

Appendix 2

Examples of activities and civic contributions across the University, which have helped to promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

Widening Access and Participation

The government regulates the University's Widening Access and Participation Plan, which includes an account of expenditures, projects and plans to widen access and participation to groups that are underrepresented in Higher Education (HE). A copy of the Widening Access and Participation Annual Review can be found on the Ulster University [webpages](#). This showcases a wide range of engagements, activities, and events the Educational Partnerships and Policy and Community Partnership teams have undertaken with widening access schools and community partners.

Athena Swan and the Returning Carers' Scheme (RCS)

The University currently holds 16 School and Faculty Awards and one Professional, Technical and Operational (PTO) Award, recognising the University's gender equality efforts and the promotion of inclusive working practices. Notably, the School of Nursing and Paramedic Science recently received an Athena Swan Departmental Gold award, making them the first nursing school in the UK to achieve this. Ulster University has also completed the pilot scheme for PTO Athena Swan, winning its first Bronze PTO Athena Swan award, with the Chief People Officer's office preparing for a PTO Athena Swan submission towards the end of 2025.

Additionally, Ulster University has supported 16 people for the Aurora leadership programme for women in 2024 to 2025.

The University's Athena Swan committee is preparing an Institutional Athena Swan Gold Award for submission in early 2027, in which the RCS plays an important role. The RCS has been continuously supporting staff in both academic and PTO roles (44 in total awarded since the launch of the scheme, seven from the previous 12 months). This scheme opens for application twice a year for carers returning from their leave with opportunities of their choosing that can potentially advance their career perspective once it is approved by their Heads of School or department and a designated panel. A number of success stories based on interviews of past awardees of the scheme have been included on the [RCS website](#) to encourage more staff to apply. Besides the existing RCS, a new one-to-one Parental Coaching opportunity was launched in 2024 and so far, the EDI department has funded seven employees both academic and non-academic to participate.

Diversity Networks

WoMen's Network

The Women's Network is now in its sixth year of operation and continues to grow in membership with support from internal and external partners. Membership numbers are steadily increasing, with 585 members, including academics, professional support staff, and PhD researchers.

The Women's Network continues as a member of Women in Business (WIB) and currently has 245 WIB members. The network's institutional membership offers staff individual access to an online dashboard to view upcoming events and resources, as well as offering discounted rates in the Centre of Learning and the opportunity to host WIB events.

In June 2024, the Women's Network held an online conference entitled 'Overcoming Your Inner Critic' in partnership with Ulster University Wellbeing and the Faculty of Computing and Built Environment. The conference focused on imposter syndrome and identifying practical tools and strategies to overcome times of self-doubt and build self-belief. Tina Calder, CEO of Excalibur Press, discussed her award-winning journey in journalism and her personal struggle overcoming that feeling of doubt and worth. This was followed by a panel discussion with Paul O'Brien, Head of Research and Innovation at BT, Treasa Rice, CEO of Glow NI, and Suzanne Bell, Timetabling and Planning Manager. A total of 115 members attended the conference and commented on the usefulness of the event in providing tips and tools to manage this issue.

Also in June, the Women's Network organised a summer social event at The Dark Horse, generously donated by owner Mr William Jack MBE. Over 70 members enjoyed this opportunity to connect with other members.

In October 2024, the Women's Network sought members' views to inform plans for 2024 to 2025 and beyond. This was led by the Co-Chairs to inform their three-year term, emphasising the importance of Ulster University's staff networks in encouraging diverse voices and personal development in the workplace.

In November 2024, the Women's Network participated in White Ribbon Day, hosting a stand in the main foyer of the Belfast Campus. This event provided an opportunity to meet with students and staff, raise awareness, and encourage the signing of the White Ribbon pledge. The Women's Network also met with the White Ribbon CEO Tahnee McCorry, to emphasise Ulster University's White Ribbon Accreditation with Dean of EDI, Professor Mary Hannon-Fletcher and Chief People Officer, Damian McAlister.

December 2024 featured a Chair Yoga session with Natalie Devoy from Nomad Yoga, who guided participants through a gentle form of yoga practised while seated, followed by Q and A on how to look after yourself at this time of year. As the holiday break approached, the Women's Network invited members and prospective members to an informal Christmas Social, celebrating the end of the year with warmth, laughter, and good company.

In March 2025, the Women's Network hosted a successful coffee morning at the Belfast campus, providing a relaxed setting for members to meet and for prospective members to make connections. Similar events are planned for the Derry~Londonderry and Coleraine campuses.

Also in March, the Women's Network spoke at the SistersIN event hosted by the Ulster University Business School. This gathering allowed young women from local schools to explore their potential and take confident strides towards their future aspirations.

International Women's Day (IWD) 2025 was celebrated with a dynamic panel event organised by the Ulster University Women's Network in partnership with the Ulster University Business School at the Belfast campus during March. The panel featured speakers, journalist and presenter Babita Sharma, Andrea Begley, disability rights activist, and Dr Fiona Bloomer, researcher and campaigner, and was facilitated by Professor Joan Ballantine. The Women's Network notes its thanks to the panel members for their openness, thoughtfulness, and willingness to share real experiences, creating an engaging and inspiring atmosphere for everyone involved. Special thanks are also due to Professor Gillian Armstrong MBE, Pro Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean of The Ulster Business School for her continued support of this annual event.

The room was alive with energy, filled with over sixty women and men who engaged in authentic conversations, shared diverse perspectives, and formed meaningful connections with every campus represented. The event provided a platform for discussing critical issues related to gender equality, including the importance of allyship, the challenges faced by women in various sectors, and the strategies needed to overcome these obstacles.

The panel discussion was followed by interactive sessions where attendees could ask questions, share their experiences, and network with each other. The diversity of perspectives and the depth of the conversations highlighted the collective commitment to driving change and making a tangible impact.

At the IWD event, the Women's Network launched the allyship campaign, 'Creating Allyship', to actively encourage allyship. This involves engaging male colleagues as allies, encouraging their participation in the network's events, and fostering an environment where they can support and advocate for gender equality. This

campaign centres on the network's annual theme of accelerating action to sustain the momentum towards achieving gender equality.

The Women's Network's mentoring programme for 2024 to 2025 remains open to all members, promoting cross-departmental connections and offering tailored, one-on-one mentorship experiences. Since its re-launch, the programme has 25 active mentors and 12 active mentoring relationships.

From March 2025 onwards, the Women's Network has an overarching theme of 'Accelerate Action' in keeping with IWD. At the current rate of progress, it will take until 2158, which is roughly five generations from now, to reach full gender parity, according to data from the World Economic Forum. Focusing on the need to accelerate action emphasises the importance of the network taking swift and decisive steps to achieve gender equality. The Women's Network calls for increased momentum and urgency in addressing the systemic barriers and biases that women face, both in personal and professional spheres.

NeuroNetwork

Ulster University's NeuroNetwork was established on World Autism Day, 4 April 2024, for staff and research students to come together to address issues and further inclusivity around neurodiversity, and to embed a neuroinclusive culture. The new network aligns with Ulster's diversity networks, offering opportunities to raise awareness, increase understanding, celebrate neurodiversity, boost employment, and engage in impactful, collaborative initiatives.

The network has been set up for neurodivergent staff, research students, allies and anyone who has an interest in and a desire to further neuroinclusion within the University. It has set up a committee which has representation from all sections of the University, including academic, professional services, administrative and technical staff, a PhD and placement student and a post-doctoral student. Of the thirteen members of the committee at least four are also openly neurodivergent ensuring that work is genuinely informed by the community it seeks to represent.

Members of the network committee set up and ran three 'quiet rooms' during welcome week and week one on the Belfast campus. There is information about these on the [University's NeuroNetwork](#) webpage.

In terms of Neurodiversity week celebration events, alongside the offering from the central Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) team, the network also hosted a variety of events to mark neurodiversity celebration week:

- Games Café on the Coleraine Campus, 19 March
- Staff Social Lunch on the Derry-Londonderry Campus, 21 March

- AD(H)D: The Lived Experience and What Neurotypicals Need to Know event, 24 March online
- Learn over Lunch: Understanding Dyslexia, 25 March on the Belfast Campus
- Autistic Women and Late Diagnosis, 31 March online

LGBT+ Network

Since April 2024, the LGBT+ Staff Network has engaged in a number of activities that highlight the University's commitment to providing a safe space for LGBT+ Staff (and allies) to connect and share their experiences whilst also promoting issues related to the LGBT+ community to the wider Ulster University community.

On 7 June 2024, the network hosted their one-day conference 'Queer/ing Research' that offers postgraduate researchers the opportunity to present queer research and provide them with experience planning and managing a conference.

On 19 June 2024, the network hosted the third Tenx9 storytelling event in the Black Box. Nine members each shared a 10-minute story based on the theme of 'Love'.

On 24 June 2024, the Research Insights blog partnered with the network to centre queer-focused research. During their Research Hour segment to highlight the range of research projects seeking to support members of the LGBTQIA+ community and promote equality and diversity within society.

On 27 July 2024, as part of the University's Belfast Pride activities, the network hosted a breakfast on the Belfast campus with 40 people attending. During the parade, the network hosted lunch in an accessible area on the Belfast campus to enable 30 people to observe and enjoy the parade from a quiet and comfortable space. On 3 August 2024, the network and the University collaborated to organize the attendance of 20 people at Causeway Pride. On 24 August 2024, 25 people attended the Foyle Pride parade representing both the network and the wider University community.

The LGBT+ Network partnered with the University's School of Arts and Humanities and Dublin Pride to stage a two-day showing of the play 'Nancy Boy Shenanigans' at the Derry Playhouse on 22 and 23 August 2024.

On 27 November 2024, Julie Tracey, an Ulster University Lecturer in Nursing, delivered an online presentation covering her research that focused on the experience of parents from LGBTQIA+ community in relation to the health visiting service.

On 4 December 2024, as part of the University-wide 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence campaign, Tracy Miller delivered a presentation on her PhD research focusing on the gender inequalities faced by the transgender and non-binary communities in Northern Ireland.

February is LGBT History Month and 2025's theme was on 'claiming our past, celebrating our present and creating our future'. The LGBT+ Staff Network partnered with the library to create a series of physical displays (by staff and students) visualizing words and images of encouragement to members of the LGBT+ community in all campus libraries. This ran throughout February. The network also asked members to contribute to an online creative space seeking similar messages. At the time of this report, the network is in the process of collating all the responses.

As part of LGBT History month, the network ran two further events. The first, 25 February, was a hybrid webinar with Jude Copeland, a local LGBT+ advocate and Ulster alumni talking about the history of the transgender community in NI and Wilma Creith. The second, on the last day of LGBT History month, was an in-person viewing of the movie 'Pride' that charts the relationship between the striking Welsh mining community and London-based LGBT activists.

BAME+ Network

The Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME+) Network carried out a variety of community-based activities and outreach events during this reporting period:

On 10 May 2024, a collaborative workshop was held on Talent Recognition and Development, presented in partnership with Minorities Recognition Awards NI (MRANI), CRAICNI, and Ulster University's BAME+ Network. This event was an enriching experience that promised to enhance participants' understanding of talent recognition and development in today's diverse workplace.

In April and May 2024, in partnership with All Nations Ministries (ANM), the BAME+ Network sent a party of members to Romania to contribute to community and cultural development projects and initiatives. It was a successful trip, and an exchange visit was scheduled to take place later in the year to coincide with the Good Relations Week Celebrations in Northern Ireland.

On 29 May 2024, the network celebrated its fourth Africa Day. Both students and staff of the University community joined in the celebration. For the first time, the network had an insightful lecture on the topic 'Politics, Economy and History of Africa' presented by Mr. Aaron Weah - a final year PhD researcher from the Transitional Justice Institute (TJI) of Ulster University as part of the celebration. There was an amazing mix of students and staff networking, drumming, dancing and enjoying each other's company after the lecture. "*The atmosphere was electrifying and unifying.*" - Isaac Krofa, Co-Chair of Student Affairs Working Group.

In June 2024, there was a 'Vibrant Celebration of Diversity' event at the Derry~Londonderry Campus. This second annual 'International Diversity Celebration' event helped to increase awareness about cultural diversity at the University. Ulster University's Student Union (USU)'s International Students Society Magee in

collaboration with Ulster University's Global Engagement Office, Ulster University's BAME+ Network, Choices Now and 360* Wellness Entrepreneur, hosted its second annual 'International Diversity Celebration' event at the Derry~Londonderry campus in March 2025. The event showcased different cultures, traditional delicacies, and talented artists, some of whom are past or current students at the University. Having booked out within three days of registration opening, it was a huge success. Colleagues and students along with their spouses, partners, and friends, joined the event with full enthusiasm, with several donning their traditional attire. The 'International Diversity Celebration' event presented an opportunity to not only increase awareness about the cultural diversity at the University but also to raise awareness about mental health and wellbeing and a sense of belonging in a diverse community.

On 18 September 2024, the third Digital Literacy Cohort (comprising 32 students) graduated, having completed the levels one and two of the Digital Literacy (ICT Skills) Education programme which started in February 2023. The next intake of students began their study in October 2024.

On 25 September 2024, through a Coffee and Culture catch-up on the Belfast campus, members of the network gathered for an informal coffee and catch up to get to know one another and prepare for a new academic year.

On 26 September 2024, a Financial Literacy session was held for International Students, focusing on available digital resources, access and process management: The BAME+ Network, the EDI unit, MRANI, and Danske Bank had a joint event on Financial Literacy tailored specifically for international students. This event, the first of its kind, was created to help international students get used to life in a new country, especially when it comes to handling finances and understanding new bank accounts in the UK. Bibin Jose, Ulster University Business School MBA graduate and Laurie Montgomery from Danske Bank provided valuable tips and resources to help students navigate the world of money in a foreign country, discussed budgeting basics, how to open a bank account, how to maintain a secured bank account, and offered financial resources and support. Panellists from Ulster University Student Union (UUSU), VP of Equality and Belonging Daniel Sanusi, CEO of Gran Lab, Dr Pragya Sharma, CEO of Shareit Biz Grainne Bannon and Danske Bank provided insights into financial challenges they faced when they moved to Northern Ireland, how they overcame those challenges and gave solid advice to new students moving to Belfast. The session was a great success, with a fantastic turnout, and representation from both the staff and student community. Following on from this session's success, this collaboration of internal and external stakeholders hopes to offer more events and workshops such as this in the future, to ensure the Ulster University international student and staff community get the support they need when they move to Northern Ireland.

On 4 October 2024, the Annual Minority Awards, hosted by MRANI, was held at the Titanic Belfast. Ulster University's EDI unit sponsored the event and BAME+ Network members attended the event in support.

On 12 October 2024, Uganda Independence Day was celebrated. Along with the Ugandan Community Association, the network believes in fostering unity and understanding by celebrating the rich traditions and cultures that make us unique. This year, the Ugandan Community Association is excited to have all other BAME+ communities and allies join them, to honour Uganda's rich history and heritage. This event is more than just a celebration, it is an opportunity to connect with others, share the University's unique cultures, and strengthen the bonds of friendship and community.

On 14 October 2024, the Heritage Sports Festival was delivered by Multi-Ethnic Sports and Culture Northern Ireland (MSCNI) in partnership with Ulster University Sport. The Heritage Sports Festival aims to connect Ulster University students with all communities in Northern Ireland through sport and physical activity during Black History Month. To launch the festival, the network hosted a reception at the Belfast Sports Centre on 14 October with refreshments, a tour of the new facility and then a cultural performance from African Drummer, Wilson Magwere. The network welcomed special guests Belfast City Lord Mayor, Cllr Micky Murray and Mayor of Derry and Strabane District Council, Cllr Lilian Seenoi-Barr at the reception. The festival promoted unity and positive relationships through sport by connecting international students with local communities. The four-day festival included events such as, the festival launch in the Belfast Sports Centre with the Belfast City Lord Mayor Cllr Micky Murray, an African Drummer Circle, a mixed-netball competition, Chinese Tambourine Dancers, Indian Bollywood Dancers performance, and a 7-a-side football tournament between campus-based teams, asylum seekers teams and local community groups.

On 19 October 2024, a Black History Month event was carried out, launching the song 'Skin Deep'. Rachel James, a Cultural Ambassador in her community, is a dynamic force within the spheres of music and social advocacy. A singer-songwriter by profession, Rachel's work has continuously demonstrated her commitment to addressing issues of racial reconciliation and social justice. She traces the beginning of her journey in protest music back to 2017, when her studies in music led her to write an essay titled Music and Politics. Through her research, she recognised the transformative power of music as a tool for social change and has since embraced it as a medium to amplify her message. In 2020, amid widespread racial unrest following the death of George Floyd, Rachel's dedication to diversity, equity, and inclusion took on new depth. Disturbed by the negativity and division she observed on social media, she sought practical ways to turn her frustrations into actionable efforts for peacebuilding and community cohesion. She joined Ulster University's BAME+ Network and not only did she become an active board member, but she also

co-chaired the Membership and Community Working Group. Additionally, she offered her insights and energy to the Family, Lifestyle, and Wellbeing, and Communication and Networking working groups within the network. Rachel's contributions to the community have garnered widespread recognition, culminating in her invitation to give a keynote talk at the 360° Spectrum of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Conference hosted by The Building Resources Community Centre. For this event, Rachel combined her passion for music and advocacy by writing a song to go alongside her talk. Her song was officially released on 21 October 2024, to communicate a heartfelt message about racial equality and cultural unity.

On 22 October 2024, a Human Library Event was coordinated. [The Student Success Centre](#) in collaboration with the BAME+ Network, and the Libraries at Belfast, Coleraine and Derry~Londonderry campuses, hosted the "UU Human Library – we all love a good story!" event on Tuesday 22 October 2024 in all three libraries. This was an inclusion and belonging initiative aimed at connecting and bringing together the University community in a welcoming space to share stories about resilience, overcoming challenges, life changing experiences, or exciting adventures. This event also brought up inspirational journeys of achievement and success. Each human 'book' represented a story of diversity, inclusion and belonging. For one day, students, academics, and other University staff were invited to volunteer to become human books and tell their story. The human books selected the topics and the titles of their story. These were then included in the Human Library catalogue that was then advertised in early October 2024. Readers were able to look at the titles in the catalogue and book a slot to borrow "the time" to hear the story from the authors. Readers and human books met in person at one of three libraries in a designated space allocated for this initiative.

On 13 November 2024, the BAME+ Network celebrated its fourth-year anniversary through a special event. The Belfast, Coleraine and Derry~Londonderry campuses were buzzing with excitement and unity as students and staff came together to celebrate another significant milestone of the BAME+ community. With the theme of 'Celebrating Successes', this annual network celebration aimed to foster community networking, specifically for those staff and students new to Belfast, Coleraine and Derry~Londonderry campuses. Current and new members of the network were again able to meet face-to-face after the start of a busy academic year, with the event offering an opportunity for open dialogue and fostering new friendships and connections.

On Belfast campus, the festivities welcomed distinguished guests, including University and UUSU representatives, regional community groups, and members of the BAME+ Network organisation. Photos from past events were broadcast across all three campuses and showcased workshops, seminars, and religious and cultural celebrations the network has hosted and facilitated over the past year. This year has also seen a significant rise in member participation and in-person events. At the

Belfast campus, held in the small level three atrium, staff and students were welcomed by the Chair of the BAME+ Network Dr James Uhomoibhi, with colleagues from the Senior Leadership Team Vice-Chancellor Professor Paul Bartholomew, University Provost Professor Cathy Gormley-Heenan and Pro-Vice Chancellor and Executive Dean of AHSS Professor Paul Connolly in attendance. Representing UUSU were Daniel Sanusi, VP of Equality and Belonging, and Favour Okpohs, VP of Belfast, along with key members of the network's operational team and working group chairs. The event kicked off with a warm welcome from the Chair of the network, with short talks from the Provost, Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice Chancellor who were enthusiastic and encouraged by the annual celebration and the network's continued achievements over the last four years. Dr Isaac Krofa, the Chair of the Students Affairs working group introduced Sandeep Rawat and Aaron Weah, student representatives from the Indian and African student communities respectively, who gave an insight into their contributions and experiences collaborating and contributing on the network's past events. The vibrant atmosphere was further enlivened by the powerful community-focused traditional music from ANM, with energetic dancing from audience members accompanying the drummers. A lunch was served which offered the opportunity for further mingling between the attendees. There was a great turnout from both the staff and student body, with new network members encouraged by the energy in the room and the aspirations of the network to celebrate every religious festival, cultural event and supporting those new to Northern Ireland, whether as members of staff or new students.

"Celebrating the 4th anniversary of the BAME+ Network is a testament to the power of unity and shared purpose across Ulster University. As VP of Equality and Belonging at UUSU, my role focuses on fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for all students, and events like this exemplify what can be achieved when we work together. Seeing the vibrant interactions between staff, students, and community partners affirms that inclusivity isn't just a goal but a thriving reality here. This network continues to create spaces where everyone feels valued and empowered to contribute. I'm proud to be part of this journey and excited about the opportunities we have to deepen our impact and build a more inclusive future together." [VP of Equality and Belonging, UUSU, Daniel Sanusi]

In Coleraine, the event kicked off with Rachel James, the network's Coleraine coordinator, giving an insight into her experiences as a minority ethnic woman in Northern Ireland and her pathways to overcoming these challenges. She gave a brief talk and, amongst other topics, talked about her upbringing as a daughter of parents from the Windrush generation and discussed her background in music as a powerful tool for addressing racial dysphoria, injustice and discrimination. The event was a great success with staff and students participating actively in discussions on community engagement, connecting with one another across language and diversity barriers and what it means to have a network that is truly inclusive for both staff and students.

“We had a great time in Coleraine. I shared my experiences of being involved in the establishment of the BAME+ network, and about my current work as a Cultural Ambassador within my local community. We had some great conversations, and many new connections were made over lunch.” [Coleraine campus Coordinator of BAME+ Network, Rachel James]

At the Derry~Londonderry campus, Dr Priyank Shukla, Chair of the Membership and Community working group of BAME+ Network oversaw and facilitated the network event with turnout from both staff and students across a wide range of Faculties, support services and Students' Union. International staff and students from Bangladesh, China, India, and Zimbabwe attended the event and shared their experiences of living and working in Northern Ireland. Students from the Internal Students Society shared their upcoming plans of activities and interest in collaborating with BAME+ Network for co-organising the events, which was very welcomed by Priyank who also shared the past activities of BAME+ Network, upcoming plans for this academic year, and encouraged all the participants for their active engagement with the network activities.

“The idea of events organised by BAME+ Network in collaboration with other departments, centres, societies, and services of the University, and in partnership with external organisations, is to connect BAME+ international students and staff with local students and staff in the University and local community. These events are very important as they not only facilitate raising cultural awareness as we learn about different cultures and traditions, but they also help in building new friendships and collaborations. This is especially important for our international community who are away from their home countries.” [The Chair of Membership and Community working group of the BAME+ Network, Dr Priyank Shukla]

On 29 November, there was a talk by Ana Chandran on Combating Violence Against Women and Girls: Understanding, Impact, and Collective Action (as part of 16 Days of Activism in collaboration with the LGBT+ Network). Violence against women and girls is a global crisis that includes physical, emotional and economic abuse. The factors that contribute to the prevalence of this violence, the impact of violence against girls and women and how the University can collectively combat violence will be discussed by speaker Ana Chandran, the founder and Director of Projects at the Belfast Asian Women's Academy (BAWA), a prominent women's centre dedicated to inspiration and empowerment. Originally from Malaysia, Ana migrated to England in 2001 and later settled in Northern Ireland in 2009. With a passion for advocating for women's rights and empowerment, she leverages her knowledge as a law graduate to champion the causes that matter most to her community. In addition to her full-time professional commitments, Ana dedicates her free time to volunteer efforts at BAWA, ensuring that her mission to inspire and uplift women remains at the forefront of her actions.

28 to 29 January 2025, there was Chinese New Year celebrations, including Lantern Crafting workshops in the Belfast campus and Derry~Londonderry, as well as Chinese Calligraphy, Chinese Tea and a performance from the Chinese Confucious Institute on the Belfast campus.

On 6 March, The Advancing Racial Equalities Awards, held in Derry~Londonderry, marked a significant moment in the ongoing fight for racial justice and inclusivity in Northern Ireland. The prestigious event, hosted by the North West Migrant Forum, brought together individuals, organisations, and community leaders dedicated to advancing racial equity and fostering a more inclusive society. It was an evening of inspiration, reflection, and renewed commitment to driving meaningful change. Among the honourees at the awards ceremony was Daniel Sanusi, a member of the BAME+ Network at Ulster University and a member of the network's Student Affairs Working Group, who was recognised with two distinguished accolades: The Young Leader Award and The Advancing Racial Justice and Fairness Award. These awards serve as a testament to his tireless efforts in championing equality, amplifying underrepresented voices, and driving impactful change within the education sector and beyond. Further information on the awards is included below.

On 8 March 2025, The EDI unit and BAME+ Network members were invited to a Ramadan Iftar event which aimed to promote peace and unity between Muslims in Northern Ireland and the local community. The program included a series of talks focusing on the significance of Ramadan and the shared messages of peace in both faiths, promoting harmony and understanding. These talks were then followed by Iftar (breaking the fast for those observing Ramadan) and dinner (for those not fasting or practicing Ramadan), accompanied by light entertainment. The event also featured performances by Middle Eastern musicians and singers, adding a vibrant cultural touch to the evening, which is something both cultures tend to enjoy.

The Young Leader Award

The Young Leader Award acknowledges individuals who have demonstrated exceptional leadership, advocacy, and dedication to advancing racial equality. Daniel's work as the Vice President of Equality and Belonging at UUSU has positioned him at the forefront of student-led initiatives aimed at breaking barriers and fostering inclusivity. Through strategic policies, student engagement, and collaboration with key stakeholders, he has worked to create a more equitable university experience for students from diverse backgrounds.

The Advancing Racial Justice and Fairness Award

The Advancing Racial Justice and Fairness Award honours individuals who have significantly contributed to racial equity, fairness, and justice through advocacy and policy reform. Daniel's efforts in shaping policies that address racial disparities, particularly in education, highlight his commitment to creating systemic change. His

work has included initiatives that improve accessibility, representation, and institutional support for marginalised communities, ensuring that students and young people have an equal opportunity to thrive.

Receiving these awards is not just a personal achievement for Daniel but a recognition of the collective efforts of students, activists, and community leaders working towards racial justice. These honours serve as motivation to continue advocating for policies that eliminate systemic inequalities, enhance representation, and empower underrepresented communities. As the University celebrates these achievements, the focus remains on the work ahead, ensuring that universities, workplaces, and communities remain spaces of true equality and belonging. With ongoing collaborations, advocacy, and student-led initiatives, there is hope for a more inclusive and equitable future. The Advancing Racial Equalities Awards reaffirm that change is possible when individuals and organisations commit to dismantling barriers and creating opportunities for all. Congratulations to all honourees and Daniel Sanusi for this well-deserved recognition.

The Race Equality Charter

The Race Equality Charter "helps institutions in their work to identify and address the barriers facing Black, Asian and minority ethnic staff and students, while also providing a framework for action and improvement" (Advance HE, 2024). Significant progress has been made with the Race Equality Matters Survey (November to December 2024) which was issued to Staff, Students, and Alumni. An institution-wide, SMART, evidence-based action plan is being developed to enhance the experiences of staff and students. This will form part of the Race Equality Charter Bronze Award application and will provide a specific framework for the University to improve the experiences of racial and ethnic minority staff and students in the years to come.

Global Engagement

Community Engagement – School Visit

In March 2025, the International Student Advisory Service (ISAS) proudly led a meaningful community engagement initiative bringing a group of female international students from Palestine and Pakistan to visit St. Gerard's (Special Education School, Belfast).

The event provided a unique platform for students to share their personal stories of upbringing and education, followed by reflections on their living and learning experiences at Ulster University. They spoke powerfully about the women who have influenced their lives, including mothers, teachers, and community leaders, sparking an inspiring and interactive discussion where pupils also shared stories of the women who have made a difference in their own lives.

A particularly impactful moment came from a student from Gaza, who provided a first-hand account of life before the conflict, including reflections on inclusion, diversity, and everyday life in the region. Her stories of playing football as a child and a love of local olives created heartfelt parallels between her home and Northern Ireland, making for a powerful and thought-provoking experience.

Two of the University's Muslim students also shared their experiences of observing Ramadan in Belfast, highlighting differences from their home traditions and engaging in thoughtful dialogue with pupils who were also fasting.

The visit was well received by students and staff alike, with high levels of engagement throughout. Plans for future collaborations are already underway, building on the success of this enriching experience.

Global Ambassador Programme

The ISAS are supported by a team of Global Ambassadors, made up of current undergraduate and postgraduate students who reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds of Ulster University's international student community. Working in partnership with Campus Ambassadors, this team plays a key role in welcoming new and returning students to Ulster each semester, helping to create a warm, inclusive, and supportive environment from the moment students arrive.

The EDGE accredited Global Ambassador Programme provides international students with the opportunity to take the lead in shaping their own student experience. Ambassadors support and deliver a wide range of events and activities designed to foster community, promote intercultural understanding, and encourage meaningful connections. These include walking tours of local areas, highlighting not only popular places to shop and socialise, but also places of worship, ethnic food stores, and community hubs that reflect and support the needs of a globally diverse student body.

In the broader context, the Global Ambassador Programme contributes significantly to the promotion of equality and opportunity at Ulster University. By empowering students to take an active role in building an inclusive campus culture, the programme encourages mutual respect, cross-cultural dialogue, and the celebration of difference.

Belonging through sport

In January 2025, the ISAS partnered with Ulster University Sports Services to host a friendly soccer tournament, using sport as a tool to promote positive relations, cultural exchange, and a sense of belonging among students.

The event brought together international and domestic students, with teams randomly selected to encourage cross-cultural interaction. This inclusive approach

created a relaxed and welcoming environment where students not only played together but also shared personal stories and cultural insights, fostering mutual understanding and respect.

The tournament served as a valuable opportunity for new incoming international students to connect with current students, who shared tips on settling into university life and adapting to a new country.

Importantly, students exchanged contact details and made plans to stay in touch, with some going on to join local football teams within the local community, extending the impact of the event beyond campus.

Building on this success, ISAS and Sports Services will deliver a series of monthly sport-based events, with the next session introducing international students to traditional Irish sports, including Gaelic football, hurling, camogie, and handball.

Campus Life

Sports Services

Ulster University (UU) Sport in partnership with MCSNI hosted the inaugural Heritage Sports Festival on the Belfast campus. The festival promoted unity and positive relationships through sport by connecting international students with local communities, as discussed in the BAME+ Network section of this report.

Student Sport Ambassadors on the Belfast campus developed a programme targeting female participation in sport and physical activity called 'Active, Fit, Sporty'. This programme aimed to engage more female students in a range of activities including basketball, gym sessions and a weekly running group. Led by female students, the group was active for six weeks in semester one of AY 2024 to 2025 with many of these participants becoming regular members of the Sports Centre.

The Belfast Sports Centre also hosted a Boccia club on Friday evenings for disabled people to participate in. This club was set up with support from Disability Sport NI and will continue to offer participation and development opportunities going forwards.

After consultation with the Ulster University community and in collaboration with the NeuroNetwork, Student Wellbeing, Staff Wellbeing and UU Sport, the Coleraine Sports Centre has delivered a Quiet Hour with the fitness suite to accommodate students, staff and community members who may find the environment overwhelming. Students, staff and community members have welcomed this positive and inclusive initiative as well as benefited from the peaceful environment it has created.

At the Derry-Londonderry campus Ulster University Sport teamed up with Student Wellbeing and local Self Defence instructor, Marty McLaughlin to host four weeks of

Women's self-defence classes. These were very successful and had 15 attendees over the four sessions. The classes aimed to empower women, build confidence, improve decision making and provide them with necessary techniques to defend themselves if needed.

Participants found the classes hugely beneficial, and feedback was fully positive with everyone wanting to attend any further classes in future.

Residential Services

ResLife offers a comprehensive events programme to encourage diversity, community and well-being within University managed accommodation focusing on student wellbeing and encouraging students to be active and recognise local and international traditions, including Thanksgiving, Halloween, Christmas, Diwali, Chinese New Year. In addition, the team promotes International Women's Day, World mental health day as well as sporting fixtures, such as The Six Nations, The Super Bowl, and international cricket. Events included:

October 24

- Black History Month Movie Night – Good Relations and increasing culture awareness

November 24

- Thanksgiving Get Together - Smores Kit – Good Relations and increasing culture awareness
- Culture Potluck – Bring food for sharing from your own culture – Good Relations and increasing culture awareness
- Diwali – Culture Food and Music - Good Relations and increasing culture awareness

December 24

- Christmas Events all month (Culture) in December – Good Relations and increasing culture awareness
- Mince Pies, Light Switch on, Best Flat, Jumper, Movies, Karaoke, Crafts, Snacks, Walks, Carols, Gift Bags

February 25

- LGBTQIA+ – Film Fridays LGBTQIA+ movies genre for the month – Good Relations and increasing culture awareness

- Chinese New Year – snacks and origami – Good Relations and increasing culture awareness

March 25

- Holi and Ead Festival - Cultural Food – Good Relations and increasing culture awareness

ResLife engaged with the BAME+ Network and Ulster University Student Nuro Diverse group to promote their events for students. Accessibility concerns are met for all events to ensure an inclusive environment.

Commercial Services

- Jehovah's Witnesses Oct 2024 and March 2025, 1000 attendees on Coleraine campus over two weekends
- New Horizon Christian Festival for one week in August 2024, 3000 members on Coleraine Campus daily including young people
- Bushmills Gospel Celebrations over 2 weeks in July 2024, with 800 people per night attending worship events in the Diamond Hall.

Community and Regional Engagement (CRE)

Race

- Sponsorship and co-organisation of three events supporting Black History Month (October 2023)
- Sponsorship of Advancing Racial Equality Awards, NWMF on 6 March 2025, including presentation and co-ordination of the event
- Active support for those at-risk during Belfast riots of August 2024

Political Opinion

- Support and sponsorship of [Peace Summit](#) and [follow-up events](#) throughout 2024 and 2025
- Numerous lectures and public events for a wide variety of political opinions and experiences aligned with Ulster Talks
- Facilitation of the inaugural Hume-O'Neill Peace Lecture (with An Taoiseach Simon Harris), 16 September 2024

Identity – Cultural and Linguistic Diversity

- Support of Irish language and Ulster-Scots events across Ulster University's campuses, including:
 - Seachtain na Gaeilge/Irish Language Week, March 2025
 - Burns Night, January 2025
 - Festival of Ulster Dialects, November 2024
 - Scoil Spreagtha – Irish language initiative for primary schools coordinated by Gael Linn with events at UU (Belfast/Derry), June 2024.

Age

- Support of age friendly University initiatives including active collaboration with U3A.
- North Belfast Youth Festival, Springboard Youth Training, Northern Ireland Youth Forum
- Partnership with U3A Causeway in preparation for 30th anniversary event on 10 April 2025

Employee Experience

Mental Health and Wellbeing

Employee Wellbeing engaged in talks with undergraduates for the Department of Management, Leadership and Marketing. They shared information on the various roles within Employee Wellbeing, discussing how they support and empower managers, individual staff members and teams. They also highlighted the importance of empathy to help maintain positive relations between teams, finishing with a taster wellbeing session which included looking at strong support networks.

The inaugural WorkWell Expo held in June 2024 aimed to promote and celebrate the Health, Safety and Wellbeing team while equipping and empowering managers with skills and resources so they could support themselves and their wider team while drawing on wider inhouse expertise. The expo gave colleagues across the University an opportunity to engage with experts, network, and enhance workplace wellbeing. This year's 2025 expo will extend on the success of last year's expo in continuing to build employee's confidence, knowledge, and skills in this area.

Following on from the success of running Brews Monday sessions in January, monthly 'Brewsdays' have been set up across each of the campuses where time has

been set aside to provide employees with the space to meet and socialise without an agenda. Coffee, tea and refreshments are provided.

A variety of inhouse and external wellbeing, and mental health training courses have been delivered by Campus Wellbeing that highlight the importance of connection with others and the benefits that come from community ties and relationships. These include sessions on:

- Mental Health Awareness
- Stress Management
- Personal Resilience
- Mental Health First Aid
- Mental Health for Managers
- Introduction To Wellbeing
- Action Mental Health (Wellbeing Toolbox Talks)
- Aware (Mood Matter course looking at Mental Health in the Workplace)
- Carers NI
- Alzheimer's Society

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Champions Network was re-launched at the start of 2025. This network represents a variety of champions from across the University that have different roles, including First Aiders, Fire Marshals, Wellbeing Champions, Mental Health First Aiders, Health and Safety Co-Ordinators and Local Display Screen Equipment (LDSE) Assessors. The re-launch events have been key in bringing these people together to promote positive relations for all. Wellbeing Champions have received external Wellbeing Champion training, a large portion of which was dedicated to the impact of good relations in the workplace and the importance of a positive working environment that prioritises these.

Ulster University's Work Well Programme launched in October 2024, coinciding with World Mental Health Day, and has since worked with employees working over 16 different Schools and departments across the University. Work Well Assessments provide a framework for active discussion and partnership working for local teams to decide upon improvements in areas most associated with poor wellbeing if not managed appropriately, helping to collectively work towards improvements and actions that fit with their local needs. This programme has represented an important mechanism for employee voice and for the promotion of positive relations in local areas, with improvements likely benefitting the mental health of employees.

Valuing Voices Initiative

'Valuing Voices' is the University's employee engagement and employee 'listening' initiative which has been in place since 2023 and is continuous, supporting the University's intention to be a values-led organisation that authentically engages with

its people. The initiative supports the University in actively engaging with staff at all levels across the organisation, seeking their feedback and then subsequently taking this into account in helping to shape the employee experience.

The initiative was first launched in May 2023 and is multiyear with a range of engagement surveys and listening mechanisms. To aid transparency and positive relations, organisational results have been released to all staff with development of organisational wide actions and each department and School taking ownership of engaging with their respective staff to discuss their department or School results and identify appropriate actions to address areas as required.

Staff panels have been implemented to facilitate reviewing the results and empowering staff to have an active input into appropriate organisational actions and to seek ongoing feedback to help inform future direction of the Valuing Voices initiative.

Returning Carers' Scheme – Web destination reboot and representation of participant perspectives and employee voice

Aiming to amplify the voice and experience of staff, the refreshed RCS [webpage](#) was created and went live in March 2025, featuring interviews with recipients who shared openly about life circumstances, career considerations and the value of the scheme on their return from caring leave.

The web page will be highlighted during Carers' Week in June through the staff news channel INSIGHT and when the next and subsequent tranches of the scheme open for applications.

It is hoped that the refreshed tone, style, and people focused content of this webpage will be a prototype to help re-energise other web content related to EDI initiatives.

Ulster University Student Union (UUSU)

Promoting Racial Equality and Inclusion

A Student-Led Anti-Hate Policy was developed by students through the UUSU Student Council, with oversight and provided opinion from the Student Officers, to address and combat hate incidents on Ulster University's campuses.

The BAME+ Network (Student Arm) is working on the development of a byelaw, which champions student networks, aimed at enhancing engagement and support for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic students through specific and targeted advocacy and networking initiatives.

UUSU has organised Diverse Ethnic Celebration events such as Black History Month, Diwali, Chinese New Year, and Thanksgiving Day to celebrate cultural diversity and promote inclusivity.

Supporting Students with Dependants and Childcare Responsibilities

Regarding Breastfeeding and Baby Changing Facility Renovation, UUSU has successfully lobbied for an upgraded space on the Belfast campus to provide better support for students with breastfeeding responsibilities.

Regarding Childcare and Creche Advocacy, UUSU is currently involved in active participation in a University-led workgroup to support the facilitation of creches on campus, ensuring better childcare options for student parents.

Enhancing Accessibility and Disability Support

The Digital Accessibility Initiative focused on making all learning platforms fully accessible. A key short-term milestone includes implementing a translation feature on Blackboard to improve inclusivity.

SWANN (Students With Additional Needs Network), established by UUSU to provide a dedicated space for students with additional needs, advocated for better support structures and accessibility across campus.

Financial Inclusion and Support

Flexible Payment Plans for International Students were successfully lobbied for in terms of a more manageable tuition payment structure for international students to ease financial burdens.

A financial Literacy Program for BAME+ Students was Launched through the BAME+ Network to educate students on effective financial management.

UUSU acted as a co-lead on the development of the student pantries across the three campuses which went live for student access in March 2025. This provides students with food and household staples in lieu of a challenging financial climate.

Promoting Equality Across Different Identities

UUSU actively took part in the PRIDE March, across the 3 campuses, demonstrating solidarity with and support for the LGBTQIA+ community.

The Pink Project was a student led peaceful protest, organised by Queen's University Student Union (QUBSU), but supported and endorsed by UUSU which saw over 500 students come together to collectively stand up together to be against all forms of gender-based violence.

Guildhall Parade for Women's Safety took place, and UUSU joined the public demonstration calling for improved safety measures for women and girls across Northern Ireland.

'Tackling Violence Against Women and Girls in Northern Ireland: A Student Movement Response' is a publication authored by UUSU, the first of its kind on the Island of Ireland and has grasped the attention of political parties from across Ireland and Great Britain. In addition to supporting the initiative, UUSU have attended numerous events regarding violence against women and girls and done considerable work educating students and society on this issue. UUSU also conducted a series of videos for social media with the content going viral on both Instagram and TikTok with one video having over 40 thousand views, the second having over 17.6 thousand views and the third having over 62.5 thousand views.

Seachtain na Gaeilge: An educational piece surrounding language discrimination and stigma. One of the visual content creations is currently sitting with over 10 thousand views and is now being used within other Students' Unions across Ireland.

Chaplains' Office

In the period, 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, the Chaplains on each campus worked together and individually to provide pastoral and spiritual support to a diverse range of students and staff. This has involved both ecumenical programmed activities and one-to-one pastoral meetings with students and staff from many different backgrounds and cultures, facing a wide range of issues such as, bereavement; broken relationships, ill health, self-identity, financial pressures, social isolation and loneliness, anxiety and other mental health issues. The Chaplains also carried out some hospital visits and participated in funeral services at the request of members of the University community.

In both semesters, the Belfast Chaplaincy Team hosted a weekly Chaplaincy Community Lunch open to all students and staff in the nearby Cathedral Hall. Attended weekly by around 100 to 130 members of the University community (undergraduates, postgraduates, staff), this event provided safe integration and community for students from many different countries including representatives from the Christian (Catholic and Protestant), Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist and Sikh faith traditions as well as those with no faith affiliation. This event also helped the Chaplains to identify and support some of the University's neuro-divergent students who needed extra support to integrate into university life. Some referrals were made to University services and to local food banks and church charities for students who were experiencing food poverty or were struggling to find affordable accommodation during the ongoing cost-of-living crisis.

The Chaplaincy Lounge on the Belfast campus was open throughout the year to provide a daily drop-in service and hospitality to all, hereby facilitating the

socialisation and integration of students and staff from a diversity of backgrounds who gathered at various times for a cuppa and chat or to participate in Chaplaincy events. Twice monthly, the Chaplains led Saturday 'Danders' to encourage international students from many different cultures to better engage with one another and to help alleviate homesickness and loneliness whilst exploring the beautiful Northern Ireland countryside. The weekly i-café programme and i-welcome meal at the start of the year was another activity supported by the Chaplaincy to help local students better engage and welcome overseas students to Northern Ireland.

Regular times of Christian prayer and worship open to all students and staff were held as part of the annual Chaplaincy programme and attended by both local and international members of the University community. Students and staff from various University departments and backgrounds were invited to attend and participated in the ecumenical Chaplaincy Carol Service in December and the Lenten activities before Easter.

There was opportunity for students to learn more about the Christian faith and indeed the other faith traditions represented by those who participated in The Difference Course, a six-week faith-based programme delivered by Chaplaincy to help participants reflect upon how the University can deal positively with difference and disagreement in life and politics today.

Mindful of the University's civic responsibilities, Chaplaincy once again partnered with The Belfast 4 Corners Festival to host, a one-day workshop for 40 sixth year pupils from a wide range of backgrounds and schools across the city. This was an opportunity for pupils, perhaps future students, to come out of their segregated corners and share creatively with one another in a song writing workshop inspired by the topic of "HOME" and led by the award winning, Ulster University alumni, musician and songwriter, Iain Archer.

New Horizon Christian Festival returned for another year to the Coleraine campus in August 2024. This festival has taken place on the Coleraine campus for over 30 years growing in scale each year. It brings 3000 to 4000 people on campus each day over the 10-day festival from creche, youth groups, SEN children and adults alike. This festival brings many families onto the campus annually with a vast age range of children showcasing the facilities across accommodation, sport, teaching rooms and community to the younger generation who may choose to study at Ulster in years to come. It also helps to build relationships within the domestic market and local community and generates significant revenue for Ulster to reinvest in its core business and development.

Chaplains have also been involved in university ethics committees, supporting UUSU initiatives and the LGBT+, BAME+, Wo/Men's, Disability and Neuro networks and other multi-disciplinary programmes aimed at monitoring and improving student and staff well-being, mental health and general morale.

Across the University, the Chaplains have continued to foster and maintain good relations with the Islamic society through their friendship and promotion of the Muslim prayer facilities and their support of other religious celebrations such as the Hindu festival of Diwali, the Chinese New Year and some other events hosted by the BAME+ Network and African societies.

On the Coleraine campus, the Chaplain has an open-door policy, keeping the office open during his time on a Thursday. Whoever wants to come in and speak with the Chaplain can do so, thus supporting the University's approach to inclusivity: The door is open to everyone, students and staff, regardless of their background. They are there to help and support the students as they navigate their studies at the University.

Doctoral College

The Doctoral College is dedicated to fostering an inclusive community where every individual feels valued and empowered, and all PhD Researchers can thrive while feeling valued and respected. The Doctoral College believes in equality, celebrates diversity, and fosters inclusion. Embracing diversity enriches the institution and strengthens its collective growth. The Doctoral College also recognises that prospective and current PhD Researchers face unique challenges at various stages of their PhD journey and therefore implements the following measures in response to these challenges. These measures should be read in conjunction with the [University Equality Scheme](#) and [Equal Opportunities Policy](#).

Recruitment and Admissions

The Doctoral College actively champions EDI principles across the University's recruitment practices and admissions processes, underpinned by fairness, transparency and inclusiveness. How this is achieved:

- **Diverse Advertising Platforms:** Utilising a multi-faceted approach (online platforms, professional networks, social media) to reach potential applicants beyond traditional channels.
- **Accessible Application Materials:** Providing clear, concise, and jargon-free application materials in accessible formats (for example, dyslexia-friendly fonts) for applicants with disabilities and learning difficulties. Advertisements on the Doctoral College web pages are accessibility-checked.
- **Pre-Application Support:** Offering workshops and online resources to assist potential applicants, particularly those from underrepresented groups, in navigating the application process.

- **Holistic Review:** Assessing applicants based on more than just grades, considering factors such as the research proposal, personal statements, and evidence of prior experiential learning to evaluate potential and fit for the programme.
- **Standardised Scoring Rubrics:** Providing shortlisting colleagues and interview panels with clear, objective rubrics to evaluate applications, ensuring consistency and minimising bias.
- **Diverse Interview Panels:** Interview panels are trained on unconscious bias and where possible, consisting of individuals with diverse backgrounds (gender, ethnicity, experience).
- **Transparent Communication:** Ensuring clear communication throughout the application and interview stages, providing timely updates and clear explanations for unsuccessful decisions.
- **Promotion of EDI and Accessibility Principles:** Collaboration with funders to promote EDI and accessibility principles in the distribution of their studentships.

Retention and Progression

The Doctoral College ensures that Ulster University PhD Researchers thrive throughout their PhD journey and receive continuous support until completion. How this is achieved:

- **Unconscious Bias Training:** All staff (supervisors, administrators and technicians) are encouraged to complete training on unconscious bias, inclusive communication, and culturally sensitive interactions.
- **Diverse Supervisory Teams:** When assembling supervisory teams, Faculties are encouraged to include individuals from diverse backgrounds, where possible (for example, gender, ethnicity, disability, career stage), offering PhD Researchers a broader range of expertise, perspectives, and mentoring styles.
- **Comprehensive and Accessible Inductions:** Offering a comprehensive and accessible induction programme, available both in-person and online to accommodate different needs and preferences of PhD Researchers. Subject-specific inductions are delivered separately by Faculties.
- **Regular Supervision Meetings:** Researchers and supervisors are encouraged to establish mutual expectations regarding supervision and the frequency of meetings from the outset. This helps promote

open communication and seeks to ensure concerns are addressed promptly.

- **Peer Mentorship Programme:** Alongside academic supervision, The Doctoral College encourages Faculties and research groups to establish peer-to-peer mentoring that connects senior PhD Researchers and post-docs with incoming cohorts, offering guidance, support, and fostering a sense of community.
- **Conference and Workshop Support:** In collaboration with Faculties, PhD Researchers are actively supported to attend relevant conferences and workshops. The Researchers Development Programme offers over 200 courses annually that PhD Researchers can freely choose from to develop required skills.
- **Student-Led Research Presentations:** Facilitating student-led presentations via PhD Festival, 3MT and other Faculty led events, providing a platform for students to showcase their research, receive valuable feedback, and refine their communication and presentation skills.
- **PhD Progress Management:** The state-of-the-art PhD management software ensures clear communication of milestones and deadlines, providing all PhD Researchers with easy access to this information for reference.
- **Transparent Feedback Mechanisms:** Promoting transparent feedback procedures for both students and staff, with clear timelines for addressing concerns.
- **Weekly online drop-in sessions:** Every Friday Doctoral College hosts a virtual drop-in session to offer advice and address any questions from PhD Researchers.

Researcher Development Programme (RDP) and Research Culture

The Doctoral College recognises the diverse composition of Ulster University PhD Researchers cohort and associated strengths and challenges. The RDP offers over 200 courses annually, delivered flexibly to accommodate various learning preferences and schedules. Enhancing access to the RDP and the training and development opportunities for those who work full time and those who have caring and other responsibilities. It is also more inclusive for those PhD Researchers who work more productively in the evening time.

There has been more engagement in training sessions by part-time PhD Researchers as a result. How this is achieved:

- **Flexible Workshop Hours:** Workshops are scheduled to start after 10 am and finish by 4 pm, whenever possible.
- **Hybrid Delivery:** A hybrid approach to RDP ensures accessibility through both online and in-person formats.
- **Portable Writing Studio:** Offering Portable Writing Studio sessions to help researchers learn how to write 'on the go'.
- **Remote Evening Training:** Providing online evening training sessions, allowing researchers to access relevant training beyond core business hours.
- **Weekend Training and Writing Sessions:** Weekend training and writing sessions are available to accommodate researchers' schedules.
- **Accessible Presentations:** Recorded presentations include captions for improved accessibility and ease of understanding.
- **Career Development:** Offering career development workshops and mentorship programmes to equip students with the skills and knowledge to navigate successful careers.
- **'Life after PhD' Series:** Showcasing past PhD researchers to highlight the diverse employment opportunities available to PhD graduates.
- **Promoting Inclusive Research Culture:** Fostering an inclusive and dynamic research culture by hosting the annual 3MT thesis competition and the Festival of PhD Research

Part-time PhD Researcher Network

The Doctoral College offers various networks designed to bring PhD researchers together, fostering community, peer support, and mutual empowerment in navigating the challenges of a doctoral journey. Some examples include Part-Time PhD Network, Parenting whilst undertaking a PhD Network, alongside participation in wider University Networks, such as the BAME+ Network and WoMen's Network, amongst many others.

The Part-time PhD Researcher Network is a PhD researcher-led initiative supported by the Doctoral College. The objective of the network is to provide a supportive space for people to attend and share experiences, seek advice and provide support to others who are completing a PhD on a part-time basis. There are a core group of

volunteers who host the meetings with a wider group in attendance and occasionally guest speakers in attendance.

This network was established in 2022 and has continued to meet on a regular basis during the last reporting period. Meetings are arranged in the evening time to facilitate a broader attendance, recognising that those who take on a PhD on a part-time basis are normally working full time. Part-time PhD Researchers find it difficult to engage with PhD related activities that are designed to enhance research culture and community. This is because they normally take place during normal working hours. The evening sessions make this more manageable and has encourage further inclusion of part-time PhD Researcher.

Wellbeing

Recognising the importance of good physical and mental health, The Doctoral College takes active steps to support PhD Researchers throughout their PhD journey. How this is achieved:

- **Disability Services Support:** Maintaining ongoing connections with the University's Student Wellbeing Services to ensure that appropriate reasonable adjustments are made for eligible post-graduate researchers (PGRs). These adjustments are tailored to the individual and discipline area and may include extended deadlines, adjustments to assessment processes, or specialized equipment.
- **Positive and Supportive Culture:** Fostering a culture of respect and mutual support, with zero tolerance for discrimination or harassment. Clear policies, reporting procedures, and resources are in place to address concerns.
- **Coffee Mornings:** Organising monthly coffee mornings for the PhD community, offering a chance to connect with peers and Doctoral College staff over a hot beverage.
- **Dedicated Campus Space:** Each campus provides dedicated social spaces for PhD Researchers.
- **Support of DocSocs:** PhD-led social student societies, known as DocSocs, are established at each campus.

Faculty of Life and Health Sciences (LHS)

The Faculty of LHS is fully committed to progressing EDI, aligning activities with the requirements of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act. The Faculty strives to embed inclusive practices across all aspects of academic life, such as teaching, research, leadership, community outreach, and student experience. The associated Schools

have led a wide range of initiatives aimed at supporting equal opportunity, enhancing access, and promoting good relations across the respective protected characteristics. The following summary outlines this year's activity across the Faculty's Schools and highlights Ulster University's collective commitment to inclusive education and civic engagement:

School of Medicine

- **Inclusive Research:** *The My Life with Down Syndrome* project involves people with Down Syndrome in co-designing research on education, employment, and healthcare outcomes. Actor James Martin participated in the project's launch at Ulster University in March 2025.
- **EDI Education:** An Interprofessional EDI training event in February 2025 involved 100 students across Medicine, Nursing, and Physician Associate programmes. Topics included neurodiversity, intellectual disability, LGBTQ+ inclusion, and healthcare regulation.
- **Cultural Competency Training:** Co-designed and delivered with the Traveller community (via RCSI and supported by HSC RandD and CAWT). The first of its kind on the island of Ireland, this project brings medical students together from both Northern and Southern jurisdictions.
- **Minority Ethnic Mentoring Scheme:** Supports minority ethnic students in Medicine through mentoring from clinicians with shared backgrounds.
- **EDI Leadership Programme:** 16-week training course for students leading EDI initiatives, blending formal instruction with capstone projects to develop inclusive leadership skills.
- **Patient-Led Assessment Design:** A SLATE-funded project introduced a co-created assessment rubric, embedding patient voice into clinical exams.

School of Sport and Exercise Science

- **Athena Swan Framework:** The School is progressing four key action areas aligned with the Bronze Award, focusing on curriculum review, leadership, civic engagement, and EDI toolkits.
- **Gender Inclusion in Teaching:** Modules and programmes are regularly reviewed to embed EDI content, including gender-focused elements in Year 1 curricula.

- **Staff Leadership in EDI:** Faculty contribute to women-in-sport networks and lead the MIDE gender-focused research group. Staff also supported recent Green Dot bystander training and delivered gender equity research challenging international sports bodies.
- **Inclusive Practice in SEN:** Hosted events on inclusive physical activity in special educational needs settings in November 2024 and is developing a team charter with a strong EDI focus.

School of Health Sciences

- **Health Promotion and Staff Engagement:**
 - Staff Wellbeing Day (April 2023): 40 staff attended foot care clinics.
 - Podiatry-led outreach to the Foyle Down Syndrome Trust and a University-wide Health and Wellbeing Conference (June 2024) engaged hundreds of staff and service users.
- **Public Engagement and Outreach:**
 - Falls Awareness Week (Sept 2024): Engaged 150+ community members and 80 physiotherapy students.
 - U3A Physical Assessments (Feb 2025): Year 1 students assessed 30 older adults to promote healthy ageing.
 - Life and Health Interprofessional Event (April): Included nature-based teamwork activities promoting collaboration.
 - Outreach to Schools (April): Promoted AHP careers and gender balance in healthcare.
 - Destined Engagement (Feeny): Students met with 12 young adults with learning disabilities and carers.
- **Curriculum and Partnerships:**
 - College of Health Summer School (July): 80+ chiropractic students joined workshops with AHP staff.
 - SLT Voice Care Session (June): Delivered by Dr Orla Duffy to staff across UU.
 - Podiatry PSRB Visit (April): Reinforced professional standards post-campus transition.

- John Hume Jr Visit (May): Explored SLT scholarships in partnership with the Down Syndrome Association.
- Derry and Strabane Homeless Health Network (launching October 2025): Will involve 600 students across disciplines in addressing inclusive care for marginalised populations.

School of Psychology

- **Neurodiversity Network:** Dr Orla McDevitt-Petrovic leads UU's ND Network, providing safe spaces, piloting inclusive initiatives, and engaging with Estates on quiet spaces. Events were held for Neurodiversity Celebration Week.
- **Green Dot Training:** Dr Susan Lagdon incorporated bystander intervention into teaching for over 100 students and hosted a session for the Breaking Borders youth programme, supporting young women's empowerment.
- **Athena Swan and Carer Support:** The School celebrated International Women's Day with a staff-led appreciation campaign. Staff participation in the RCS was recognised in three of the seven featured University case studies.

School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences

- **Admissions and Progression Monitoring:** Equality data reviewed annually across all nine protected characteristics. Data informs changes to improve equity in access, retention, and outcomes.
- **Inclusive OSCEs and Placement Support:** Assessments are co-designed with student wellbeing services to accommodate diverse needs. Placement supervisors are briefed to ensure inclusive practice.
- **Public and Patient Involvement (PPI):** Students engage with a wide range of speakers representing lived experiences across disability, chronic illness, and minority communities.
- **Gender Monitoring and Assessment Design:** Annual reviews of gender balance inform representation and curriculum design, including gendered aspects of PPI case studies.
- **Support for Students with Dependants:** Advance scheduling, Continual Professional Development (CPD) activities, and reflective

planning allow flexibility and recognition of students with caring responsibilities.

School of Nursing and Paramedic Science

- **Gender Identity IPE Workshop (November 2024):** A co-produced interprofessional workshop with mental health and OT students focused on cultural humility and trans inclusion. Research is being submitted to the WFOT Congress 2026
- **Cultural Awareness Panel (March 2025):** BAME+ staff shared lived experiences of accessing and delivering healthcare in NI. Students provided strong verbal feedback and called for future inclusion of similar sessions.
- **Curriculum Enhancement:** Events were aligned with Sustainable Development Goals (4 – Quality Education and 10 – Reduced Inequality), prompting critical student reflection on bias and inclusive communication.

School of Geography and Environmental Sciences

- **Science Communication and Public Engagement:**
 - Staff contributed to the NI Science Festival 2025, with Professor Paul Dunlop participating in the spoken word event "Flight, Food for Thought" at Boundary Brewing (Newtownards), and Dr Wes Forsythe contributing to the Future Island Project at the National Museum in Cultra.
 - Dr Wes Forsythe also served as keynote speaker at the Irish Post-Medieval Archaeology Group Conference titled "From Coastlines to Castles: Celebrating Ireland's Maritime Past."
 - Dr Forsythe and Dr Chris McGonigle led a public exhibition on traditional boats during the Red Sails Festival in Portstewart, as part of the Madill Archive Project, an initiative preserving maritime heritage.
- **Educational Outreach and Skills Development:**
 - Dr Saad Bhatti presented at an AGINI webinar on "Geospatial Skills to Succeed – Bridging the Gap," highlighting the department's efforts to align skills training with employability and regional economic needs.

- The School ran its annual Geotopics Conference and workshop for post-primary Geography teachers in June 2024, attended by approximately 30 teachers. This long-standing initiative helps support curriculum development and knowledge exchange between secondary and tertiary education.
- **Social Impact Research:**
 - Dr Sara McDowell led the project “Managing Difficult Pasts in a Post-Conflict Environment,” which explores legacy and transition narratives in Northern Ireland, contributing to the discourse on peacebuilding and civic healing.
 - Drs Suzanne Beech and Sara McDowell also collaborated on the “Bordered Youth” project, investigating citizenship and identity formation among young people in post-Brexit Northern Ireland. This research directly involved youth from border communities, promoting inclusive dialogue and participatory methodology.

School of Biomedical Sciences

- **Educational Outreach and Skills Development:**
 - Ulster Gene Editing Academy, a one-week summer programme for school and regional college students
 - Careers Event: Ballymena Learning Together, a careers fair involving schools and Higher Education in Ballymena.
 - Curriculum Enhancement-Education Advisory meeting with food and nutrition teachers from across Northern Ireland about enhancing the student learning experience around sustainable food systems.
 - Food Nerd Videos Series of short information videos developed for NI GCSE and A-level students around the themes of food production and regulation, healthy diets, food sustainability, food waste and food insecurity and poverty.
- **Community and Public Engagement:**
 - Community Well-being Kitchen: Markets Area Belfast, Public Lecture. Pilot programme designed to help address community-level challenges around mental health, physical wellbeing and the cost-of-living crisis in the area

- Nutrition and Parkinson's Disease: Series of health promotion events at local Parkinson's UK support groups.
- Big Breakfast for World Parkinson's Disease Day: Fundraising event for PDUK

Faculty of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment

During the AY 2024 to 2025, the School of Engineering at Ulster University demonstrated its sustained and evolving commitment to EDI through an extensive portfolio of initiatives aimed at fostering an inclusive, respectful, and supportive environment for all students and staff. This commitment was strongly recognised in the School's recent successful renewal of its Athena Swan Silver Award. A variety of new and dynamic initiatives were launched during this period, reflecting the School's proactive approach to EDI. These included a partnership with Women in STEM to support Final Year Projects, the hosting of a vibrant STEM Summer Day in 2024, and a wide range of cultural celebrations such as a Chinese New Year lunch, Eid festivities, and a Mid-Autumn Festival for international students from SUST. The School also took part in Engineering Sustainable Futures 2024 and 2025.

Social integration and student engagement remained central to the School's EDI strategy, with events such as a Pizza Night for international students, a Christmas Quiz, a staff-wide coffee morning. The School was also successful in securing a placement student whose role focuses on strengthening student engagement across all EDI-related activity.

In addition to these new efforts, the School maintained strong momentum across its ongoing EDI commitments. These included its partnership with Primary Engineers to inspire early-stage learners, consistent student outreach, active support for international students, backing nominees for the Young Woman Engineer of the Year Awards, and the continued implementation of the Technician Commitment. Internal staff-focused initiatives such as the Admin Staff Away Day, student-focused training schemes, and the BAME+ Network also remained integral to fostering a culture of inclusion. The buddy system continued to support staff transitions and wellbeing, while preparations for the Silver Athena Swan Award renewal were methodically advanced throughout the year.

In response to feedback from the University-wide Valuing Voices Survey, the School placed a strong emphasis on listening and acting upon staff concerns. This was further reinforced through an anonymous survey conducted during the July 2024 Away Day, enabling staff to openly voice their experiences and suggestions. Informed by this feedback, the School Executive has since committed to rolling out targeted initiatives that directly respond to the themes raised, ensuring continued alignment with the School's values and the needs of its community. These ongoing

efforts reaffirm the School of Engineering's dedication to building a culture where all individuals feel valued, supported, and empowered to thrive.

In May 2024, teenagers within the COS Circle of Support for Autism Families had the opportunity to take part in a two-day engineering workshop led by the School of Computing, Engineering and Intelligent Systems on the Derry Londonderry Campus. These workshops were funded by Community Outreach through the Access Ambassador Programme. The project aligned to a widening access activity designed to positively influence individuals and communities and enable fair access, progression and success in and to, higher education. The teenagers participated in a series of engineering workshops consisting of 3D scanning and printing, material testing, structural analysis and robotics. The workshop aimed to inspire young minds, fostering a passion for STEM through practical activities and interactive sessions. Feedback from the project was very positive, with many expressing newfound enthusiasm for engineering and technology.

On 31 May 2024, 70 students from the Royal Academy of Engineering Connecting STEM Teachers schools' network in Northern Ireland celebrated the 92nd anniversary of Amelia Earhart landing unexpectedly near Derry~Londonderry when she became the first woman to fly the Atlantic solo in May 1932. The Amelia Earhart STEM Challenge, hosted annually by School of Computing, Engineering and Intelligent Systems on the Derry~Londonderry Campus brought together students from across the region to compete in design challenges ranging from Longest Flying Distance to Best Plane Aesthetics. The STEM Challenge allowed them to demonstrate their talents and celebrate the magnificent achievements of Amelia Earhart and her unique aviation link with Derry in a way that was both fun and educational. The winners of The Amelia Earhart Legacy Association Perpetual Trophy were Thornhill College, who also won a helicopter ride with their teacher over Derry~Londonderry and along the flight path taken by Amelia Earhart, before she landed on Gallagher's farm in Ballyarnett, courtesy of City of Derry Airport and Cutting-Edge Helicopters. The Amelia Earhart STEM Challenge was initiated by Clare Doherty, the Academy's Connecting STEM Teachers coordinator in Northern Ireland. She is the great-granddaughter of Robert Gallagher, the farmer who was among the first to greet the celebrated US women pilot at Ballyarnett when she landed in one of his fields.

On 20 November 2024, Professor Michaela Black, Professor of Artificial Intelligence (AI) at Ulster University, delivered a public professorial lecture, on 'Demystifying the Hype of AI'. Professor Black shared insights on AI's trajectory, its societal impact and what the future holds in this exciting field, unpacking the often-misunderstood aspects of artificial intelligence, examining its societal impact, ethical implications, and the potential challenges and breakthroughs the University may see in the years to come.

On 18 March 2025, researchers from NIFBM, Intelligent Systems Research Centre, School of Computing, Engineering and Intelligent Systems on the Derry Londonderry Campus organized a Patients-Public Involvement (PPI) Workshop centred on personalized stroke rehabilitation, with a focus on brain-computer interface (BCI)-driven neurorehabilitation. The workshop brought together a diverse group of participants, including stroke survivors, family members, neurologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, nurses, and neuroscience researchers from institutions across the UK, India, and Bangladesh. The primary objective of the workshop was to gather feedback on how BCI-based rehabilitation strategies can be adapted to individual cognitive and mental states to improve patient engagement and acceptance. The response was overwhelmingly positive. Patients and their families expressed strong interest in the technology and contributed valuable suggestions for improvement. Key areas of feedback included the need for an intuitive user interface and the development of more comfortable and patient-friendly exoskeleton designs. Participants were also consulted on their preferences for home-based therapy. Many patients welcomed the possibility, provided sufficient training and support were available. Caregivers, including nurses and therapists, stressed the importance of effective tools for monitoring patient progress in both clinical and home settings. They also shared crucial insights into patient-specific considerations that should inform the system's design. The perspectives gathered through this workshop are proving instrumental in guiding the refinement of Ulster University's BCI technology. They ensure that the Faculty's approach remains user-centred and grounded in the practical realities of stroke rehabilitation. Ultimately, these insights will help make personalized, BCI-supported stroke recovery more accessible, acceptable, and effective for patients and caregivers alike.

Language Actions

Ulster University hosted a musical event for Irish Language week on 26 March on the Derry~Londonderry Campus. This a concert of largely Irish Language songs, with the entire evening presented in Irish. There were approximately 80 people in attendance. Music was provided by The Magee Trad Society and the band The High Seas, from the Donegal Gaeltacht, which includes former student Dermot Mulholland.

Office of the University Secretary

The People Committee, at its meeting on 21 May 2024, received a comprehensive presentation from the Dean of EDI, which provided an update on EDI activity within the University, the linkage to the University's strategy, the proposed new EDI structure, and 'next steps'. Members commended the body of work being undertaken by the EDI Team, and the University's ambitions in this important area.

The University included a welcoming statement to promote equality of opportunity in the recruitment for new external lay members to Council in May and June 2024. The

University also used a wide variety of platforms to advertise the Board vacancies, including Ulster University's Section 75 Consultee List and equality networks. Recruitment information was available in accessible formats when requested.

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