

Appendix 2

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

Widening Access and Participation (WAP)

The government regulates the University's Widening Access and Participation Plan, which includes an account of expenditures, projects and future plans to widen access and participation to groups that are under-represented in Higher Education (HE).

Ensuring an equitable balance in cross community participation, the following are the University's target groups:

- students with backgrounds of social and economic need;
- students declaring a disability and those with disability support allowance;
- individuals from low participation neighbourhoods;
- young males from the most disadvantaged communities;
- girls into STEM;
- students with a background of care;
- students of ethnicity other than White UK/Irish;
- carers (new) etc.

The University achieves this through the following:

- direct financial support to eligible students;
- retention and success initiatives to support students;
- targeted educational outreach to schools and communities;
- flexible education pathways for under-represented groups;
- sponsoring active research into educational attainment; and
- research and impact.

Lack of financial and other direct support can result in inequality of progression to HE which can impact negatively on the diversity of Northern Ireland's (NI) workforce of the future.

In total for 2022/23, the above activities represent an investment of in excess of £3 million in direct student support and in excess of £7 million in indirect student support.

Direct Financial Support to Under-represented Students

During 2022/23, over £1.8 million in Access Bursaries, Care Leavers' Bursaries and Accommodation Vouchers were distributed to eligible students from families on income support (exact 2022/23 figures are not available yet). This helps reduce the financial barrier to participating in HE. In addition to this over £100,000 was also spend on module fee waivers during 2021/22.

This direct financial support is funded by the University from fee income and is supported by Student Administration, with family tax and benefit records verified by the Student Loans

Company. There is a correlation between Section 75 groups, socioeconomic deprivation and under-representation in HE.

Technology Fund

Following on from the University decision to set up a Technology Fund at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic (2020/21), to provide laptops to those who would be least likely to be able to provide the technology required for home and online learning themselves, it was agreed that this would be continued in 2022/23.

The Fund, which was set up and resourced by WAP, Student Wellbeing, and the Development and Alumni Relations Office was directly targeted at:

- full-time undergraduate first year students eligible for a widening access bursary (that is, with a household income below £22,500 as submitted to the Student Loan Company); and
- students with a background of care.

A number of pre-paid MiFi units were also purchased for students who did not have adequate broadband.

Prior to 2021/22, we were unable to support students who received either a Social Work or an NHS bursary as we were unable to verify the household income element of the criteria. In 2022/23, with the additional support received from the Department of the Economy, we were able to support first year students who were in receipt of NHS and Social Work Bursaries with a permanent home postcode within Deciles 1-5 of the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure.

Community Scholarships

Ulster University believes that higher education should be accessible to everyone with potential, and that university can be an engine not just for economic growth but for the social and economic progress of the most disadvantaged communities, leading to a more inclusive, equitable and confident society.

[Community Scholarships](#) help more students to access HE. They have been developed for applicants from all schools across NI who are first in their families to attend university and for those who face a range of potential barriers including: economic deprivation, social barriers including disability, caring responsibilities or care experienced.

Lack of finance may be the only reason that many young people with potential do not progress to university. In order to address this inequality, Community Scholarships support more young people on their University journey to ensure that they graduate with the qualifications, experiences and skills that will secure their future.

78 Community scholars were enrolled in Ulster University during 2022/23. A further 26 Community Scholarships are available for 2023/24. Essential to the provision of the scholarship is the follow up support to ensure that each scholar can thrive while in UU.

Community Scholarships – Thrive Programme

The Thrive Programme enables an inclusive approach to access Higher Education. Ulster University welcomes and supports new Scholarship students who have been successfully awarded the Ulster University Community Scholarship over the past 3 years.

Thrive adapts a two-pronged approach. It recognises the financial support needs of our widening access Community Scholars and provides a supportive nurtured environment of advocacy.

Many young people have multiple barriers when entering university, from financial to well-being. Thrive provides a dedicated package to enable young learners to thrive.

Having a dedicated person to support young learners, is crucial to ensuring they have the opportunity to realise their hopes and aspirations and to excel academically.

The Thrive programme:

- Develops a sense of belonging to Ulster University.
- Supports Retention.
- Builds relationships alongside academic and social space.
- Enables Community Scholars to reach their full potential and obtain graduate success.

Points of Engagement:

- Welcome Pack at the beginning of semester.
- One to one meetings with a dedicated mentor across both semesters.
- Group meetings across both semesters.
- Opportunities to volunteer and represent the University.
- Informal reach through email and text message.
- Advocating for students when they are faced with difficulties.
- Signposting to other support services in the University

Scholarship Student quotes:

"I still can't believe I've finished my first year already! There were times I thought it wouldn't have been possible, going back to education with a 7-week-old newborn and a toddler was difficult but we got there in the end! I'm excited to see what 2nd year brings and I'll for sure be staying."

"I have received the most amount of help I could possibly have hoped for, and I am deeply thankful for it. University always felt like an unachievable mountain peak, but with the support of the scholarship I've finally been able to realise that I'm capable of doing what I've always wanted, and that I truly belong at Ulster University."

Retention and Success Support for Under-represented Students

Small group teaching

Small group teaching, an initiative to support student retention and success, has been fully embedded across Ulster University. Our reported progression statistics are excellent and indicate that all quintiles of derivation progress at similar rates.

This has now been further enhanced by investment in assistive technologies and services supporting attendance, engagement and academic skills support to improve retention, progress, achievement and success. In total this represents an investment of £0.26 million. Again, in this connection, the correlation between under-representation by Section 75 groups and socioeconomic deprivation is noted.

Peer Mentoring

The University operates the internationally accredited and quality assured Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) peer-mentoring scheme. PASS is available to any programme that requests support based on progression performance for WAP objectives. Trained student mentors are assigned to groups of students in participating programmes. The WAP correlation between Section 75 groups and progression is noted.

Interactive data dashboards are used to monitor the impact for WAP and inclusion purposes. During academic year 2022/23, PASS ran within Psychology, Law, Law with Criminology, Law with Politics and International Studies, Accounting and Law, Computing, Biology, Biomedical Science and Quantity Surveying. Overall, 60 students signed up as a PASS Leader. This is lower than previous rates of engagement pre COVID.

PASS leaders have opportunities to undertake two CPPD modules with Accreditation and EDGE to enhance their employability.

Trained student PASS leaders (mentors) usually work in pairs to facilitate weekly timetabled study sessions with students in lower years groups (mentees). Some programmes used blended methods to offer flexibility of pace, place and mode.

During 2022/23, the University offered, 'Studiosity Student Connect Peer Mentoring'. This allowed first year students to seek discipline specific support from final year student mentors. It complemented the PASS scheme and the other Studiosity services that were already available to students. The main purpose of introducing this was to aid student retention as part of the University's Widening Access and Participation Plan and provide an additional route for first year students to seek support.

Studiosity Writing Feedback and Connect Live Studiosity Services

During 2022/23, the University continued to offer, 'Studiosity Student Writing Feedback' and Studiosity Connect Live'. This allowed all students to upload any assignment draft for feedback and/or connect live to a Maths, Science, or English Subject Specialist, when they needed help even after hours.

Ulster University Schools Engagement Team

In March/April 2023 the Ulster University Schools Engagement Team delivered Inspiration North West.

Inspiration North West

This project was initiated as a Summer School in 2020 but Covid-19 restricted this and therefore was amended to roll out during 2023.

The project objective was to inspire students in the North West (NW) to see the NW region as a destination for success: that is, School, University, Employment and Global success.

The project was funded by the Garfield Weston Trust and was designed to address the cultural view that students must leave the NW to be successful. It involved Year 10/11 students coming onto the Coleraine and Derry~Londonderry campuses and undertaking a number of inspirational workshops. They also enjoyed the opportunity to speak and question young NW based entrepreneurs.

Students were questioned before the event and again post event. This showed that attitudes towards the NW had improved, and students were more likely to remain in the NW for university

and their careers. The project saw direct impact in attitudes which in turn should see an improvement in behaviour towards remaining in the NW for their university choice. At the time of writing, the review of the project is underway. However, it is clear that 85% of those students who participated saw a significant improvement in how they saw the NW region.

Ulster University Schools Outreach

Ulster University Schools Outreach Unit offers an extensive portfolio of aspiration and attainment raising programmes designed for young people across Northern Ireland to recognise their full learning potential.

All educational interventions are fully inclusive and work with pupils of all abilities. Programmes are delivered in Maintained, Controlled, Integrated, Irish Medium, Grammar, Non-Grammar and Special Educational Needs (SEN) schools across NI. Additional support is given to schools with a Free School Meals Entitlement of over 40%.

Outreach activities provide equality of opportunity and good relations for all irrespective of:

- gender, religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- whether they have a disability or not;
- caring responsibilities;
- men and women generally.

The following synopsis highlights some of the outreach projects led by Ulster University which were aimed at school pupils both primary and post-primary across NI, to support equality, inclusion and cross-community integration within the school sector.

The Manchester United Foundation Partnership

Ulster University has a unique partnership with Manchester United Foundation to engage and inspire young people.

Across a range of programmes, the Foundation has engaged with 11 schools and delivered 100+ sessions to 622 participants which has resulted in 200+ hours of work experience. Of these 210 were male, 412 were female, 4 were from minoritised ethnic groups and 26 were SEN.

The Female Development Programme

The Manchester United Foundation delivered a Female Development Programme designed to promote young females into leadership positions and build their confidence. A range of physical and educational sessions were delivered. These were designed to increase awareness of careers pathways and opportunities in education and sport.

20 pupils (aged 12 -16) from 10 Schools (2 from each school) across the Foyle Learning Community in Derry~Londonderry participated in weekly sessions across 28 weeks. They completed basic football skills along with team building and personal development activities.

Some of the initiatives the young females undertook are as follows:

- BT Playmaker course – Six participants gained qualification over 5 weeks.

- Two Female Leadership Next Move Events – these were delivered on campus after a practical session by Julie Nelson, Northern Ireland Footballer, and ex professional Eva McGinnis, alumni student in Derry and Manchester United Foundation volunteer.
- Black History Month – Participants dressed in Red to show their support for ‘Show racism the red card’ as well as a ‘Black History Month’ themed session.
- Social Action - Participants help to support the Christmas appeal.

The Females in Technology & Business Initiative

A new initiative delivered in partnership with the Manchester United Foundation, Alchemy Technology Services and Ulster University Faculty staff enabled young females to investigate professions within Technology & Business. An increasing number of girls are studying science, technology, engineering and business at GCSE, but men still vastly outnumber women in Technology and Business roles in the workplace.

A range of engaging and constructive workshops were delivered alongside presentations from role models and industry.

Pupils gained valuable insights into the life and career of female leaders in the sector as well as giving pupils the opportunity to participate in practical workshops delivered by Ulster University.

These included:

- Coding;
- Robotics; and
- Industry Discussion.

The Ability Counts Programme

The Ability Counts programme delivered in partnership with the Manchester United Foundation promoted and developed the use of *football* as a tool within educational outreach to broaden inclusion of pupils of all abilities.

The programme was offered to SENCO’s across the Foyle Learning Community. 10 schools engaged. It was aimed at young people aged 12-16 years and was designed to give equal opportunities to each pupil fully inclusive of physical or SEN special educational needs. The initiative was delivered across 28 weeks spanning from September to June and focused on:

- Improving Mental and Physical Health of participants;
- Engagement and relationship building with Foyle Learning Community pupils on campus;
- Inclusive football engagement across the with Foyle Learning Community schools.

Ulster University Girls Who Code Club

The ‘Girls Who Code Club’ was set up to inspire female pupils to explore programming using the Micro:bit and bit:bot robotics. It was designed to build confidence and ability with young females, to inspire young females to pursue STEM pathways and careers.

The pupils were introduced to the Micro:bit and they initially coded it using the blocks editor. Once they were comfortable coding using the blocks editor, they moved on to exploring how to code it using two other programming languages - Micropython and JavaScript. The pupils were encouraged to work in pairs to strengthen teamwork, communication and negotiation skills, to make changes to the code and fix errors.

During the initial session the pupils were introduced to the Micro:bit and asked to sign-up to the Discovery Academy where the corresponding Micro:bit courses were available online. Three new activities were introduced into each session and the pupils completed their course by taking a quiz to the corresponding Micro:bit module on our online Discovery Academy.

The pupils received their certificate once they completed their course and they were awarded gold pins for successfully completing two Micro:bit courses.

The Welcome Hub at Glengormley Integrated College

The Welcome Hub is a specialised Educational Unit for refugee and asylum-seeking children. It is based at Integrated College Glengormley. Children attending the Hub are aged from 11-16 and they come from Iraq, Iran, Palestine, Kuwait, Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine, South Sudan, Eritrea and Kyrgyzstan.

Over the past 2 academic years the Schools Outreach team have worked in collaboration with the Hub Co-ordinators to provide a series of themed educational and aspiration raising workshops.

During 2022/23 Outreach Officers delivered 10 sessions for 24 pupils on the themes of Hospitality, Event Management, Travel & Tourism and Engineering. The programme culminated with a tour of the new Belfast Campus.

Some of these young people who were new to Northern Ireland have experienced trauma in their lives. Working collaboratively with the co-ordinators, this project provided, welcome, nurturing and compassion to these young people. It provided access for all and inspired these young people to achieve a better future.

Men in Nursing Project

This project aimed to address the stereotypical view of nursing as a female only profession. It increased knowledge and awareness of nursing and influenced perceptions, so that young men would consider nursing as a viable option in the future.

Breaking the stigma around men in the nursing professional is important as currently men represent a small percentage of the nursing workforce and approximately 10% of Ulster undergraduate nursing students.

The Men in Nursing initiative is a highly interactive mode of outreach with nursing students from Ulster University demonstrating clinical skills such as hand washing, using a defibrillator, blood pressure pulse, CPR, trauma and wound dressings, mental health. It gave 38 young men from Year 10 at Holy Cross College a practical insight and hands on experience of the profession.

LGBT+ & BAME+ University Networks Creative Competitions

The Schools Outreach Team facilitated a range of competitions to promote equality and inclusion. These created a space for young people to express their opinions, skills, and knowledge in a wide range of areas.

In collaboration with the University's Diversity Networks, the LGBT+ Network and BAME+ Network, opportunities were provided to raise awareness and celebrate diversity through school's outreach to promote the University's wider equality, diversity and inclusion agenda and

share the message that Ulster University is a welcoming environment where diversity is celebrated and enhances the learning experience of everyone.

Time Out for Positive Steps at Belfast Hospital School Project

The TOPS Project (Time Out for Positive Steps) is part of Belfast Hospital School. It is a specialised educational Unit for young pupils presenting with emotional health and well-being issues and anxiety-based school refusal. The project provides for Key Stage Four pupils from across Belfast who have all been referred by the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

This group of young people have experienced mental health challenges in their teens. Working collaboratively with the co-ordinators this project provided a positive and engaging learning environment which focused on the development of the pupils' talents. The project provided access for all and inspired young people to seek a better future.

Ulster University Community Outreach

Working in partnership characterises the University's approach to community outreach and engagement. Partnerships with key stakeholders are essential given the diversity of communities that we reach.

Through the Ulster University Science Shop, the Community Engagement team continues to engage with disability and equality-focused issues with voluntary sector partners across Northern Ireland.

This long-standing initiative encourages both Ulster University staff and students to undertake real world connected learning projects with the community and voluntary sector organisations. The Science Shop engaged 551 students who completed over 331 projects, in partnership with Alternative Angels, Groundwork NI, Sported, The Rainbow Project, Sailortown Regeneration, Foyle Down's Syndrome Trust, Grow NI, Limestone Football Club and North Belfast Advice Partnership. The students engaged were drawn from a range of disciplines including, Law, Public Relations, Sociology, Interactive Media, Consumer Management and Food Innovation, Sports, Architecture, Psychology, and Communications Advertising and Marketing.

'Raising Aspirations and Achievements of Care Experienced Young People' is a programme developed in partnership with Fostering Network, all Social Care Trusts and Health and Social Care Boards who help to identify participants and support them while they are on campus. In partnership with The Fostering Network, VOYPIC (Voice of Young People in Care), Include Youth, Opportunity Youth Action for Children, FE Colleges, Department of Education, Student Finance NI and the Education Authority we advertise and encourage young people to "Tick the Box" on their UCAS application so that they can access this invaluable support.

The University is national leader on supporting Care Leavers. During 2022/2023 the University recorded 90 enrolled students with care experience. These students have a single point of contact within the University and each student received a widening access bursary to support their learning experience at Ulster University.

The Community Engagement team, in partnership with Fostering Network, have run a range of new activities for staff, foster carers and young people. The University has facilitated events and workshops and arranged tours of the new Belfast campus and Ulster accommodation.

The team also:

- Reinstated the joint UU and Fostering Network summer school for young people to attend the Coleraine campus;
- Engaged with VOYPIC (Voices for Young People in Care) who moved to new premises adjacent to the new Belfast campus;
- Facilitated a variety of activity and meetings to develop new opportunities and to ensure the campus is an accessible space for their service users encouraging them to become an Ulster student.

Through the Ulster University staff Access Ambassador scheme, the University funded opportunities for staff to share their expertise with community partners including the following projects:

1. Introducing care experienced young people to art studios at the Belfast School of Art, facilitating an introduction to art media, methods of art making and forms of contemporary art that invite participation at Ulster.
2. School of Geography and Environmental Science facilitating workshops to equip young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods with the skills they need to better understand their local environments and how to advocate for change.
3. Belfast School of Architecture, Studio Infra, working in partnership with LGBTQI+ community partners imagining the future of Queer Spaces working in Belfast's Queer Quarter — Union Street and surrounding area.

Ulster University Flexible Education Pathways

The design and development of the flexible modular provision within the CPPD (Certificate of Personal and Professional Development) framework is informed by learning needs identified through on-going consultation with the education, community and business sectors.

Provision is targeted at under-represented groups. CPPD modular options are available at level 3 and 4 to support part-time students intent on exploring the achievement of higher-level skills, or a route to further HE studies (in line with the NI Access Strategy: Access to Success).

The framework also serves workforce development opportunities for employers by enabling recognition and accreditation of skills (in line with the NI Skills Strategy: Skills for Success). Ulster University provided accredited learning opportunities for 158 community, NEETS (Not in Employment, Education or Training), FE bridging students and work-based adults in areas of WAP. The design and development of the modular provision within the undergraduate flexible frameworks was informed by learning needs identified through on-going consultation with the education, community and business sectors.

298 students were enrolled on 22 modules at undergraduate level that were available to the external part time market, engaging with organisations such as, Hastings, Local NI Schools, FE Colleges, PSNI and Chenega Europe.

Ulster University Research and Impact in Educational Attainment

A range of agile interactive data dashboards were created during the reporting period using both external and internal data for WAP benchmarking, targeting and evaluation purposes.

Dashboards created using external data provide information to outreach teams and/or other key stakeholders, relating to primary and post-primary free school meal entitlements, special educational needs profiles, GCSE and A-Level attainment, progression to Ulster University and WAP HE Institution data comparisons.

Dashboards created using internal data provide information on WAP demographic profiles by University, Campus, Faculty, School, Programme and Student characteristics, including geography. Such data supports impact, statutory reporting and quality enhancement for key stakeholders.

Suitably protected, these allow visibility of equities of widening participation (WP) performance and Section 75 characteristics. Where inequities are found the response may be a number of the following:

- financial, access, outreach or retention initiative monitored within the WAP Plan;
- supportive measures through general quality enhancement;
- staff awareness, pedagogy design or curriculum development; and
- mentoring support.

Taking Boys Seriously (TBS)

During the reporting period, the TBS project focused on planning for a TBS Boys & Young Men's Summit which took place in September 2022 and engaged in a research analysis phase which involved summarising key research findings via the compilation of research papers and reporting objectives to Athena Swan in March 2023.

The TBS Boys & Young Men's Summit

In September 2022, the project hosted the TBS Boys & Young Men's Summit at Ulster University's Belfast Campus. This provided the opportunity for 200 boys who had been identified as experiencing barriers to their education attainment, to have a positive encounter with Ulster University. It enabled them to contribute to the wider research goal of raising educational aspirations and opportunities for young boys/men from community backgrounds that are under-represented in Higher Education.

200 young men from across 14 schools and 3 EOTAS centres took part. This one-day event was a celebration and recognition of the participation in TBS research of adolescent boys who experience compounded educational disadvantage. Workshops were facilitated by a range of local youth providers and Ulster's Schools Outreach Team. Diversity and inclusion were prominent themes throughout the workshops on offer including:

- *Talk About It* workshop facilitated by PureMental NI which centred around mental health and emotional well-being, in particular discussing the barriers to communication when it comes to well-being and ways to overcome them.
- *ABCs of Identity* workshop facilitated jointly by Cara-Friend and Community Relations in School with a focus on how we see and understand ourselves and how this is shaped by our personalities, cultures, gender/sexual expression, families, and background.
- *Becoming a Campaigner* workshop facilitated by Belfast YMCA which focused on how to influence change in school and education and how to become effective campaigners.

- *Magic of Young Men* workshop facilitated by YouthAction NI which focused on what it means to be a young man, challenging stereotypes, busting myths and celebrating the positive influence of young men.

This was the first time that the majority of the 200 boys had been on a university campus and teachers reported:

“The event was such a brilliant celebration of all the research and practice that has been carried out over the past year. The boys had a great day and felt so proud to be recognised.”

“The boys had a wonderful day, and enjoyed making friends and connections with boys in other schools. They loved how the workshops allowed them to work with each other and with boys from other schools.”

The Head Boy of Belfast Boys Model School reported:

“It’s brilliant to see so many young men from across Northern Ireland coming together to raise their voices and be recognised for their contribution to this very important project. I’m proud to see how my school have been taking steps to take boys seriously and help every boy reach their potential.”

The research analysis phase

100 educators across 22 post-primary schools and 4 EOTAS centres have engaged with Ulster’s 10 TBS principles of relational education and applied them in their educational setting. During this reporting period, the research phase involved working with 442 adolescent boys across 22 post-primary schools and 4 EOTAS centres in Northern Ireland in relation to their experiences of education.

Key findings from research phase have informed the development of a series of research papers currently out for peer review.

The research has found that:

- 47% of the sample felt they don’t get adequate opportunities to talk about feelings and emotions in educational settings.
- 73% reported rarely or never talking to an educator in school when they feel stressed or overwhelmed.
- 45% reported rarely or never getting the support they need in school when feeling down.

In response to these concerning findings Ulster’s TBS research is working with schools and youth projects to strengthen an approach to working relationally with boys and young men which explicitly emphasises the need to work with emotions, promote positive mental health, and work positively with masculinities in a way which counters deficit narratives and promotes a strengths-based approach.

Core to the growing momentum and groundswell of support for TBS is an active steering group including representatives across the spectrum of formal and informal education. This includes the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools, Controlled Schools Support Council, Education

Authority, Department of Education, and YouthAction NI who are committed to supporting the integration of the TBS relational education approach in policy, pedagogy, and practice.

The next phase of the research is focused on strengthening an evidence-base which captures the impact of this relational education approach in relation to engagement, experiences, aspirations, and outcomes in education for boys and young men experiencing compounded educational disadvantage.

Athena Swan

The TBS project shared objectives and findings via a report to Athena Swan in March 2023.

Alternative External Access Pathways

The University-hosted Collaborative Partnerships Forum supports all Further Education (FE) institutions across NI in strategy and coordinated development of alternative pathways at Access Diploma and Foundation Degree levels.

The University validates FE provision leading to qualifications at Levels 3, 4 and 5 which provide direct entry to the University as well as standalone exit qualifications across NI and qualifications within Apprenticeship provision. Typically, the FE sector will cater for a wide range of under-represented groups. This contribution by the University further adds to the sophisticated range of pathways and support measures that enable enhancement and advancement to HE.

Numbers on Ulster University-validated programmes across NI FE and college sector (including CAFRE (College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise) have shown a period of decline, impacted by the falling 18-year-old demographic and Covid (for example, centre assessed grades) and are of the order of approximately 3000 - 3500 students.

In most years between 300-600 students' progress to Ulster University. In the academic year 2021/22, 551 (306 in 2022/23) students progressed from Collaborative FE institutions onto full and part-time programmes at Ulster University.

1476 students from the six Regional FE Colleges joined an Ulster University Undergraduate Full-time programme. Students came from a range of qualifications and joined Ulster University programmes from entry level (level 4), up to level 6 (via Summer bridging). 40.5% of those with NI permanent home postcodes can be defined as WAP students based on postcode (that is, Deciles 1-4). 19.1% of these were from decile 1 or decile 2.

In academic year 2022-23, 306 Ulster validated award students progressed from Collaborative FE institutions onto full and part-time programmes at Ulster University (Decile profile information for 2022-23 is not yet available).

Higher Level Apprenticeships

Higher Level Degree Apprenticeships offer an alternative route to achieving a Degree or Postgraduate qualification by supporting employers in upskilling new employees and reskilling existing employees in new roles.

This route widens opportunity for individuals who may have dependents, or other difficulties in committing to full-time study, to undertake funded study whilst remaining in employment. Ulster University is the largest provider of Higher-Level Apprenticeships at Level 6 and 7 in Northern Ireland.

In academic year 2022/23, over 240 apprentices commenced study with Ulster University.

Provost's Portfolio

A refreshed executive role of University Provost was announced in February 2023, coinciding with the recently launched Corporate Strategy, [People, Place and Partnerships](#). The new Provost, Professor Cathy Gormley-Heenan, leads a portfolio focused on the development and execution of the University's Operational Plan for external engagement, highlighting and developing the contribution Ulster University makes to the economy, culture, and communities in NI and the wider world.

Portfolio responsibility includes Marketing and Communications; Department for Alumni and Relations Office; Campus Life; Regional Development; the Confucius Institute and the Economic Policy Centre.

The following information provides a brief snapshot of activities that promoted equality of opportunity and good relations across this Portfolio.

Marketing and Communications

Logos and various creative material and campaigns have been delivered to assist the Diversity Networks to increase their visibility, promote events and deliver messaging in a professional and impactful way. The impacts of this are wide-ranging and enable the Networks to build visibility, membership, and momentum.

Support for Pride activities with social media amplification from 22 July to 25 August 2022, across Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram. Marking student stories as well as profiling events in Belfast and Derry. This demonstrates to current and prospective staff and students that we are an inclusive university, as well as supporting local community and businesses through civic engagement.

Belfast Campus Sky Illumination - lighting projected out into North Belfast tailored to promote EDI calendar events. For example, during LGBT History Month in February 2023, the Skybridge was illuminated in rainbow colours. An Illuminations Policy is currently under development to support an annual calendar of events. The illumination of the building acts as a community beacon showing UU's support and recognition to key equality dates across the year.

The staff digital news channel, *Insight*, continued to publish articles throughout the reporting period, to profile events and activities that promote equality of opportunity and good relations across the University.

A sample of articles, by titles, is listed below:

- Ulster University awarded Northern Ireland Diversity Mark accreditation
- Ulster University launches its Menopause Policy

- LGBT+ Staff Network celebrates second anniversary! (ulster.ac.uk)
- LGBT+ Staff Network Invites you to Ten x 9 event at the Black Box (Belfast) (ulster.ac.uk)

- Staff invited to complete survey on gender equality at Ulster University
- Ulster University gains new Disability Accreditation Mark
- New Employability initiative creates life-changing opportunities for graduates with disabilities (ulster.ac.uk)
- Invitation to #EmbraceEquity in celebration of International Women's Day (ulster.ac.uk)
- Ulster University gains White Ribbon Accreditation in support of ending violence against women
- Supporting Parents at Ulster University with Parenting NI
- Launch of new resource to support parents in end-of-life care (ulster.ac.uk)
- Equality Commission report urges Government to put equality at heart of future funding policies (ulster.ac.uk)
- Ulster University Wo/men's Network Supports Rural Community Menopause Awareness Event
- Ulster University awards 86 Community Scholarships helping students access higher education
- Belfast campus welcomes local schools to a Mental Health Symposium (ulster.ac.uk)

Development and Alumni Relations Office (DARO)

DARO is responsible for building and maintaining relationships with graduates and friends of the University. Alumni and friends help current students to succeed through the provision of mentoring, placement opportunities, and opportunities for employment upon graduation. They also help current students through philanthropic support.

UU Community Scholarships

Through consultation with schools and community groups, DARO worked with the Schools Outreach Team to identify that lack of finance remained the most significant barrier for those young people with potential from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds, to progress to a higher education. As a result, the Ulster University Community Scholarships were launched in April 2022 to target school/college leavers with potential and who meet the following criteria:

- Be care experienced
- Have a NI postcode
- Be in receipt of an offer from UU and have picked UU as first choice

In addition to the above criteria, applicants indicate if they met any of the following criteria:

- Be currently in receipt of free school meals (FSM) and/or Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA)
- Be the main carer for a family member or dependant
- Be in receipt of disability living allowance/personal independence payments
- Permanently reside in an area of high deprivation/low participation

46 scholarships were awarded in 2022/23, meaning that now 88 students at Ulster University are being supported with scholarships of £2,000-£3,000 a year for each year of their degree (excluding placement year). This initiative supports equality of access and aims to contribute to social mobility and economic development in NI. A further 30 scholarships have been promoted

during 2022/23 for students entering in September 2023. Feedback from recipients has been positive, for example:

“Without this scholarship, I would have had to go into full-time employment as I would not have been able to cover the costs of going to university. It has made a huge difference to my life, giving me the opportunity to follow my lifetime aspiration to study a degree in Sports.”
Ulster University Community Scholar 2022

Campus Life

With approximately 27,000 students across four distinct campuses across NI, it is the student experience that is offered which sets Ulster University apart. The University is uniquely placed to engage local communities, support expansion of the knowledge-based economy and contribute to the economic, social and cultural development of Northern Ireland.

Campus Life covers Residential Services; Student Wellbeing; Sport Services; Our Campuses; Library Services; Employability and Careers; Students' Union and Go Global.

A sample of activities which took place during the reporting period across Campus Life are listed below:

Holi Festival

Access to the University's Jordanstown site for a local community group to enjoy a 1 day celebrating of Holi festival, there was music, traditional foods and colours bringing families together for an important event within the Hindu culture. This has opened the campus grounds to the Hindu community to celebrate an important festival within their culture with their families and local community in a welcoming and safe environment. Over 60 people attended to enjoy the celebrations on the Jordanstown campus.

New Horizon

New Horizon is an annual 7-day Christian festival which takes place on the Coleraine campus using both external and internal spaces, covering a range of activities from celebrations to creche facilities. For one week in August 2022, over 3000 people attended this festival in Coleraine using a variety of facilities and services available on site from venue spaces to catering and accommodation. The site also welcomes day guests, opening its doors to the local community as well as to people traveling from across NI.

UU Coach Academy

To encourage more female students to progress through coaching pathway, Ulster University Students' Union (UUSU) offers funding for members and current coaches. This is an annual provision, which saw 24 (18 female) students complete coaching qualifications this academic year and who will be involved in delivering the Junior Elks programme later in the year.

Student Sport Ireland - Women's Student Coaching Academy

Spearheaded by Student Sport Ireland (SSI) and Rowing Ireland (RI), monies have been secured by SSI from Sport Ireland (SI) to deliver a Women's Student Coaching Academy across the island of Ireland to member colleges and universities. The development of the academy is led by a working group of sports officers from colleges and universities, of which UU is included. The rationale behind the academy is to increase the number of women coaching at any level in sport; set students on a trajectory to coach at a higher level and thus increase the number of

women coaching in high performance sport; and provide the wraparound support to realise this. The wraparound support will take the form of bursaries (college dependent), branded clothing, a place on the relevant coaching qualification, educational workshops in areas relevant to coaching such as nutrition, safeguarding young people, psychology etcetera, and finally, access to a coach mentor.

- 4 women students completed their year in academy and qualified in sport of choice.
- 4 women empowered to further progress their coaching development.
- Relevant clubs will benefit – additional coaching resources and improved knowledge; members inspired to seek similar opportunities.
- There are now plans to include 10 students for the 2023/24 academic programme

Sunrise Socials

Due to the remarkable growth of the ‘Sunrise Social’ phenomenon across the world, and the substantial recognition of the benefits experiencing sunrise has for a person’s mental health and wellbeing, UUSU Sport facilitated opportunities for students to connect and be physically active at sunrise during Freshers’ Fortnight (September 2022). Students were transported to surrounding areas of natural beauty near their campus of study, taking in East Strand, Portrush and Cavehill, Belfast. 75 students attended events across Belfast and Coleraine.

Regional Development

There was support for ‘White Ribbon Day’ on 25 November 2022 across the campuses, reiterating the institutional commitment to the White Ribbon Pledge to support the end of violence against women (initially signed November 2021).

On 3 March 2023, Regional Development hosted a Peace Summit in partnership with the John and Pat Hume Foundation for Peaceful Change and the dedication of new Cinematic Arts space to peace-building legacy of Mo Mowlam. [Peace Summit Report – A Call to Action](#) – was launched later in the year.

[International Women’s Day: Making a Difference event in Riverside Theatre](#) was held on the 7 March 2023. The event on the Coleraine campus was in collaboration with Enterprise Causeway and attended by 260 people.

The officer of Regional Development was also invited as a panel speaker at Aurora Your Future in HE, finale event in Dublin for female leadership programme with Advance HE. Support for the Aurora programme at Ulster and across the Irish tertiary network, enables leadership development opportunities for female colleagues.

The Confucius Institute

The Confucius Institute at Ulster University (CINIUU) aims to encourage the learning of the Chinese language and an appreciation of the culture; to facilitate cultural, educational and commercial exchanges; and to strengthen links between countries.

The Classroom Programme

The CINIUU Classroom Programme provides support for students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. Students entitled to free school meals may avail of the HSK (the

international standardised test to assess the Chinese-language proficiency of non-native speakers) or the YCT (Youth Chinese Test) Chinese language proficiency tests at no cost.

This is an ongoing opportunity in CINIUU and is promoted annually to all hub schools, continuing throughout the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023. This enables all students regardless of socio-economic background to participate fully in the Mandarin language courses.

All Confucius students have an equal opportunity to travel to China to experience the 2-week Study China programme regardless of socio-economic background.

School Liaison

CINIUU operates within a wide range of schools across the spectrum of socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. This structure was set up from the outset and continues to be supported as part of CINIUU's hub and partner school network.

Throughout the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023 schools received Mandarin language and culture lessons; supported in entering competitions and provided with specialist cultural events. Young people from all cultural and socio-economic backgrounds are supported in accessing Mandarin and culture lessons.

Developing cultural links

Events organised by the Confucius Institute combine Chinese and local culture. CINIUU seeks to create a balance in the representation of cultures in NI. In the period 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023, the following 2 major events took place: 10 Year Celebration Event and the Chinese New Year. Both events included representation from the two major traditions in NI, which included Irish dancers; Scottish dancers; Pipes and drums band and traditional Irish musicians. CINIUU uses its platform to promote and celebrate all cultures in NI.

Economic Policy Centre

The Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC) is an independent economic research centre whose aim is to produce evidence-based research to inform policy development and implementation. The Centre engages with organisations that have an interest in enhancing the Northern Ireland economy and its work is relevant to Government, business and the wider general public.

Encouraging more females into the economics profession

Economics as a profession, particularly at a senior level, is male dominated. Therefore, UUEPC sees it as part of a wider responsibility to society to encourage more females to study economics in the first instance and then to move into the economics profession.

During the reporting period, this aim continues to be progressed in the following ways:

- School visits – highlighting the role of an economist and the potential for a positive impact on society with female members of the team encouraging both boys and girls to consider economics as a career.
- This higher proportion of female graduates has resulted in a higher proportion of females entering the profession over the last decade.

Specifically, within the UUEPC, the following has been undertaken:

- Work placement/ internship opportunities – the UUEPC offers two work placements and several internships each year. These opportunities are promoted and open to all and historically we have attracted a much higher proportion of female student placements. All UUEPC placement students are then well positioned to find employment in the profession after graduation.
- Recruitment – the UUEPC has a strong record in attracting placement students back to work in the Centre after graduation. As a result, there is a high proportion of female economists working in the Centre who have the opportunity to progress.

The UUEPC now has female representation at all grades in the Centre. Of the 10 full time staff, six are female. This level of female representation in an economics group is very uncommon.

The Office of the University Secretary

On 9 May 2022, People and Culture and the Office of the University Secretary (OUS), in partnership with the Commissioner for Public Appointments (CPA), held an online workshop for staff to understand more about the process and benefits of going forward for appointment to the Boards of the University's Public Bodies and to encourage a wider and more diverse pool of applicants.

The Chair of the University's Council introduced the Workshop. Prior to wider dissemination, the call for participants was issued to the University's Staff Disability Network to particularly encourage its members to avail of this opportunity. 22 staff participated in this workshop with positive feedback received on the effectiveness of the workshop and the information received.

In October 2022, OUS conducted a recruitment exercise to appoint two external members to the University's Governing Body, the Council. All recruitment material included the following positive recruitment statement: *'Ulster University actively promotes and celebrates equality of opportunity and diversity, and, in this context, the Committee would welcome and encourage nominations from all communities - particularly those from members of the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic, disabled and LGBT+ communities.'*

In addition, the online advertisement stated that *'Candidates should also share our values and passion for diversity, openness and inclusivity and a drive to support us in delivery of our new strategy, People, Place and Partnership'*.

The opportunity was circulated to all the University's Section 75 Consultee list; the University's four Staff Diversity Networks; Diversifying.io website -a careers platform for people to find jobs and opportunities with employers and organisations who are serious about diversity and inclusion; EDI colleagues reached out specifically on behalf of OUS to Disability Action NI and Employers for Disability NI, as pan-disability organisations who had a network of contacts to encourage applications. A wide and diverse pool of sixteen applications was received.

Athena Swan

The Athena Swan (AS) Charter is a framework which is used across the globe to support and transform gender equality within higher education and research. The Charter also recognises work undertaken to address gender equality more broadly and not just barriers to progression that affect women. The University has been a signatory since 2012. During the reporting period, the following progress was made:

- The AS Institutional Self-Assessment Team (ISAT) continued to meet to oversee AS activity and submitted the University's AS submission for a Silver Award in January 2023. Membership included the Deputy Director (Employee Experience) People and Culture. The ISAT membership reflects the gender and career diversity within the University.
- The School of Computing, Engineering and Intelligent Systems successfully renewed their Bronze Award.

Language and Culture

As a widening access University, Ulster University's mission is to encourage a diverse University community. 'Inclusion' is one of the University's four core values. The University recognises especially the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity as part of the cultural wealth of our society here. During the reporting period, there were a number of activities organised that promoted Irish and Ulster Scots language and culture, including:

- Éigse Loch Lao annual Irish language conference on the Belfast campus on 2 December 2022 in partnership with Áras Mhic Reachtainn entitled 'Éigse na nUltach', an exploration of the creative activism in the province of Ulster.
- The unveiling of *Gallchnó Cholm Cille* (see image attached) took place at Ulster University (Teaching Centre, Block MU) on Wednesday 7 December 2022 with Mayor Sandra Duffy from Derry City and Strabane District Council performing the honours. Columban scholar, Dr Brian Lacey, and Emeritus Professor of Irish, Ailbhe Ó Corráin, were also in attendance to say a few words to mark the occasion. This piece of walnut (*gallchnó*) was recovered from the campus grounds and carved by Ulster University graduate James McSparron to mark 1500 years since the birth of Colm Cille ('the dove of the church'). James and his daughters were also in attendance.
- In April 2022, a meeting was organised with representatives of Ulster Folk Museum to develop collaboration between UU and UFA in Ulster-Scots research and archival studies and in May 2022, a meeting took place to share Ulster-Scots research with local broadcasters.
- Dr Frank Ferguson, Director of the Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies at the University, acted as judge for the Linen Hall Library's Ulster-Scots Writing Competition and one of the editors of the Yarns Writing Collection for the Ulster-Scots Community Network.

- Dr Ferguson has provided consultancy to a range of broadcasters on Ulster-Scots literature, language, history, culture, heritage and identity. He was a member of the University's Good Friday Agreement's Working Group (August 2022) and represented the University as part of the Hear Here Steering Group for the Causeway and Glens Borough Council which aims to develop links between Irish and Ulster-Scots cultures and communities in the borough. In November 2022, he spoke on Ulster-Scots Ghosts at a University event Portrush Town Hall and on 4 January 2023 interviewed for BBC Radio Ulster Programme on Scots writer Nairn.
- During the reporting period, Dr Ferguson supervised two PhDs exploring Ulster-Scots literature, language, identity and culture.

Office for Digital Learning

BlackBoard Ally – Digital Inclusivity

There has been ongoing implementation of Blackboard Ally, a digital accessibility tool for auto-creating alternative and accessible version of learning content uploaded to the Virtual Learning Environment. The system is designed to provide alternative versions of content but also to create long term change in the way staff create digital content. The system includes instructional material and a score for each document showing how accessible material is.

- Increased digital accessibility score from 58.2% to 62.9% across all documents in the VLE between 1 April 2022 and March 2023.
- Community of practice established (Special Interest Group on Inclusive Teaching) which includes a digital accessibility theme at each event.
- Research project underway with MSc Library and Information Systems to create an exemplar accessible course. A number of modules now achieving a 100% accessible score.
- 109.425 alternative, and accessible, files have been downloaded
- 12817 students have used the service

The Centre for Higher Education Research and Practice (CHERP)

ENHANCE Scheme

All staff who have learning and teaching roles are supported to gain professional recognition as HEA fellows via the [ENHANCE Scheme](#). This is accredited against the [PSF](#) which has recently been updated with a strengthened emphasis on inclusive practices. The ENHANCE Scheme has been redesigned, and reaccredited by Advance HE, to ensure it promotes equality for both students and those staff involved with them. The Scheme supports a diverse cohort of staff who are valued for their effective and inclusive approaches to engaging and supporting learners within the context of their roles. The Advance HE accreditation response 2023 stated:

“Inclusive practice and the Professional Values of the PSF are at the heart of the University’s ethos, as explicitly evidenced by the values-led institutional strategy which reflects those of PSF 2023.”

Post Graduate Certificate of Higher Education Practice (PgCHEP)

This programme is available to Ulster staff with a substantive learning and teaching support role that involves sustained, direct engagement with learners. It attracts mainly colleagues who are new to teaching role from across all disciplines, Faculties and campuses.

Module 1 (Semester 1-2): All staff new to a teaching role undertake the PgCHEP's first module PHE 705 Learning and Teaching in HE. The emphasis of this module is around inclusive educational practices. Staff are encouraged to understand their students' contexts and to develop curricula and approaches that support a diversity of learners.

Module 2 (Semester 1): Shaping the Curriculum in Higher Education has been designed to enable participants to enhance their professional practice in a higher education context drawing on a scholarly evidence base to develop a responsive, inclusive and flexible programme of learning.

Module 3 (Semester 2): Enhancing Learning and Teaching in HE is the capstone module of the PgCHEP and it provides an opportunity to reflect holistically on their development as an educator. Participants enhance their professional practice in a higher education context drawing on a scholarly evidence base to develop a responsive, inclusive and flexible programme of learning.

FST is a module designed to introduce PhD researchers and professional support staff to Learning, Teaching and Assessment at Ulster University. It is aligned to the First module of the PgCHEP with an emphasis around inclusive educational practices. Participants are encouraged to understand their students' contexts and to adopt approaches that support a diversity of learners.

An Athena Swan session, provided by Ulster's Athena Swan Officer, is included in the PgCHEP induction session (October 2022)

Strategy for Learning and Teaching Enhancement (SLaTE): Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)

Inclusion and equality are central to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The aim of Ulster's ESD project is improve the learning experiences, skills and success of students and graduates, by progressing the institution-wide adoption and explicit embedding of effective Education *for* Sustainable Development, across all curricula, in alignment with and in support of the UN SDG framework. The project has four objectives:

1. Benchmark ESD in curricula
2. Embed effective ESD in curricula through professional development opportunities for staff).
3. Cultivation of Sustainable Development awareness and literacy
4. Disseminate ESD best practice exemplars.

Colleagues from across disciplines, Faculties and campuses have engaged in ESD in the curriculum related opportunities, in support of the UN 2030 Agenda, which has inclusion and equality at its core.

Progress 2022-23: ESD support and professional learning for staff:

- ESD workshops provided as part of the institutional ICDF workshops (March 2023).
- University wide ESD Webinar (March 2023)
- ESD professional learning events provided for Faculties and individual schools, namely:
 - School of Applied Social & Policy Sciences (April 22)
 - School of Nursing (April 22)
 - Social Work (Oct 22)
 - School of Sport (Oct 22)
 - Faculty Life & Health Sciences - L&T Committee (Nov 22)
 - Belfast School of Art (Feb 23)
 - Health Sciences (Feb 23)
- ESD included in PgCert Higher Education Practice (PgCHEP), within module PHE708, Shaping the Curriculum (see above), and the MEd module PHE711, Leading Team Based Curriculum Design.
- Ulster staff ESD in the curriculum exemplars are collated and disseminated via invited contributions at ESD workshops and CHERP website and ESD SharePoint area.
- Ulster participation in the SOS-UK Global Goals Teach In.

SOS-UK Global Goals Teach In (February - March 2023) - Cultivation of UN SDGs Sustainable Development awareness and literacy

For the fifth consecutive year and in partnership with Ulster University Students' Union (UUSU), Ulster staff and students have participated in the national [NUS/ SOS-UK Global Goals Teach In](#) initiative that takes place annually during February-March.

Colleagues from across diverse disciplines, faculties and campuses engaged in the initiative, raising awareness of the SDGs among Ulster's student population, in support of the UN 2030 Agenda, which has inclusivity and equality at its core.

The University was ranked 6th Place (of 128 institutions UK and international) for staff engagement.

Active Learning Champions – 2022-23

The [Active Learning Champions scheme](#) has been running at Ulster University since 2019. This academic year the scheme was reinvigorated to inspire, support and disseminate effective practice in Active Learning, exploring how to enhance inclusive learning and teaching practices in the hybrid world.

23 Active Learning Champions have been re/appointed, one for each school in the University driving change from within.

In their roles, the active learning champions are taking the lead in embedding active learning pedagogies as part of the revalidation and evaluation processes, completing best practice audits, and webinars providing opportunities for staff to share practice and learn from one another. Actively promoting inclusive teaching through learning by doing.

Staff Diversity Networks

There are four Diversity Networks – three of which are for staff-only and one which has staff and student membership. This section provides a brief overview of some of the activities that the Networks have been involved in during the reporting period.

LGBT+ Staff Network

The Network celebrated its second-year anniversary during the reporting period, in February 2023. Open to all staff, PhD researchers and allies of the LGBT+ community, the Network is a vehicle to promote and enhance equality and inclusion across all genders and sexualities at the University.

In common with the University's other Diversity Networks, the LGBT+ Network provides an opportunity to raise awareness and celebrate diversity through social events; to contribute to policy development and implementation; and to help ensure that the interests of those whom the Network represents, continues to form a part of the University's wider equality, diversity and inclusion agenda.

As the Civic University, the Network also acknowledges its responsibility in providing leadership to challenge homophobic and transphobic attitudes and practices far beyond the University.

During the reporting period, activities by the Network included:

- The Confucius Institute, in partnership with the LGBT+ Staff Network and EDI Steering Group for advancing LGBT+ equality, organised cultural events 'Tea and Chats', on each of the University's campuses during May 2022.
- On 5 May 2022, welcomed back Gillian Callan, a documentary filmmaker to view her short film 'Equal' followed by a Q&A. 20 members of the Network attended. The short film tells the story of the battle for equality in NI in relation to equal rights for same-sex couples.
- To celebrate the National Day of Staff Networks on Wednesday 11 May 2022, representatives from all UU Networks hosted an online information session to encourage increased membership and participation. This was a very successful seminar with over 25 staff joining from all across the University to learn more about the activities of the various Networks.
- Various awareness days were acknowledged through social media and internal communications. By way of an example, the Network liaised with the University's corporate communications team to submit quotes and a short video piece to raise awareness on International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia ([IDAHoBiT](#)), on Tuesday 17 May 2022.
- The LGBT+ Staff Network in partnership with the Wo/men's Network hosted an online Q&A with [Lisburn YMCA](#) on 27 May 2022. The session provided an opportunity to hear from Project Co-ordinators about the Y's Girls mentoring programme, a year-long programme matches girls aged 8 - 14 with an adult mentor. The session was aimed at

encouraging members of the Networks to volunteer as a mentor, to demonstrate our civic outreach and to empower young people.

- The Network liaised with Sports Services to promote and encourage participation at NI's first LGBTQ+ Sports Day, held on the Jordanstown campus on Saturday 4 June 2022. The event that was jointly hosted by [Sporting Pride Ireland](#) involved taster sessions in a variety of sports; a 'Colour-run' staged by Jordanstown Junior Park Run volunteers; refreshments; live music and an after party at The Maverick with Portia Di'Monte and Onya Becks.
- On 15 June 2022, over 80 people attended the Network's inaugural Tenx9 storytelling event in the BlackBox. 9 members of the Network spoke for 10 minutes each on a personal story around the theme of 'Belonging'. This was a powerful story telling event that provided the audience with insight, laughter and sometimes tears.
- As part of the University's Belfast Pride activities, the Network hosted a breakfast on the Belfast campus with 40 people attending and on 27 August 2022, 30 people attended the Foyle Pride parade representing the Network and the wider University community.
- On 22 September 2022, the University's EDI Section and the LGBT+ Staff Network jointly hosted a meeting with the PSNI's LGBT Link Officers next Thursday at the Belfast campus. The LGBT Link Officer role is being piloted in Belfast, and is a response to the PSNI identifying that there is under-reporting within the LGBT community. It is envisaged that this new role will help to increase confidence in reporting and to provide another avenue for people to raise issues within the LGBT community. The session in UU was attended by 15 staff approximately and it provided an opportunity to discuss policing in the area; and to discuss ways in which the PSNI could help people from the LGBT+ community to feel safe and to feel confident in reporting offences.
- In partnership with FlexEducation, the Network and Schools' Outreach team launched an LGBT+ Art Competition in October 2022 for post-primary schools. Young people were invited to submit a piece of their own art/photography/textiles/poetry/music/literature, representing "An influential figure of Theatre, Film, TV, Music or the Creative Industries in celebration of the upcoming LGBT+ History Month, February 2023." Over 20 entries were selected and shared on social media and internal news channels.
- In partnership with the Foyle Pride Festival committee, the Network hosted a film night 'Our Journeys', followed by Q&A at the Student Union, Rock Road Social. Reflecting on 30 years of Foyle Pride and the significance of the Students' Union at that time in providing a safe space for the LGBT+ community.
- The Network hosted the LGBT NI Heritage Project in March 2023, to present their new, short documentary, *The Troubles I've Seen*, which captures the shared experiences and stories of the local LGBT Community. The event at the Belfast campus was attended by 15 members of staff and PhD researchers. Directed by Conan McIvor, this emotive and often funny documentary hears from those who experienced and were involved in the beginning of the LGBT movement in Northern Ireland, discussing how

their pride and fearlessness helped them overcome the shame and harassment levelled at them by elements of society.

The Wo/men's Network

This is the fourth year for the Network and over the reporting period there has been a 6% increase to membership listings from 531 to 561. The Network aims to encourage a collective leadership approach where women can develop their leadership skills outside their formal job roles. New members are routinely invited to join a working group that matches their interests and develops their skills.

The core operations group expanded in size from five members to 10 bringing in additional talent and skills to guide the work of the Network. The focus of the Network remains on influencing, advocacy and campaigning for policy development that supports women in the workplace.

During the academic year 2022/23, a number of activities took place – led by the Network, and on other occasions, in partnership with other external and internal groups. Activities included:

Collective leadership with various members of staff leading on specific campaigns and work streams such as the White Ribbon Campaign; the Domestic Abuse Policy; Safe Space Training; International Women's Day and other events/conferences and In Conversation events and development of the UU Business School Partnership.

In Conversation with Jenny Pyper, Chair of the University Council. 52 people attended across the University to hear about Jenny's personal and professional journey, to her role as Chair of the Governing Council at UU.

Attendance at discussion forums with the other EDI staff networks and regular collaboration with other UU staff networks to explore intersectionality which dovetails with our common aims. A refreshed marketing brand and logos for all staff networks was also agreed during the reporting period.

The Network reconnected with Women in Business (WiB) by hosting a table at the Chairs event and refreshed the University's corporate membership list to ensure membership opportunities were maximised for staff. The Network organised a Lunchtime Seminar to share information on the benefits of WiB membership, with 4 attendees. This year, 15 Women's Network members have taken advantage of the institutional membership offer to sign up with Women in Business.

Building your Personal Brand – Colleagues in People Development facilitated a bespoke iteration of this popular session which helps mentor staff in their career journeys. 41 Network members attended.

International Women's Day (March 8) IWD is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating gender parity. Supported by UUBS, the Co-chair of the Ulster University Women's Network, Dr Lynsey Hollywood, welcomed over 50 people from business, academia, third sector and public sector to a shared lunch on the Belfast campus to hear from a panel of female speakers:

- Moira Doherty, Deputy Secretary, Department for Communities (UU Alumni)
- Dr. Nourhan Hendawy, R&D engineer at Levidian (PhD completed at UU)
- Jacinta Linden, CEO of Bolster Community (UU Alumni)
- Sarah Fox, Project Support Worker at Bolster Community (UU Alumni of our jointly delivered Leonard Cheshire GradEmploy NI programme)
- Abimbola Odeleye, Entrepreneur and International Post Graduate student (Business Development and Innovation Masters Course)

The panel discussed this year's IWD theme of #EmbraceEquity exploring how individuals can better understand the true meaning of equity versus equality and how individuals' actions can lead to a collective change in support of gender parity as well as what organisations can do to embrace equity.

The IWD2023 event was aligned with the Sustainable Business month and UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 to "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls."

White Ribbon Campaign NI - As part of the University's commitment in the 'Listen Learn Lead' White Ribbon Action Plan, Townhall events were held during October 2022 at both Coleraine and Belfast Campuses which resulted in recommendations being made to the UU Wellbeing team.

The Network was an active partner in the Sexual Abuse and Violence week held in October 22, the main outcome of which was support for the new permanent post of the University's Safe and Healthy Relationship Advisor and a focus on intimate partner violence.

A White Ribbon Day event with 15 attendees, was held to commemorate and describe Ulster's commitment to challenging misogyny in all forms at Ulster.

Dr Susan Langdon, a senior lecturer at the University, presented the results of the Townhall sessions and described the need for a more cohesive strategy at Ulster.

Damian McAllister (Chief People Officer) formally endorsed the White Ribbon Accreditation and stated Ulster's support for challenging misogyny. The event was attended by senior academics and professional services staff, male allies, Women's Network Champions, students and the Confucius Institute. All attendees signed the White Ribbon Charter, which was also endorsed by staff from the Senior Leadership Team.

As part of the White Ribbon Accreditation event, the Women's Network also promoted the work of Architecture students, who organised distribution of care packages to vulnerable people in association with East Belfast Mission. The 'Handbags and Hampers of Hope' project raised £430 and provided much-needed essentials to people across Belfast.

Talk Money week - Kith and Kin Women and Money. The Women's Network hosted the 'Women & Money' event on 7 November 2022 as part of Talk Money week, with 40 people in attendance. Kith and Kin Financial Wellbeing provided detailed information on key topics affecting women over the course of their working life: Menopause; Motherhood; Divorce & Separation; Female Pension Inequality and Returning to work. While Women in Banking and Finance offered support to women and men from all industries, including exclusive access to networking events for Ulster University staff (not solely financial services).

Feedback on the session was overwhelmingly positive and institutional membership WIBF would be a valuable investment from an employee wellbeing perspective in the future.

Mentoring - the refreshed mentoring programme has resulted in four new relationships being supported this year. For 2023/24 the promotion of this will be a key focus of Network activity.

The Women's Network has been represented on the institutional EDI Steering Group and the Athena Swan Silver Award ISAT group. The Network activities also contributed to the University achieving the Diversity Mark Bronze award.

The Network continued to collaborate with the UU Health and Safety and Wellbeing team to implement the following policies that have a direct impact on women employed at UU and contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals:

- Menopause policy and guidance
- Period poverty: free period products at each campus for staff and students and promotion of discounted products from our partner TOTM
- Breastfeeding rooms on each campus
- Domestic abuse policy

Menopause

The Wo/men's network in collaboration with the Wellbeing team, launched Ulster University's Menopause Policy at the Magee Campus in September 2022. Ulster University is committed to providing an inclusive and supportive working environment for all employees and acknowledges their responsibility to create awareness of the menopause and to provide training opportunities for all employees. Staff training is now available on Menopause Awareness for all staff to undertake.

The Wo/men's Network supported the Menopause Awareness Event, held in the rural townland of Donemana, Co. Tyrone, promoting health literacy in the community. The event brought local women together to learn from and share their experience of pre/peri/post menopause in a safe, informal comfortable space. Medical advice along with the most up to date research to support women was made available to local women.

Period Poverty

Free period products were made available on all campuses. During 22/23 financial year £2,432.80 of funding from the Department of Communities helped support this pilot programme and this was topped up by the university resulting in total spend of £4,820.75 resulting in 24,192 free period products being used.

The University has committed £5,328 to date in year 23/24 on products to date with 26,784 products circulated to date showing an update in usage over time

From 1st May 2023 this will be a statutory duty for public bodies to supply these products so the partnership between the network, staff wellbeing and the student union has put UU 'ahead of the curve' and systems are in place to secure this important.

Domestic Abuse Policy

The Network supported wellbeing colleagues to gain approval for the new policy and for the training of Safe Space Advocates by Onus NI our partner.

The Network continues with work with a wide range of internal partners including EDI, UUSU, the Alumni Office, Confucius Institute, International Students Group at UU, Health, Safety and Wellbeing team (staff), Wellbeing team (students). External partners include, White Ribbon NI, Soroptimists NI, Time of the Month (TOTM) and Women in Business (WiB).

Staff Disability Network

The University's Staff Disability Network (SDN) was established in 2004, to work towards achieving full inclusion for disabled staff, to improve the cultural environment, and to challenge assumptions about disability. The SDN is a supportive and welcoming environment for disabled staff within the University. The Network continued to meet virtually throughout the reporting period, giving members an opportunity to connect with each other in a supportive and confidential space.

SDN members' contributions help inform the development of Ulster's disability policies, action plans, and strategies. Within the reporting year this included, for example, the University's decision to transition from desk telephones to headset devices and the potential impact this could have on disabled staff. Members also provide comment and ideas on how the University's current Reasonable Adjustment Protocol could be amended to ensure that it is fit for purpose, aligning with all data protection legislation while offering continuity of the tailored adjustments agreed and implemented.

The Network engages with the wider University and civic community; and has representation on University-wide committees, such as the EDI Steering Group; Employee Experience Panel; Network Leads Group, and Wellbeing Champions.

Externally, the SDN responded to Disability Action's consultation relating to experience of hospital waiting lists. Several members also participated in a research study with the University of Manitoba, Canada. This research focussed on, amongst other things, the Disability community; more specifically, the lives of people who are disabled and who have a direct connection to the conflict. The objectives for the research were to:

1. gain an understanding of minority perspectives and experiences on peacebuilding processes;
2. generate a new lens of intersectionality when examining peace accords; and
3. create new knowledge around peacebuilding processes and its effects on minority communities.

The questions focused on disabled people's experience during or after the Troubles in Northern Ireland, highlighting unique challenges and barriers, both historically and in a contemporary basis.

During the reporting period, the Network continued to raise awareness of disability and medical conditions; and celebrating World Health Day, via its social media Twitter account.

The Network also provided University staff with 3 opportunities to engage in fun, interactive inclusion sessions learning how to communicate and bid seasonal greetings with the d/Deaf

community at Christmas using basic British Sign Language (BSL) signs. Following this, the Network facilitated 6 virtual training and awareness sessions introducing British Sign Language and Deaf Culture to staff at the University. 44 staff completed these sessions with extremely positive feedback being received. A short e-learning course was also developed to complement this offering so these staff could have easy access to reference materials to keep their newly acquired knowledge up to date. Many of the participants who attended the training have expressed interest in continuing their learning through accredited BSL training.

Continuing to promote inclusion for all, the Network focussed on the issue of accessible content. A presentation to the People & Culture Senior Management Team highlighted the requirement that all actively used internal and external documents available on web-based software should meet accessibility standards under the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Application) Accessibility Regulations (2018). This includes content shared by email, SharePoint, MS Teams, BlackBoard Learn, Access People XD and University operated websites.

This presentation showcased step-by-step guidance on how to make documents accessible and why this matters. This project, led by the SDN, brought together stakeholder representation from various departments across the University in order to embed positive practice in all communication. This project is now being presented to the University's Senior Leadership Team for consideration on how to progress forward.

Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Staff and Student Network

Established in November 2020, the Network places equality, diversity and inclusion at the heart of everything it does, with particular emphasis on integration, wellbeing and success of all members. The Network comprises of BAME members of staff, students, friends and allies of BAME individuals and groups, including alumni of Ulster University.

During the reporting period, the Network was involved in leading and participating in a wide range of activities and events, as well as attending Corporate Inductions and various intersectional activities in partnership with the University Networks. One of those intersectional activities involves working with the University's Women's Network with the aim of providing support to Afghan women in NI.

Other activities that the BAME+ Network has been involved in include:

Regular Network Meetings

The Network Working Group Chairs met on a monthly basis to discuss and share the activities of their respective working groups. The BAME+ Network Board meets quarterly to discuss the visions, goals and ambitions for the Network and the progress the Network is making toward these ambitions.

BAME+ Network Ambassador

Dr. Stella So created the first [BAME+ Network Ambassador through the Ulster EDGE activity/award](#) to promote and raise awareness of the BAME+ Network, and embrace the community. Ambassadors will be student volunteers creating and supporting student-led campaigns, promoting the BAME+ Network at Ulster University, growing the message of the community as widely as possible and encouraging greater student engagement to join the Network.

UU BAME+ Network 2nd Year Anniversary

To celebrate the 2-year anniversary of the BAME+ Network a lunch was held on the 2 December 2022 across the three campuses. This celebration presented the opportunity for members to come together to share experiences, and for potential new members to hear more and meet current members. The event welcomed all staff and students within the BAME+ community, allies and those who were just interested in hearing more about the Network.

2nd "From Surviving to Thriving" Workshop

The 2nd "From Surviving to Thriving Workshop: A Virtual Workshop for International and BAME Ph.D. Researchers (and Supervisors)" virtual workshop for international and BAME PhD researchers and supervisors on the 27 January 2023. A joint event organised by UU BAME+ Network, UU International Student Advisory Service (ISAS) and the Doctoral College. Topics of interest for discussion include challenges in:

- Understanding/Awareness of diverse cultures and working styles
- Performing excellent research
- Research writing and presentation
- Teaching
- Professional networking and improving visibility
- Job searching and charting career path.

This 1-hour workshop was targeted at international and BAME communities, especially Ph.D. researchers and supervisors at Ulster University to discuss their needs and challenges. Local or non-BAME PhD supervisors or PhD researchers were also welcome to attend.

Chinese New Year and Lantern Festival celebration

Chinese New Year and Lantern Festival celebration was held on Sunday 5 February 2023 in the Great Hall, Magee. Jointly organised by the Mandarin Speakers Association and Ulster University BAME+ Network, the celebrations included Chinese cultural performance (Beijing Opera, Martial Arts), Chinese workshops such as Chinese calligraphy and arts & crafts, as well as Chinese food.

First UU BAME+ Network Film Festival

Dr Murat Akser, Lecturer in Screen Production and Director of MA in Film and Television in the School of Communication and Media, curated a selection of three films at the Belfast and Derry. Each event was well attended with 15 – 20 Network members.

Careers Café – Challenge Yourself: Stepping outside of your Comfort Zone

Dr. Stella So, Senior Employability Adviser at the University, organised and hosted the first Careers Café – Challenge Yourself: Stepping outside of your Comfort Zone. Organised jointly by UU Employability and Careers department and BAME+ Network in the Belfast campus.

The event welcomed all students, in particular International/BAME students to meet a panel of speakers who had gone through the UK recruitment process and discussed how they had overcome their struggles in assimilating into a new environment, new culture and stepped outside of their comfort zone. This bespoke themed Careers Café provided the opportunity to listen to their stories, how they approached and secured different opportunities to enhance their CV and employability skills, along with embracing their differences to build confidence academically as well as professionally.

The panel of speakers included Chaudhary Hamza Riaz, Vice President Equality and Belonging at Ulster University Students Union; Afnan Arique - Belfast Equality Councillor and Business Studies student from Bangladesh; and Isaac Krofa - Researcher and member of UU BAME+ Network. UU branded merchandise and refreshments were provided.

Ramadan Fasting Challenge Event

The first Ramadan Fasting Challenge Event was held at Magee Campus on 24 March 2023 from 5:15pm until 9:15pm. The idea of the event was to connect International Muslim Students with the local community and at the same time bring harmony between the University's multi-cultural community.

The event was an open 'meet & greet' session. There was a small stall for the reception which where anyone could call to and asked for information and to learn more about Ramadan from the Muslim community. Some regional food was brought by local families. At sunset, people then broke their fast. The serving of food followed the live prayer.

Africa Day

On 25 May, the BAME+ Network held an Africa Day event to commemorate the founding of the Organisation of African Unity (now known as the African Union) on this day (25 May) in 1963. It aims to celebrate African unity. The [African Union \(AU\)](#) is a continental body consisting of the 55 member states that make up the countries of the African Continent. Over 100 people attended. The African proverb for this year's Africa Day is "*Do not look where you fell, but where you slipped*". Thomas Tettey Annang, a Belfast-based drummer and dancer from Ghana, performed and a lunch of West African food was served.

Global Outreach and Engagement

AI Research Centre and MAVRLAB welcomed a research visitor from Nigeria from October to December 2022 in the area of AI in Education. This visit was hosted by Dr James Uhomobhi. Schools and Community Education programme were held throughout from February to March 2023 hosted by MAVRLAB. It was planned to extend this to the Summer 2023 of the year.

Diwali

Diwali is India's most important festival of the year—a time to celebrate the triumph of light over darkness, knowledge over ignorance, and good over evil. The five days of Diwali are marked by prayer, feasts, fireworks, family gatherings, and charitable giving. For some, Diwali is also the beginning of a new year. In October 2022, Dr Nikhilkumar Shah hosted a Diwali BAME+ Network Café Culture and spoke about the significance of this major Hindu festival and how it is celebrated in the Hindu community.

Holi

Holi also known as the "festival of colours" is a Hindu festival that celebrates spring, love, and new life. Mamina Shrestha gave her personal reflections on Holi, what it means, its history, its significance and how it is celebrated in Nepal. This event was held online on 8 March 2023.

Newroz - Kurdish celebration of the Persian new year holiday

Newroz is the Kurdish celebration of the Persian new year holiday "Nowruz". Kurdish Newroz coincides with the Spring Equinox and is a festival celebrating the beginning of Spring. It is considered to be the most important festival in Kurdish culture. Held on 16 March 2023, Enas Mousa, a First Year Law Student gave her personal reflections on Newroz, what it means, its history, its significance and how it is celebrated.

Reflections on Racial Discrimination –NI and Beyond

Professor Brandon Hamber led a panel discussion with PhD Researchers with a focus on the elimination of racial discrimination. This event was organised to mark the International Day of the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Brandon is the John Hume and Thomas P. O'Neill Chair in Peace based at the International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE).

Estates Services

During the reporting period, additional accessible parking spaces at the Magee campus improving access to block MF, along with accessibility improvements to entrances to the block. This is new area for the School of Health Sciences and in line with commitments made during the EQIA process. Estates have also implemented door automation to the rear of block MG at the Magee campus, improving access to the adjacent public realm improvements.

Strategic Programme Office

The Strategic Planning Office was established to oversee a number of projects involving the move from Jordanstown campus to the new Belfast campus. One of the projects which progressed during the reporting period is detailed below.

Virtual Campus Familiarisation Project

The Virtual Campus Familiarisation project builds upon a two-time award-winning student project, that uses high specification technology to allow users to fully immerse into virtual reality representations of Ulster University Belfast campus. This student-led project allows users to familiarise with spaces and helps to improve the overall university experience for applicants, students, staff and visitors.

Users can choose from two viewing platforms:

1. Smartphones – view 360-degree static images of spaces or place your smartphone into VR goggles for a more immersive experiences.
2. Weblink navigation – use your laptop/computer to navigate spaces using your keyboard to include more spaces of the Belfast campus, external locations (Fredrick Street car park) and other campuses.

Background/What prompted initiation - Virtual Campus Familiarisation originated from a SLATE-funded project called 'Project ADAPT' on which David Comiskey (Senior Lecturer within Belfast School of Architecture & Built Environment) was the Principal Investigator. Josephine McGoldrick (2021 Graduate) and Saif Wasim (Placement student, 2021) contributed to the early-stage development of the work as part of Project ADAPT. The title 'ADAPT' refers to "using technology to Aid Design, visuAlisation and Peadagogical Transition in relation to space layout planning".

Timescales/Objectives - The scope is currently set for the Belfast campus only, scanning and representations will be created until 30 June 2023. Two years of NIO funding has been applied for to continue the project.

Benefits of Virtual Campus Familiarisation –

- Improves the applicant/student experience by helping to manage expectations. Virtual reality makes navigating spaces on campus easy and exciting through the use of smartphones, laptops or VR goggles.
- Virtual reality offers a more immersive and engaging experience than images, creating a more memorable experience for users. Spaces are interactive, allowing the user to navigate the campus, interact with objects and explore different areas.
- Enhances the staff/academic experience by allowing staff to familiarise with space layouts and available technology prior to teaching. Virtual reality allows furniture manipulation, meaning staff can consider optimal teaching layouts.
- Familiarising with campus supports mental and physical wellbeing and can significantly ease anxiety. Users can familiarise with our accessible locations on campus alongside sensory triggers such as glare, ventilation, exit points, etc. A perfect tool for users with physical impairments and those with anxiety, ADHD or ASD.
- Promotes Ulster University overseas as an effective tool for global and external stakeholder engagement. The project allows visitors and partners of Ulster University from different geographical locations to view Ulster University spaces.
- The 'Virtual Campus Familiarisation' project is student-led and promotes the capabilities of Ulster University students.

Future Screens NI – TapSOS

Future Screens NI comprises the two higher education institutions (Ulster University and QUB) and a number of key industrial partners central to the creative economy in the region, including NI Screen, BBC, Belfast City Council, Belfast Harbour, Causeway Enterprise Agency, Digital Catapult, Catalyst Inc., RTE, Games NI, Kainos, Invest NI, Techstart NI, Matrix and Tourism NI. The Partnership has, from this, developed a definition of, and a working model for, the creative industries in NI which is focused on participation, cultural and economic growth, and social and economic regeneration placing the Partnership as a leading developmental catalyst in this NI sector.

During the reporting period, the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, along with Future Screens NI, hosted an event with Becca Hume, a Multidisciplinary Design MA graduate of UU, with a passion for inclusive tech.

Conversations with a Deaf colleague made Becca Hulme realise that people who can't speak on the phone don't have the same access to 999 as those who can. As well as the Deaf community, she thought of those who might not be able to speak due to a medical crisis, such as a heart attack, stroke, or diabetic attack. What if someone was with an attacker, kidnapper or abuser, and was unable to safely make a phone call? How could someone with an airway obstruction call for help? TapSOS's graphics and simple text can help non-native English speakers communicate with emergency services.

Anyone at any time could find themselves unable to make a phone call during an emergency. Becca created a free app that solves this problem. With a few taps, the TapSOS app allows users to report an emergency and get help. The emergency app includes a detailed medical profile, GPS location tracking and access to the UK's Police, Ambulance, Fire & Rescue and Coastguard services. Integrated with BT, TapSOS helps 999 call handlers access the information they need to send the right help as quickly as possible.

TapSOS is the first accredited 999 app with access to all four UK emergency services, and can be used anywhere in the UK. The app is accredited by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) and by the British Association of Public Safety Communications Officials (BAPCO), the UK's leading association for Public Safety technology.

The innovative tech has been recognised with a number of awards, including 'Best Use of Advanced Technology' at the International Critical Communications Award, Madrid, the HealthTech Innovation of the Year, Digital Leaders, London and the ADS Security and Innovation Award at the Security & Policing, London.

School Initiatives

This section provides examples of civic contributions and activities that have promoted equality of opportunity and good relations, in a sample of Schools across the University.

School of Biomedical Sciences

Training and awareness

Previous research from the Paediatric Optometry Research Group, demonstrated that school staff working closely with children with visual impairment have limited or no training in working with this population. In addition, this work stemmed in response to a demand from parents and educators working with children with visual impairment.

25 Classroom Assistants were provided with training between September – December 2022, which in turn will have a significant impact for both the children they support and the school environment in general. The aim is to improve access to education for the children and allow them to maximise their potential in the school environment.

The Healthy Heroes initiative

The student-led project aims to improve nutrition knowledge for local children at Key Stage 2 and from disadvantaged backgrounds. Students from Food, Nutrition and Dietetics courses at the Coleraine campus collaborated with 5 local Primary Schools to deliver a 4-week educational intervention within the classroom from February – March 2023. Attendees learned about where our food comes from, including sustainability, the principles of health eating and practical skills for preparing healthy lunches.

Over 100 Primary School pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds took part in the initiative, gaining knowledge and understanding around some key aspects of food and nutrition. 30 UU students gained real-world experience to augment their academic study and enhance employability. Delivery of the Healthy Heroes initiative also strengthened links between UU at Coleraine and the local community.

School of Engineering

The year 2022/23 has presented the School with many new opportunities and challenges in this space. Following our full return to in person activities, including teaching, examinations and outreach activities, the school has been able to get re-involved with numerous schemes that have been more challenging to participate in in recent years. The School has become involved in a number of new schemes and activities in the reporting period, such as Primary Engineers, while continuing our involvement in WES, the BAME network and other ongoing activities as detailed below.

Throughout the year, the School continued to refresh all publicity and promotional material to address stereotypes traditionally associated with engineering. Including monitoring and updating web content, online prospectus and marketing material to ensure a balance of gender and diverse sample of our student and staff population on all public materials.

Silver Athena Swan Promotion

Staff use the Silver Athena Swan logo in many communications in day-to-day activity, including on email signatures and other promotional materials. All talks to the public, open days, school talks and applicant events, include mention of the school's Athena Swan status and many mention the School's involvement with the Women in Engineering Society (WES). This establishes the importance the School places on equality and diversity at all levels. Staff have also been encouraged via emails and promotional activities in the School to complete mandatory unconscious bias training through the University's EDI team.

Dr Mark Ng is the current Athena Swan champion for the School. In this role he heads up the School's Athena Swan activities.

Family Initiative

The School was able to put on the first in person Family Day following a 2-year hiatus during the current reporting period. The 'Family and Friends Day' was held on the Jordanstown Campus on 19 August 2022. All staff; academic, clerical, technical and research were invited along with any friends or family members they wished to bring and there were games, bouncy castles and a barbecue. Feedback was very positive from staff members and their families, which was a great opportunity for staff to get together in an informal capacity and get their families involved. The resulting social media posts from the event displayed diversity with regards to gender and ethnicity.

Buddy System

The 'Buddy system', established in 2019, and peer mentoring, continued throughout the reporting period. In the successful application for a Silver Athena SWAN award, the review panel noted this initiative as a good example of best practice for introducing new staff.

WES

The School launched Northern Ireland's first Women in Engineering Society (WES) Educational Partnership Hub in 2019.

As part of the partnership the School introduces WES in all its open day and induction material to new students. The School continues to promote activity in this area on its social media pages under the hashtag #IfSheCanSeeltSheCanBelt

Following the move to the Belfast campus in September 2022 the School has set up a new space for the WES hub. The space features posters of inspirational females in STEM throughout history and our Athena Swan awards are displayed prominently. The space is accessible by all students and staff and clearly displays the Schools commitment to celebrating female Engineers and STEM ambassadors.

We also celebrate the achievements of our staff, PhD Researchers and students on our social media accounts often linking in the WES twitter accounts for additional promotion of achievements,

UU BAME Network

Dr James Uhomobhi of the School of Engineering is currently Chair of the inaugural Ulster University Black and Ethnic Minority (BAME) Network.

School Outreach

Academic staff within the School were contacted at the beginning of the Academic year with regards to opportunities to attend School careers days and open days throughout the year. Staff attended open days and career evenings across Belfast and the wider area. School leadership monitor this activity to ensure there is good representation in terms of gender and ethnicity across these activities. Our PhD Researchers have also been offered opportunities to be STEM ambassadors, visiting schools to promote STEM subjects, particularly amongst female students.

The School has also worked with the widening access team in the University to put on a number of sessions for primary and secondary age students in the reporting period. For example, in March 2023 we hosted a Schools Partnership session with students from De La Salle College to a workshop run by Professor Margaret Morgan supporting informed decision making around disciplines in Engineering.

This year the School have partnered with Primary Engineer, a charitable scheme that gives Primary School students the chance to submit entries which answer the question 'If you were an Engineer for a day, what would you do'. The partnership sees the School contributing £5000 per year for the next two years to the Primary Engineers scheme. Throughout the course of the partnership, we will host grading day events and awards ceremonies on University premises in partnership with Primary Engineer. Members of the USSE (Ulster Student Society of Engineers) will also be involved in the judging of entries to be put forward to prototype development.

Student Training and Initiatives

Undergraduate students are required to complete Unconscious bias training as part of a mandatory module in their first year. This is important for their all-round development and learning and particularly for group project work throughout our undergraduate courses. The training helps students recognise their biases in working in these groups. It is also valued by employers when it comes to their placement year and future work opportunities. Other student initiatives include ensuring that all studies advice groups maintain a gender balance and that students are allocated to groups for project work, instead of choosing their own groups, to ensure no student is left out.

Royal Academy of Engineering (RAE) Diversity Impact Programme Funding

Professor Margaret Morgan and Dr Sharatchandra Varma Bogaraju received confirmation of funding for the RAE Diversity Impact Programme on 13 March 2023. Only ten of these programmes have been funded across the UK.

Supporting International Students

The School has seen a large increase in international student numbers in the past few years on our Masters programmes particularly and due to our partnerships with Chinese University; Shaanxi University of Science and Technology (SUST). In order to aid integration and belonging for these students we have funded and organised social events for these students. In December 2022 we hosted a pizza and drinks evening for all Masters students in the Students' Union. Over 20 Masters students attended from a diverse range of countries. We also hosted welcome events for SUST students arriving from China.

Other activities and Events:

Engineering Futures for the NI Science Festival

February 2023 – 150 primary school children welcomed to the Belfast campus to experience flight simulators, water filtration, composites and digital health demonstrations.

Dream Big - Engineering Our World

January 2023 – Open to Yr12 and 13 students studying maths or STEM subjects. Meet industry professionals and receive information, advice and guidance.

Young Women Engineer of the Year (YWE) awards

December 2022 – Attended by two female, final-year students as representatives for Ulster University, funded by the School.

Technician Commitment

To raise the profile of technicians across a range of disciplines, as professionals within the University's staff and student community, by uncovering the roles, skills and contribution of this often 'invisible workforce'.

To recognise the contribution technicians make to research outcomes and student learning outcomes, their commitment to the highest quality teaching, research or knowledge transfer and their role in creating the environment in which teaching and research flourish.

To demonstrate the impact of technicians in a range of subject disciplines, both skills-based across specialist complexity as well as wide-ranging pastoral support and first point of contact and regular proximity in many subjects.

To explore the role of the technician's voice in relevant University decision making and strategic direction.

School of Nursing and Paramedic and Paramedic Science

Competency Test Centre (CTC)

The Purpose-built Test Centre within the School of Nursing offers the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) Part 2 of the Nursing Midwifery Council Test of Competence. This test is for Internationally registered Nurses and Midwives who wish to register and work in the UK. The CTC continues to test approximately 600 nurses a month providing welfare support when Covid-19 has restricted travel. By providing these tests the CTC offers internationally registered Nurses and Midwives the opportunity of living and working in the UK.

Photoshoot

The school arranged for a photoshoot to be included in all of the Schools internal and external interfaces including School Webpages and marketing material. The photoshoot aim was to be inclusive of all genders, religious beliefs, racial groups and ages to promote an inclusive identity for the School

Website

Nursingni.com is a website which is a collaboration between Ulster University, Queen's University and the Open University. The website was enhanced during the reporting period, and it includes video resources that promote nursing for all people (regardless of religion, culture, gender etc) as well as one promoting men in nursing. The website was created as part of the Athena Swan gender equality agenda, to highlight nursing as a career for all. It is supported by the Chief Nursing Officer who emphasises the commitment to the equality agenda in health services in NI.

School of Sport

Take 5

Since November 2022, the Northern Ireland Public Health Research Network (NIPHRN) [School of Medicine] in collaboration with School of Sport engaged with over 50 stakeholders from across the public, private and community/voluntary sectors to identify their research needs and priorities. As part of the progress, the Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing [hereafter 'Take 5] was highlighted as a key public health initiative that has been used to maintain and improve the mental health and wellbeing of people within communities across NI, but at present there is no robust evaluation framework in place to demonstrate reach and impact of Take 5 in the short, medium, and longer-term.

The project is the early stage of development, with plans currently in place to establish a Research Development Group [RDG] that will be responsible for (1) overseeing the design and implementation of the research project; (2) securing the necessary funding to 'make it happen'.

It is anticipated that this collaborative research project will positively impact of all people across NI regardless of religious belief, political opinion, gender, race, disability, age, marital status, dependants, and sexual orientation.

Work-based learning / Science Shop

Each year, students from the BSc (Hons) Sports Coaching and BSc (Hons) Football Coaching and Business Management degrees enhance their education through engagement with the Science Shop. The Science Shop provides projects in the community where students volunteer and solve an organizational issue.

Community groups gain capacity to work on projects that without the interventions would not be solved. Students gain valuable experience in the community broadening their experiences and working with diverse populations.