.

Action 12. Through an ongoing broad range of communications, reiterate to staff and students: a. the University's commitment to providing a supportive and inclusive environment within which people can expect to learn, grow and develop through challenge; b. that this means that they may encounter ideas or arguments which may be experienced as objectionable or offensive; c. but that a line will be drawn at conduct which is unlawful or contrary to the University's policies

The implementation of these actions will be informed by legal advice to ensure that we are compliant with the current law in relation to academic freedom and freedom of speech.

Admission of Students

There are some emerging trends in terms of our student population, in particular when looking at the proportion of mature students, both undergraduate and postgraduate. (KPI6)

Our overall mature undergraduate student population has been declining steadily since 2016-17 and has fallen by 6.7% over the last four years. In 2019-20, mature students accounted for 17.1% of our new undergraduate student population. This echoes a national decline in mature entrants since the introduction of tuition fees in 2012-13.

The proportion of Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic new undergraduate UK students has remained steady over the four year period, 28.3% in 2016-17 and 29.2% in 2019-20. In contrast, the proportion of Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic new postgraduate UK students is 10.3% in 2019-20. We know there is work to be done in this area in terms of supporting UK Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic students, and the Transitions and Transformations project will be looking specifically at increasing access to postgraduate research student for UK Black students.

The proportion of new female postgraduate students has declined slightly from 60.0% in 2016-17 to 57.8% in 2019-20. In contrast, the proportion of female undergraduate students has remained steady over the four year period, 55.1% in 2016-17 and 54.6% in 2019-20.

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

	2016-17		2017-18		2018-19		2019-20	
Characteristic	Good degrees		Good degrees		Good degrees		Good degrees	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Mature	1181	23.8%	1015	20.2%	946	18.4%	926	17.1%
Young	3780	76.2%	4003	79.8%	4205	81.6%	4489	82.9%
Disability declared	473	9.5%	561	11.2%	651	12.6%	678	12.5%
No disability declared	4488	90.5%	4457	88.8%	4499	87.4%	4737	87.5
Female	2733	55.1%	2725	54.3%	2714	52.7%	2954	54.6%
Male	2226	44.9%	2226	44.9%	2289	45.6%	2435	47.3%
Not declared	2	0%	5	0.1%	3	0.1%	5	0.1%

Characteristic	2016-17 Good degrees		2017-18 Good degrees		2018-19 Good degrees		2019-20 Good degrees	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
White UK	1982	44.0%	1855	40.0%	1927	40.8%	1945	39.0%
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic UK	1275	28.3%	1395	30.0%	1472	31.2%	1455	29.2%
White Non-UK	545	12.0%	569	12.0%	614	13.0%	747	15.0%
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Non-UK	711	15.8%	807	17.0%	709	15.0%	837	16.8%
POLAR 4 Q1	492	14.6%	530	16.6%	498	14.0%	581	16.4%
POLAR 4 Q5	805	24.0%	775	22.8%	855	24.1%	749	21.1%

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

Characteristic	2016-17 Good degrees		2017-18 Good degrees		2018-19 Good degrees		2019-20 Good degrees	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Mature	615	37.4%	946	46.3%	925	42.9%	606	36.1%
Young	1031	62.6%	1097	53.7%	1230	57.1%	1073	63.9%
Disability declared	160	9.7%	148	7.2%	132	6.1%	155	9.2%
No disability declared	1486	90.3%	1895	92.8%	2023	93.9%	1524	90.8%
Female	988	60.0%	1229	60.2%	1224	56.8%	971	57.8%
Male	657	39.9%	814	39.8%	928	43.1%	705	42.0%

Characteristic	2016-17 Good degrees		2017-18 Good degrees		2018-19 Good degrees		2019-20 Good degrees	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Not declared	1	0.1%	0	0.0%	3	0.1%	3	0.2%
White UK	481	30.2%	463	28.9%	461	26.9%	403	25%
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic UK	166	10.4%	181	11.2%	183	10.7%	168	10.3%
White Non-UK	377	23.7%	351	21.9%	329	19.1%	286	17.7%
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Non-UK	568	35.7%	610	38.0%	744	43.3%	759	47.0%
POLAR 4 Q1	122	16.3%	114	16.1%	112	15.8%	122	18.9%
POLAR 4 Q5	177	23.7%	159	22.5%	149	21.0%	171	26.5%

Summary

This report recognises that we are continuing to make progress against the equality objectives as set out in our People Supporting Strategy to 2025. It acknowledges that we are very much on a journey and are still building an inclusive community. In 2021/22 we will continue to work towards the goals we have set ourselves, listening to and hearing our communities so that we all understand when and how members feel they experience and can contribute to our enabling environment. These conversations will be open and honest, help us to take action when needed and make visible progress quickly.

The external context within which we are currently working – navigating the COVID-19 pandemic and the Brexit transition period will present additional challenges to which we will need to respond. We will continue to monitor the progress we make on the equality objectives, reporting to Education Committee, Research Committee, People Culture and Inclusion Advisory Group, University Steering Group and Council on specific areas to provide assurance or to set out future ambition.