

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

Final Report

2020-2025

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Plan 2020–2025

Final Report December 2025

Executive Summary

The [EDI Plan 2020-2025](#) aimed to embed equality, diversity and inclusion at the core of our mission. The plan focused on developing an inclusive culture, eliminating discrimination and advancing equality of opportunity. Significant progress was made across staff and student diversity, inclusive policies and building a sense of belonging. Key achievements for 2020-2025 include stronger EDI governance and oversight; enhanced visibility and growth of EDI networks; impactful delivery of high quality programmes such as: the Springboard Women's Development Programme; Inclusive Management training; a sector-leading Menopause Support programme; tailored disability support; inclusive recruitment initiatives (e.g. Diversity 200 and Surrey Future Fellows); a Race Equality Charter Bronze award; an Athena Swan Institutional Silver Award; and being one of a very limited number of Universities where every School holds an Athena SWAN award.

We now look ahead to the next five years, building on our success and continuing to impactfully address our challenges with the launch of our new EDI Plan 2030.

Introduction

The [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion \(EDI\) Plan 2020-2025](#) was launched in November 2020 to ensure that Surrey is a place where all individuals feel welcomed, valued and safe. The plan was built around the core aims of eliminating discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations in line with the Equality Act 2010. It introduced three priority areas: 1) Inclusive and Supportive Culture; 2) Eliminate discrimination, harassment & victimisation; 3) Advance Equality of Opportunities. This report summarises progress made against the key priorities and objectives and brings this phase to a close as we prepare to implement the new five-year EDI Plan 2030.

Measures of Success (as published in EDI Plan 2020-25)

We committed to measuring success in a number of ways, as outlined in the table below.

Measure	Progress
Student/staff satisfaction and outcomes	
Close the gap in National Student Survey (NSS) 'overall satisfaction' between students on the basis of protected characteristics by 2025.	NSS removed the 'overall satisfaction' measure in 2022. However, when reviewing positivity scores, we see improvement across protected characteristics. Sex: Female students, 77.7% positivity in 2020 to 85.9% in 2025. Male students, 73.4% in 2020 to 85.2% in 2025. Ethnicity: Ethnic minority students positivity rating went from 71.13% in 2020 to 85.96% in 2025 (compared to white students 78.21% in 2020 to 85.12 in 2025). Disability: Disabled students, 77.73% to 84.63% compared to non-disabled students 75.60% to 85.83%.
Achieve 90 per cent on our annual staff survey for the EDI-related question 'the University demonstrates commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion' by 2025.	2023: 78% (-2 on 2022, -1 on 2021, +7 on HEI) Question changed in 2025 (to align with Athena Swan survey) to 'My school or area is committed to fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion to staff. 2025: 70%

Reduce awarding gap between Black and White students to 6 per cent by 2025 (as stated in our Action and Participation Plan 2020-21 to 2024-25).	We did not achieve this. Awarding gap in 24-25 was 18%
Gender	
Achieve the Institutional Athena SWAN Silver award in 2022 if data shows sufficient progress.	Achieved
All departments to have started the Athena SWAN application process by the end of the 2020-21 academic year.	Achieved
All departments to maintain or improve the Athena SWAN award up to 2025.	Achieved
Continued monitoring and working towards reducing the gender pay gap at all grades for academic and professional services staff until 2025.	Ongoing, overall gap increased in 2023 to 15.79% (median) and now reducing. Currently 13.32% Gender Pay Gap action plan in place.
Race	
Achieve the Institutional Race Equality Charter Bronze award in 2021.	Achieved
Continue monitoring and working towards reducing the ethnicity pay gap at all grades for academic and professional services staff until 2025	Ongoing, overall gap 8.45% in 2020 reducing to 5.72% in 2022 and currently stands at: 5.6%
LGBTQI+	
Achieve a Stonewall Workplace Index Top 100 ranking in 2022 and improve or maintain the position each subsequent year up to 2025.	Reviewed and adapted objective to follow best practice approach with internal LGBTQI+ action plan
Disability	
Exceed the legal minimum accessibility standards for all University building upgrades by 2022.	Achieved
Achieve Disability Confident Committed Employer Level 2 by 2022.	Reached standard but retained Level 1 status due to resourcing priorities and delayed Level 2 submission to 2026
Faith and Belief	
Provide adequate prayer, discussion space and/or facilities for our multi-faith community.	The Religious Life and Belief Centre work closely with senior leaders and our Estates and Facilities Team to respond to religious observance needs. The University currently provides a range of prayer, worship and wellbeing spaces. These work well for events up to 80 people, but space is challenging for festivals for large communities, and this is being actively addressed.

The Measures of Success table outlines the key indicators we committed to tracking throughout 2020-2025 - including satisfaction measures, pay gap trends, charter progress and representation outcomes. These metrics form the quantitative framework against which our six EDI objectives have been delivered. In the sections that follow, detailed progress is set out against each objective, demonstrating how the activities undertaken across the University have contributed to the improvements and challenges reflected in the measures of success.

Progress against Objectives

Objective 1: Promote an understanding of EDI issues and engagement across the University community

A wide range of initiatives have been delivered to deepen understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion and to encourage meaningful engagement across the University. This has been achieved through enhancement of the EDI websites internally and externally, and consistent dedicated communications support. Use of storytelling and showcasing lived experience through a range of microsites and the [‘Proud to be Surrey’ Campaign](#) has been a powerful way to build inclusivity, promote cultural awareness, improve collaboration and build a stronger sense of belonging among staff. An extensive suite of EDI training has been delivered. We have enhanced the EDI content within the management training we offer, and we have also responded positively to requests for training on an ad-hoc/bespoke basis, where it has been felt that specific issues need to be addressed. Our metrics to determine sense of belonging and inclusion are as follows:

- Staff engagement score: 72%
- Student positivity score (NSS): 85.6%
- I feel a strong sense of belonging to the University 60% (-1 on 2023)
- My school is committed to fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion for staff 70%

All faculties and departments have been encouraged to take a shared responsibility in recognising key events and celebrating diversity. This has led to thoughtful, distinctive and enriching explorations of diversity and inclusion. Examples of some of this work can be seen here in sites created for [Holocaust Memorial Day](#), [LGBT History Month](#), [International Women’s Day](#), [Black History Month](#) and [Disability and Neurodivergence Awareness Month](#).

Work towards Athena Swan in all schools and institutionally, has driven higher awareness and engagement across the University and this has extended beyond issues of gender to equality and inclusion more generally. It has contributed to strengthened organisational culture, improved systems and governance, and enhanced engagement by giving people a voice and addressing some of the structural barriers to progression. We have sought to maximise the impact of the Athena Swan and Race Equality Charters by treating them not as an award process, but as a longer-term framework for inclusive organisational change. We have increased our focus on delivery of the actions within the Race Equality Charter (REC), the Implementation Team is now chaired by the Chief Student Officer. The award is scheduled for renewal in 2027. In preparation, we are planning the resource requirements needed to manage the submission process, develop supporting evidence and deliver a strong application.

Over the past five years, we have significantly changed EDI governance with the introduction of new structures and the integration of EDI into senior decision-making roles through our Executive Board sponsors. The four key Staff EDI Networks are now well established and have demonstrated sustained growth over time: SEED (Surrey Embracing Ethnic Diversity); Women’s Network; Purple Network for Disability and Neurodivergence (and Carers); and the Rainbow LGBTQIA+ Network. The Sponsors and Chairs meet regularly to help address barriers to inclusion and progression. Workload recognition has been introduced for Network Chairs and Co-Chairs to ensure they have allocated time. The Students’ Union has introduced a range of Student Equality Networks and a dedicated team was established within the Chief Student Office to focus on EDI matters relating specifically to students, and aligned with the University’s [Access and Participation Plan](#). The Staff and Student EDI Networks support building a sense of belonging amongst particular groups.

Supported by the University’s enhanced governance framework for policies and procedures (POPP), we have broadened collaboration and engagement in the development of EDI related policy, procedures and practices from people at every level across the University, encouraging shared investment in this work and maintaining careful consideration on current best practice across the sector and beyond.

We have implemented a comprehensive programme of EDI training - including e-learning modules and face-to-face sessions accessible to all staff - and we continue to evaluate its effectiveness through regular feedback. Findings demonstrate strong engagement and clear evidence of strengthened inclusion and belonging

within the University community. Further work will focus on engaging remaining audiences to ensure consistent uptake across all areas.

EDI content has been carefully incorporated into the new management training portfolio, aimed at all existing and aspiring Managers, to ensure roles and responsibilities around inclusivity is understood by those with people management accountabilities

We have sought to further embed EDI within our teaching and research and innovation activities through our Charter action plans and the work of the Surrey Institute of Education, leading to enhanced inclusive curriculum activity and accessible teaching frameworks. We recognise that every student, regardless of background, has the right to feel respected and included. Inclusive teaching activity has also invited our teaching staff to rethink what and how they teach and widen the materials used on any subject. We have supported open exchanges about these important issues in order to secure and promote academic freedom and freedom of speech at Surrey. Similarly, we have strengthened recognition of EDI contributions within staff workload planning and appraisal whilst upholding our commitment to academic freedom and freedom of speech.

Objective 2: Promote a zero-tolerance policy to all forms of discrimination

Significant work has been undertaken in this area with the publication of an improved Harassment and Bullying Procedure which was developed collaboratively with staff and stakeholders across the organisation in 2022 and again refreshed in 2025. We have enhanced our web information including a central source of information for all harassment queries, delivered training to prevent sexual harassment and misconduct. This has included a bespoke AI based conversational learning module on this topic that has been rolled out to staff and students and has received positive feedback. We have also delivered bespoke 'Respect' Training to relevant departments. We have sought to strengthen reporting systems (Report+Support) and ran a number of anti-harassment and bullying pledge campaigns led by Senior leaders, designed to raise awareness, change culture, and encourage people to speak up against inappropriate behaviour. Whilst awareness of *how* to report has increased (86%, +16 on 2023 and +22 on HE benchmark), we are aware that further work needs to be done to build confidence and trust so that people feel able to report issues formally, in a way that action can be taken. Further work is underway to fully understand the ongoing barriers and to continue promoting an authentically inclusive and respectful campus for all staff, student and visitors. Work will continue with a strong focus on closing the gap between prevalence and reporting.

Impactful race equity training was co-created with Advance HE using stories and experiences of Surrey staff and students and was introduced for all staff. An LGBTQIA+ awareness training workshop was regularly delivered for staff, the first of our Disability and Neurodivergence Awareness Months was held in 2024 (and again in 2025) to raise understanding and engagement in issues around disability equality and neurodivergence. A host of other events have been held regularly across a range of topics to build awareness and support an inclusive and cohesive culture.

The University has maintained its commitment to actively combat stigma and discrimination around mental health through EDI and Mental Health First Aider training. A cross-organisational programme of work is underway to prepare for the University Mental Health Charter submission which will assess current provision and guide our activity going forward.

Inclusive management training and additional support programmes and toolkits have been rolled out, covering a range of equality themes including parent returners, menopause and neurodivergence. Our Wellbeing Champions Network was relaunched and refreshed with enhanced training and development.

Equality Impact Assessment is now embedded into all University Policy and Procedure governance, HR change programmes, appraisal and promotion rounds. The Equality Impact Assessment tool is used on an ongoing, real-time basis to proactively identify and address potential impacts, rather than being applied retrospectively.

Objective 3: Improve student academic awarding and progression

Over the past five years, the University of Surrey has made meaningful efforts to improve student academic outcomes, progression, and equity of experience, underpinned by the interventions set out in the 2020–2025

Access and Participation Plan. Significant investment and sustained focus have strengthened the conditions for student success across the academic lifecycle, from access and transition through to progression and graduate outcomes.

Notable progress has been achieved through Surrey's employability and placement provision. The University's placements continue to deliver strong academic and progression benefits, with students undertaking a placement demonstrating a 14.2% advantage in securing highly skilled employment compared to non-placement peers (HESA, 2024). Importantly, placement participation has contributed to narrowing gaps in progression to highly skilled employment, particularly for Black students compared to White students. This impact has been reinforced by the work of the Employability and Careers team, whose sustained excellence has supported student progression beyond graduation and strengthened academic outcomes through applied learning.

The University has also enhanced academic engagement and progression through digital innovation and partnership working. The introduction of the MySurrey Engagement learning analytics platform supported students to take greater ownership of their learning, enabling earlier intervention and more informed academic support. Alongside this, closer collaboration and co-creation with the Students' Union has strengthened the sense of belonging and improved student access to targeted support, particularly in response to cost-of-living pressures. These developments have supported improved continuation and engagement, especially for students at greater risk of disengagement.

Despite these areas of progress, the University recognises that not all targets set out in the [2020–2025 Access and Participation plan](#) have been met and that gaps in academic awarding and progression persist for some student groups and in particular the black / white awarding gap has persisted at a much higher level than we are comfortable with – 18% in the 24/25 academic year. While the direction of travel is positive, further work is required to ensure that all students, regardless of background, have equitable opportunities to succeed academically and progress through their studies at Surrey. The next phase of activity ([Access and Participation Plan 2025 – 29](#)) will therefore focus on consolidating what has worked well, addressing areas of underperformance, and strengthening whole-institution approaches to student success.

Objective 4: Improve staff satisfaction and diversity

Over the past few years, there has been a complete overhaul of staff procedures, and we have developed new flexible working recommendations to support work-life balance and wellbeing.

We have continued to monitor, report on and introduce actions to support closure of our gender and ethnicity pay gaps. Progress has been slow but is moving in the right direction. Ongoing efforts will be to improve the quality of data available to local heads to ensure accountability for closing pay gaps, alongside a range of strengthened measures to address barriers to progression.

We have implemented improvements to the staff recruitment process (via our Diversity 200 initiative) particularly focusing on gender, ethnicity and disability gaps. We have reviewed and enhanced recruitment processes to improve the reach of vacancies and to eliminate bias from the selection process, as far as possible. We have sought to improve representation, reduce gaps in attainment and pay and ensure a broadly inclusive recruitment experience with seamless provision of adjustments and a supportive process throughout.

We were particularly proud of a highly inclusive and successful hiring campaign for our [Surrey Future Fellows](#). Targets were set and exceeded to ensure that we maximised opportunity to support diversity and representation throughout the process.

We have introduced a range of specific support for a range of staff groups. Our Parent Returners Network has grown alongside roll out of a comprehensive toolkit to support parent returners and their managers as they prepare for leave, during leave and on return. Our menopause support programme is sector leading and has led to a highly successful partnership with local FemTech provider [Adora Women's Health](#) who provide access to trusted health experts and a digital health and wellbeing service to ensure that every woman is guided and supported through her menopause journey.

Working closely with the Centre for Religious Life and Belief, we have raised the profile of our professional Chaplaincy, positioning it as a support mechanism, alongside the Centre for Wellbeing, for the needs of both staff and students. The team of [Chaplains and Religious Life and Belief associates](#) has grown significantly and represents the Surrey staff and student community through a range of faiths and beliefs including: Christian (recognising denominations of Anglican, Catholic, Methodist/Free Church, Orthodox, Pentecostal, Friends International/International Christian); Muslim; Hindu; Judaism; Buddhist; Sikh; Bahai and Humanist. A new Faith and Belief Procedure was launched in 2025 and the Centre for Religious Life and Belief delivers an associated programme of work across the calendar including multi-faith networking activity, cross-cultural and religious literacy training, celebration of key religious festivals and events and support for international students, such as the Christmas Day lunch initiative which has taken place for the past six years. In support of our intersectional, inclusive approach, members of the Chaplaincy Team have undertaken a comprehensive chaplaincy training syllabus, and this included LGBTQIA+ Awareness Training to support them in their work with staff and students. Grief cafes have also been introduced to support bereaved staff and students.

We have focused on improving support for our disabled and neurodivergent community through improved policy, awareness campaigns and introduction of Tailored Adjustment Plans, Employee Assistance Services, Occupational Health support and manager learning and support. Further work will focus on further improving understanding and training provision for managers, colleagues and students on neurodivergence and disability more generally. Current data from our People Survey tells us that more needs to be done to equip staff with the learning opportunities they feel they need to help them in their careers.

- The University does enough to support my health and wellbeing at work 59% (9+2 on 2023, +4 on benchmark)
- Staff representation overall: 54% female | 26% ethnic minority | 7% disabled
- Student representation overall: 53% female | 48% ethnic minority | 18% disabled

Objective 5: Support Early Career Researcher progression

Research Culture Standards

Over the past few years, we have sought to demonstrate the standards we expect of our research culture, partly through our commitment to the principles in the HR Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. This requires our researchers to make an active contribution to the development of a supportive, fair and inclusive research culture.

In 2022, the School of Health Sciences adopted a charter to set out expectations around fair treatment of researchers. The charter draws on the Concordat and is aimed at both Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and their line managers. Through the ECR Forum, more Schools are currently looking at developing their own versions.

In late 2024 and early 2025, the Pro Vice Chancellor - Research and Innovation (PVCRI) appointed three academic Research Culture leads. Their activities have involved providing opportunities for research-active and research-enabling staff across the university to express their experiences of Surrey's research culture through a survey and a series of 'Cafe Culture Conversations', instituting the People, Culture and Environment Committee (which feeds into the University Research and Innovation Committee), and strengthening academic integrity procedures and improving integrity training. ECR representation is included on the People, Culture and Environment Committee.

In the last two academic years the Research Culture leads have allocated internal funding for a range of academic-led research culture events, such as away days, training workshops, and research-culture strategy brainstorming sessions, with a direct requirement that these be made as inclusive as possible. 20 events were successfully run in 2024-5, and a further 23 have been approved for 2025-6. ECRs were included in all of these initiatives, and some initiatives were proposed and led by ECRs. In the 2025-6 round, proposals were encouraged by teams working across disciplines and schools.

The University's ECR Academy was founded in 2023 and took in the long-running ECR Forum as well as a dedicated training curriculum for ECRs. Steps are being taken now to develop the Academy into its next, more

autonomous phase, in which ECR colleagues (supported by senior colleagues) will play a more significant role in planning and decision-making, while also gaining leadership experience valuable for their career development.

Open Research days were run in January 2023 and 2024 and were good examples of demonstrating expected standards. Competitions were run for best open research contribution, and ECRs were prominently represented in the top entries.

Improving representation in policy setting and resource allocation

ECR representatives have attended the University Research & Innovation Committee (URIC) meetings, as well as People, Culture & Environment (PCE) meetings. In late 2025 it was proposed that the ECR Forum would report directly into the PCE committee to embed the ECR voice in a formal structure for high-level visibility and attention. RII are maintaining oversight to ensure that ECR representatives are included in Faculty Research & Innovation Committee meetings.

In 2025, FEPS adopted a set of principles for inclusive selection of research bids, in situations where there is an internal competition. The principles include a commitment to diversity of reviewers and panel members along various dimensions, including career stage.

Integration of EDI into our Research Excellence Framework (REF) assessment processes.

We made strong efforts in REF 2021 through the REF EDI Working Group, to ensure EDI considerations were central to building the REF 21 submission. The working group made recommendations through the final Equality Impact Assessment on how EDI could be integrated into future REF preparations and as we gradually move towards REF 2029, we continue to thoroughly integrate EDI into our REF assessment processes via REF 29 EDI Working Group.

With regard to Early Career Researcher progression, changes were made to the Output Review process to ensure that all output data includes all Surrey co-authors and that outputs are no longer just linked to the author who nominated it for review. This was to remove any unintended bias that may have impacted ECR's. Following an institution-wide review of Surrey's research culture in 2025, mentoring has been identified as a priority: to provide all colleagues with appropriate career support and development of their leadership potential, along EDI lines. Supporting ECRs is a key pillar in this work.

Objective 6: Provide strong and visible leadership

Through our annual reporting process against EDI objectives, we have published relevant EDI statistics, progress reports and action plans, including data on representation, gender and ethnicity pay gaps, and harassment and bullying to show accountability for level of progress.

Equality impact assessment has been used purposefully to guide decision making and to ensure we understand and mitigate any bias or negative impact on protected groups.

EDI principles have been embedded within all management and senior leadership training. Our Senior Leadership Programme 2023 included modules on inclusive behaviour, leadership expectations and support to enable a more self-aware, curious and collaborative culture. Race equity training for senior leaders through a Reverse Mentoring Programme was completed in 2022/23.

Overall, our gender representation of women at Executive Board level has increased from 25% in 2021/22 to 45% in 2025/26. This progress has strengthened the balance of gender representation among Executive Board sponsors championing our EDI networks.

As a result, our most senior leaders are now hearing directly from minority groups about what matters most to them and are better positioned to remove barriers that hinder connection and progression. This increased visibility and support is also helping to inspire future talent and encourage greater ambition to progress into Executive Board positions within Higher Education.

Conclusion

The EDI Plan 2020–2025 has provided a strong and transformative foundation for advancing equality, diversity and inclusion across the University of Surrey. Over the past five years, we have strengthened governance structures, broadened staff and student engagement, and embedded inclusive practice across policies, leadership behaviours, teaching, research, and the wider campus experience. This has contributed to a more confident, connected and aware community - one in which staff and students increasingly report a stronger sense of belonging and recognition.

Across the six objectives of the Plan, meaningful progress has been achieved. We have improved understanding of EDI through enhanced training, storytelling, and visibility of lived experience; strengthened our zero-tolerance approach to discrimination through improved reporting routes, targeted campaigns and updated policies; advanced student success and progression through targeted interventions and inclusive education practices; and invested in more equitable and transparent recruitment, promotion and working practices to improve staff diversity, satisfaction and development. Our work to support Early Career Researchers has deepened through strengthened research culture initiatives, mentoring, inclusive funding processes and enhanced representation in key decision-making structures. Leadership engagement in EDI has also matured significantly, with clearer governance, more visible accountability from senior leaders and enhanced capability through targeted development programmes.

Looking to the future - EDI Plan 2030

While progress has been substantial, our work is far from complete. Persistent awarding gaps, continuing barriers to reporting, inconsistent staff experiences, and the need for consistently inclusive leadership signal areas requiring sustained focus and attention. The next phase of our EDI journey will build on the learning and momentum gained so far. It will require renewed ambition, deeper collaboration, and purposeful alignment with wider institutional commitments.

As we move forward, we will strengthen our approach by aligning EDI with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, embedding Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech within our inclusive culture, and continuing to advance responsible, equitable research practices. We will extend our commitment to belonging and inclusion across all our campuses and transnational education partnerships, recognising the evolving global landscape in which we operate.

The foundations laid over the past five years give us a strong platform for the next phase of Surrey's EDI activity - one that is data-driven, transparent, accountable, and rooted in the experiences of our community. Together, we will build a truly inclusive organisation where diversity is celebrated, equality is embedded, and everyone thrives in a community of belonging and a culture of excellence.