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Introduction

I am delighted to write the introduction for the University’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy. This Strategy has been in development for a number of months, and through the hard work and dedication of our EDI team and colleagues across the University, the finished document provides us with a way forward until 2022.

As Director of People and Culture (P&C), I have lead responsibility for this strategy, and its ambitions and focus combine with the wider University People and Culture strategy published in 2019. However, achieving this strategy requires much more than the responsibility I have as P&C Director; more than the University Council overseeing its successful implementation; and more than the work of the EDI team – it needs each of us to play a role in championing and supporting positive outcomes for everyone. As staff and students, the strategy both applies to us all and is owned by us all.

The Strategy provides a framework for achieving the delivery of positive outcomes relating to EDI at Ulster, and supports the core aims of the University’s ‘5&50 Strategy’. We maintain our commitment to meeting all statutory requirements in relation to EDI – such as our ‘Equality Scheme’, our ‘Disability Action Plan’ and our ‘Article 55 Affirmative Action Programme’ - but the strategy seeks to go further than compliance - placing diversity and inclusion at the heart of our culture, supporting us in our endeavours to reflect the society we serve, and providing a barometer for excellence.

Ultimately, the strategy’s success will be determined by the extent to which it acts as a catalyst and advocate for change that will enable the achievement of real and lasting positive outcomes for colleagues and students. I look forward to the successful delivery of the Strategy and thank you all in advance for your support.

Damian McAlister
Director of People and Culture
Section 1: EDI and you

The following definitions have been adopted for the purposes of this strategy:

**Equality** is about making sure people are treated fairly within the legislation. Equality is not about treating everyone in the same way, but it recognises that people have different needs and these can be met in different ways, to provide equal access to opportunities. Equality focuses on those areas covered by law that have been put in place to prevent people from being treated unfavourably on a range of specific factors, i.e. race, gender, disability, age, religious belief, political opinion, marital status, dependants, sexual orientation etc.

**Diversity** is about respecting and valuing difference in individuals. A diversity approach aims to recognise, value and manage difference in individuals and to positively strive to meet the needs of different people.

Diversity is the manifestation of all the ways in which people differ, and all the characteristics that make one individual or group different from another.

**Inclusion** involves recognising difference, providing flexibility and choice - not uniformity and treating everyone identically. Equality, diversity and inclusion are separate but interconnected concepts. They need to be progressed together. Equal access to opportunities is key to developing and engaging diversity of thought, to enable people to bring their whole selves to work.

- **Equality**
  - Equal access to opportunities
  - Everyone is individual and different
  - A sense of belonging; feeling respected and valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best at work or study
Section 2: Key equality challenges

Our Equality Scheme demonstrates commitment to equality of opportunity for nine different categories of people. These are:

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- men and women generally;
- persons with a disability and persons without; and
- persons with dependants and persons without.

Without detracting from or subsuming ongoing work to support our Equality Scheme, this strategy focuses on our key equality challenges as they relate to the UK Higher Education context (i.e. regarding race, gender and disability). However, we remain cognisant of the particular challenges faced outside our sector, within a Northern Ireland context, such as community background and advancing LGBT+ equality.

Our equality data highlights the diversity of the University’s 2300 staff and 24000+ students. Whilst our profile is broadly reflective of local/regional demographics, we see it as being of significance that we are more diverse in terms of our Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) representation, especially given that our local community is often described as one torn by a history/culture of conflict. At 5% in 2018, this is more than double that of the Northern Ireland population (as described in the NI Census 2011).

Our staff community 2018

2290 staff across 4 campuses
in Northern Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BME</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability declared</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46-55yrs</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 1.4% increase in female staff since 2012
- 34.8% staff from outside the UK (an increase of 4.6% since 2012)
- 7.6% increase in female professors since 2012

Source: CoreHR, EO Data, 6 February 2018
However, a closer look at the data highlights some of the key equality challenges facing the University: these are consistent with the UK Higher Education sector. Occupational segregation is endemic within the staff community. For example, despite the fact that 55% of our staff are women, only 34% (53) of our professors and 35% (6) of our senior officers are women. 92% (11) of the BME professors are male, 100% of our senior officers are White and 99% of female professional and support staff are White. 43% of disabled staff are in academic/research roles.

For staff, our key challenge is to address the underrepresentation of women, disabled and BME staff in senior and non-traditional roles; to identify barriers to and within academia and address underlying causes (e.g. breaks in the student pipeline, academic flight, availability of flexible working opportunities, access to training and development, access to promotion opportunities, undervaluing some types of jobs, historical and cultural factors).

35% of senior staff (SLT) are female
34% of professors are female
58% of academic, research, technical, scientific and manual staff are male
62% of professional and support staff are white women
99% of female professional and support staff are white
49% of non-professorial academic staff are female
9% of non-professorial academic staff are BME (69% of these are male)
8% of professors are BME
0.7% are BME and female
43.5% of disabled staff are in academic/research roles

Source: CoreHR, EO Data, 6 February 2016
Leaky Pipe Lines

Our student data indicates that there are leaks in our student pipeline (i.e. students with certain characteristics fail to continue progression towards academic careers). Whilst the representation of female students increases between undergraduate and postgraduate levels (from 53.5% to 66.5%), only 49% of non-professorial academic staff are female. Whilst student BME representation increases significantly between undergraduate and postgraduate levels, only 9% of non-professorial academic staff are BME. The representation of disabled students decreases between undergraduate and postgraduate levels and academic careers.

Our student community AY2016/17

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>24229 students across 4 campuses in Northern Ireland (inc. ADDL)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>56.4% are female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1% are BME</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.9% declared a disability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90% are aged over 21 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6% of UG students are from outside the UK (a decrease of 0.7 since 2010/11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender

- 53.5% of first degree undergraduate students are female
- 66.5% of PG students are female
- 67.1% of PG Taught students are female
- 51.2% of PG Research students are female
- 49% of non-professorial academic staff are female
- 34% of professors are female

Source: Banner and Core HR EO data, 6 February 2018

What we know

Young women are now 35 per cent more likely to go to university than men. If this differential growth carries on unchecked, then girls born this year will be 75% more likely to go to university than their male peers.

(HEPI Report 84, 2016)

The proportion of students disclosing as disabled has nearly doubled since 2003/04. Disability disclosure was lowest among postgraduate students.


There are substantial gaps in progression of white males from disadvantaged backgrounds to higher education.

(The 2015 Higher Education Green paper, cited by ECU)
EDI Strategy

**BME**

- 3.2% of students at first degree undergraduate are BME
- 10.6% of students at PG level are BME
- 9.7% of PG Taught students are BME
- 9% of non-professorial academic staff are BME
- 8% of professors are BME

**Disability**

- 10.9% of students at first degree undergraduate level are disabled
- 6.3% of students at PG level are disabled
- 5.6% of students at PG Taught are disabled
- 10.4% of students at PG Research level are disabled
- 4.4% of non-professorial academic staff are disabled
- 1.3% of professors are disabled

Source: Banner Student EO Data AY 16/17 and Core HR EO data, 6 February 2018
Student attainment/achievement AY2016/17

Key equality challenges also persist in relation to academic achievement/success. Whilst female students performed as well as male students in achieving a ‘good degree’ (i.e. a first class or 2:1 degree), UK domiciled White and non-UK domiciled BME students both outperformed UK domiciled BME students (i.e. an ethnicity attainment gap). 60.6% of disabled students obtained a ‘good degree’, compared with 69.2% of non-disabled students.

What we know

Women generally achieve fewer first class degrees than men.  
(ECU conference 2008)

While overall proportions receiving a First or 2:1 have increased over the last 8 years, there continues to be a considerable gap between the proportion of white British students receiving these degree classifications compared to UK-domiciled students from minority ethnic groups. This degree attainment gap has remained nearly static over the last ten years. In 2012/13, 57.1% of UK-domiciled BME students received a top degree, compared with 73.2% of White British students – a gap of 16.1%.  
(ECU Webpage 2016)

Graduates with disabilities tend to do slightly less well than those without reported disabilities.  
(HEFCE Report 2015/21)

45.5% of male students and 45.5% of female students obtained a first class or 2:1 degree

60.6% of disabled students obtained a first class or 2:1 degree

26.7% of BME students obtained a first class or 2:1 degree compared with 48.1% of White students

40.1% of UK domiciled BME students obtained a first class or 2:1 degree compared with

55.1% of non-UK domiciled BME students

58.2% of UK domiciled white students

Source: Banner Student EO Data AY 16/17
UK domiciled student leavers AY 2016/17 in full-time employment

In terms of employment, the Destinations of Leavers from the Higher Education 2016/17 Survey suggests equal proportions of UK domiciled male and female leavers in employment after 6 months (i.e. they are employed in almost equal rates). However, there are noticeable differences in the proportions of UK domiciled BME and White respondents, and disabled and non-disabled respondents in full-time employment after 6 months.

For students, our key challenge is to explain why these differences in student transitions/academic progression, degree attainment and employment outcome are occurring; to identify what we are doing well so that we can address underlying causes (e.g. examine the link between ‘discipline’, student transitions and attainment).

Whilst we are unique by context, our key equality challenges are no different to those of the Higher Education (HE) sector in the UK in general.

76.4% of all Ulster leavers responded to the 2016/17 Leavers Survey

Of those, 67.8% reported that they were in full-time employment 6 months after leaving

68.5% of all white UK domiciled respondents reported that they were in full time employment after 6 months COMPARED with 56.4% of all UK domiciled BME respondents

68% of male UK domiciled and 68% of female UK domiciled BME respondents reported that they were in full time employment after 6 months

57.6% of all disabled UK domiciled respondents reported that they were in full time employment after 6 months COMPARED with 69.0% of all UK non-disabled respondents

Source: Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education 2016/17 Survey
Section 3: Key EDI drivers

Our aim is to ensure that every student and member of staff has the opportunity and encouragement to excel within a supportive and welcoming environment; that their lives are enriched by their experience of different cultures, beliefs, abilities and values. We hope that by recognising, respecting and valuing these differences, and adopting more diverse perspectives, our staff and students can become effective local and global citizens and be ambassadors for the University. We recognise that EDI is central to achieving excellence throughout all of our functions, shaping staff and student experience. As such, EDI is already enshrined in our core values, our vision, our mission, our 5&50 Strategic Plan, our strategic priorities and our policies. These are our key EDI drivers.
Our strategic priorities:
- Civic contribution
- Academic excellence
- Global vision
- Operational excellence

Our policies:
Equality of opportunity is currently promoted and distributed through a number of interlocking policy strands:

- **Equality Scheme** - promoting equality of opportunity and good relations
- **Disability Action Plan** - promoting positive attitudes towards disabled people and encouraging their participation in public life
- **Article 55 Affirmative Action programme** - ensuring fair participation in relation to community background
- **Student Good Relations Policy and action plan** - promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group
- **Equal Pay action plan** - mitigating pay differences across gender, ethnicity, disability and community background groups
- **Athena SWAN action plan** - supporting and developing the careers of women in STEM at Ulster
- **People and Culture Strategy** - promoting an engaged, diverse workforce that is reflective of the communities we serve
- **Global Engagement Strategy** - to develop a global culture at Ulster
- **Learning and Teaching Strategy** - guiding our ambition for academic excellence in teaching and the student experience to encourage sustained creativity, interdisciplinary thinking and international perspective
- **Research and Impact Strategy** - supporting Ulster’s vision to deliver globally significant research with local relevance, making a positive contribution to society as a whole

This list is not exhaustive.

Monitoring our staff and student data is also fundamental to ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion at Ulster. It is a requirement of the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland that we use our equal opportunities monitoring data to inform the development of policies, to embed, or ‘mainstream’ equality.
Section 4: Strategic ambitions

The EDI strategy provides a unified/cohesive institutional framework for inclusion, assimilating and reconciling existing equality work with local legislative requirements. It takes into consideration the current University context and demographics, higher education equality trends, and feedback from staff/students on how they perceive EDI in the workplace.

The EDI strategy has three ambitions. These are to:

1. **encourage and engage the most diverse perspectives;**
   - embed equality, diversity and inclusion in delivering our key strategic objectives/our vision and mission.

2. **deliver fair access, equality of opportunity and enhance participation;**
   - ensure an exceptional staff and student experience for all
   - embed equality and diversity in staff and student recruitment
   - engender work-life balance, encourage flexible/alternative working patterns
   - consider the relationship between policy and career trajectories - to inspire success.

3. **nurture/cultivate an enriched environment where any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported and valued;**
   - recognise the value of each individual, enabling and supporting them to achieve their maximum potential
   - build mutual respect between individuals and groups based on understanding and valuing of diversity, and on shared respect for equality - ‘a place for everyone’
   - inspire a greater sense of cohesion/belonging/community - enhance networking and consultation opportunities to enable individuals to express views without fear of retribution, to support our ‘shared’ future.
Section 5: Priorities

The following priorities will assist us to realise our strategic ambitions:

- **Identify, acknowledge and address (unconscious) bias in the workplace**
  - Introduce mandatory unconscious bias training for all staff

- **Address gender role segregation within the institution**
  - Review/improve attitudes and experiences to promotion for academic and professional support staff

- **Advance race equality at Ulster and build intercultural awareness**
  - Improve the representation, progression and success of BME staff and students
  - Support international staff and students (actions other than those included in the Global Engagement Strategy)

- **Advance Disability Equality at Ulster**
  - Improve participation of and attitudes towards disabled people through a refreshed Disability Action Plan

- **Become an LGBT+ inclusive employer**
  - Subscribe to Stonewall’s Diversity Champion’s Programme

- **Continue to meet statutory requirements relating to equality of opportunity and good relations**
  - Go beyond mere compliance
  - Maintain a watching brief on, and respond to key Northern Ireland employment equality issues
  - Develop our Article 55 Affirmative Action Programme to reflect changes in community background

- **Develop smarter evidence of equality gaps to guide us to effective change/continuous improvement**
  - Recognise the range of needs of our diverse student population and integrate them into governance and practice of student education
  - Develop and present an Annual EDI report to Council
  - Increase the variety of key equality data available internally and on our website

- **Develop an EDI action plan to support the delivery of the EDI strategy, facilitate SMART, ‘evidence based’ planning and policy development and provide a structure for assessing effectiveness in addressing our key equality challenges and priorities.**
Section 6: Strategy to action

A new EDI team sits within the People and Culture directorate. This team will work with and support colleagues to bring this strategy to life.

This year we will establish an EDI Strategy Implementation Group to develop and review progress on the EDI action plan. The EDI team will ensure that progress against the strategy is shared with key stakeholders through the Section 75 Annual Progress Report, and more generally via internal channels. We encourage any colleagues who wish to support us in overachieving our EDI ambitions to make contact with us.
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