

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2024-29

An enabling strategy of the Oxford Brookes University Strategy 2035



OXFORD
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UNIVERSITY

Introduction

At Oxford Brookes University we value and celebrate diversity, and strive to create an inclusive, open and supportive culture, where each individual student and staff member feels that they belong. As such, we are committed to promoting equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in all areas of our work. Brookes has made steady progress in a number of areas in recent years, and has a large number of initiatives and high levels of commitment to EDI across the University, as illustrated in our annual [Equality Reports](#).

We recognise, though, that there is still more for us to do and that we need to consolidate, co-ordinate and better integrate our priority areas of focus to achieve greater impact. We also recognise the interlinked nature of many areas of our work, and the need to ensure that initiatives are mutually reinforcing. Our increasing diversity will only be sustainable if the experience of our students and staff is positive and everyone is supported to thrive in an inclusive community. This Strategy provides an overarching framework to guide our work, setting out our priority areas of focus for the next five years.

The Strategy takes a broad view of what it means to promote equality and inclusion for all, whilst recognising our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010, and the need to take targeted action to address disadvantage and / or the under-representation of students and staff from different [equality groups](#) where necessary. We recognise the unique experiences of each individual and will take an intersectional approach to our work that recognises the intertwined challenges of various forms of exclusion.

The Strategy is accompanied by an implementation plan, which will be updated on an annual basis, setting out in more detail the actions that we will take. Our work takes place against the background of a rapidly changing landscape, where challenges, priorities and external drivers are constantly evolving, and we will adapt and respond accordingly. The implementation plan will be developed alongside, and draw on, other related strategies and action plans. It is also complemented by our charter mark action plans, which provide more detail of the actions that we will take to redress identified imbalances relating to particular equality groups.



Vision Statement

Our vision is for Oxford Brookes University to be truly diverse at all levels and to be known for its inclusive, open and supportive culture, where differences are valued and celebrated.

Each student and staff member, regardless of their background, identity or role, will feel that the University community is one in which they belong and are able to be themselves; they will be supported to fulfil their potential and empowered to participate fully in all areas of University life.

There will be a shared commitment to advancing equality, diversity and inclusion, where everyone understands their own contribution, and which is visible from the very top of the institution.

We will do this by:

- Building a strong supporting framework to underpin our EDI work
- Supporting each member of the Brookes community to embody inclusivity
- Embedding EDI considerations into each of the four pillars of the Strategy 2035.



Ambition 1: A strong supporting framework

Our effective, impactful work to promote equality, diversity and inclusion will be underpinned by a strong supporting framework. We will:

- Review our governance arrangements for EDI, ensuring that these are robust and effective, and that they support strong engagement with and between Faculties and Directorates.
- Embed equality analysis into all areas of planning and decision-making to ensure that we are making deliberate choices, based on a full understanding of user needs and of the potential equality impacts of our decisions.
- Review and strengthen mechanisms for institutional accountability, to ensure that we monitor progress towards our EDI commitments, publish supporting evidence and data, and demonstrate high levels of transparency.
- Build mechanisms for strong voice and engagement, ensuring that minoritised voices are amplified, that decision-making is based on the lived experience of our students and staff, and that feedback loops are in place. Recognising their importance to the University, we will invest in and support our networks.
- Embed EDI into internal and external communications to raise the visibility of our institutional and senior leadership commitment to EDI, and increase awareness of the extent of our work.
- Ensure that appropriately disaggregated diversity data is collected, collated and accessible to inform institutional and local action planning; and that service providers use data to understand and respond to the needs of their users, and ensure that services are accessed proportionately by different demographic groups.
- Continue to engage with charter marks such as Athena Swan, the Race Equality Charter, the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, Disability Confident and the University Mental Health Charter to provide a framework to analyse and address the specific needs of different demographic groups.
- Support each Faculty and Directorate to conduct analysis and develop action plans which identify and respond to their most critical local EDI issues. In the process, we will identify where actions are most appropriately taken forward at an institutional level for greater efficiency and to maintain equity of experience across the institution.
- Develop mechanisms to support Faculties and Directorates to pilot new approaches, network and share good practice with each other.
- Review resourcing of our EDI work, recognising the workload pressures that constrain the ability of staff to contribute to initiatives that go beyond 'business as usual' and the need to balance individual responsibility with specialist expertise.



Ambition 2: Support the University community to embody inclusivity

We will support every member of the Brookes community to embody the guiding principle of inclusivity and play their role in achieving a truly diverse and inclusive culture. We will:

- Through our communications, induction and other processes, build the understanding of all staff and students of the importance that Brookes places on EDI, our expectations of them and the strengths of a diverse staff and student body.
- Strengthen mechanisms to identify individual roles, responsibilities and contributions, ensuring that students and staff are both held to account and receive appropriate recognition.
- Review our training and development offer to ensure that each member of the University community is supported to develop the knowledge, awareness and competence that they need to demonstrate inclusivity in their own context, putting an emphasis on simple actions that can be embedded into day-to-day activities.
- Develop the skills of our managers and leaders and support them to be exemplars of our values, confident to lead and motivate inclusive and supportive teams, that consistently embed EDI into their work.
- Promote a culture of healthy debate and mutual respect, in which we value freedom of speech, embrace difference and a diversity of opinions, and recognise our responsibility to consider the impact of our words and actions on other members of the University community.



Ambition 3: **Education and Enterprise**

We will continue to build a diverse and inclusive student community, which supports every individual to grow, succeed and thrive, recognising the interconnectedness between student experience and educational outcomes. We will:

- Continue to increase the diversity of our student body, taking steps to remove barriers to access for under-represented student groups.
- Make substantial progress towards achieving equal outcomes across all student groups and achieve reductions in degree awarding gaps.
- Support our students to maximise their potential, ensuring equitable progression to postgraduate education and higher level employment across all student groups.
- Work with students and other stakeholders to enhance inclusive and accessible curricula, learning, teaching and assessment, including through the continued development and implementation of the IDEAS inclusive curriculum model.
- Ensure that academic enhancement and development builds individual EDI capability, introducing a holistic staff development and recognition framework to embed inclusive learning, teaching and assessment practice.
- Continue to build an inclusive, supportive, welcoming and safe community where student experience, wellbeing and sense of belonging is prioritised and all students are able to participate fully in university life.



Ambition 4: **Research and Innovation**

We will continue to increase the quality and global impact of our research by embedding a focus on EDI and strengthening our inclusive and connected research community. We will:

- Develop our capacity to ensure that our policies, practices and decision-making are data-driven, evidence-based and research-informed, drawing on our internal research expertise and establishing mechanisms to create stronger linkages between our research and institutional practice.
- Build the capacity of our research community to embed EDI considerations into research design, to increase the quality and global impact of our research.
- Build and sustain a diverse and inclusive research community, in which researchers, innovators and entrepreneurs at all career stages can flourish and excel.
- Make better use of our own research expertise to lead others and have a proactive influence in the sector and beyond.



Ambition 5: People and Culture

We will make Brookes a place where people want to work and study, creating a more diverse and inclusive community distinguished by collaboration and mutual respect and where everyone has the opportunity to develop, progress and thrive. We will:

- Recruit academic and professional staff who embrace our values, from the widest possible pool, through efficient, inclusive recruitment methods and targeted positive action initiatives.
- Provide inclusive, accessible and transparent career paths and promotion processes to support both academic and professional staff to progress their careers, identifying and removing any blockages for under-represented groups.
- Put in place targeted leadership development opportunities to support the progression of under-represented groups into senior roles and to support diversity on University committees.
- Offer an employee experience where inclusivity and wellbeing are prioritised, taking a proactive approach to ensure that everyone can flourish, be their best and feel fulfilled at work.
- Implement a programme of work to reduce and respond effectively to instances of harassment and discrimination.





Ambition 6: Partnerships and Place

Our facilities, location, partnerships and external reputation will attract an inclusive and diverse community of students and staff from across the UK and the world. We will:

- Ensure ongoing consultation with staff and students as we develop our Oxford Campus Vision so that the access and inclusion needs of users are reflected in planning and decision-making, resulting in a physical estate that enhances staff and student experience and helps foster a sense of belonging.
- As we implement our Digital Strategy, prioritise an accessible and inclusive digital environment, which supports collaboration and inclusive relationships, and which puts user experience at the centre of design and investment decisions.
- Build relationships, work in partnership with and learn from others, within our local community, our network of alumni, the wider HE sector, and beyond, to strengthen our approach to EDI and positively influence others.
- Build and strengthen relationships within Oxford and Swindon, to build recognition among all sectors of our local communities that Brookes is a great place to work and study.
- Develop inclusive local and global partnerships that reflect our commitment to EDI and to our values, being clear about what we stand for and our willingness to be held to account, and using our position to influence change.