

# Brunel University London's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

2021-24

# Social Justice For All

## Vision

Brunel University London's mission is "to bring benefit to society through excellence in education, research and knowledge transfer." At its core is our value "to be fair and inclusive": to treat everyone with dignity and respect so that we all have the same opportunity to succeed and have an excellent student / employee experience.

## Aims

This strategy is for all prospective and current students, employees, contractors and visitors at Brunel and aims to adopt a whole university approach to making Brunel a fairer and more inclusive University, with social justice at its heart. We are proud of our diversity – on campus, online and as part of our global reach and influence. We are committed to providing an inclusive culture and to removing any barriers or institutional or structural social inequalities to success. We want this strategy to be bold, innovative and agile and aim to embed it into all aspects of the university's operations, and into the daily life and experiences of the University community. We are determined to exceed our legal duty to eliminate discrimination however it occurs and to advance equality of opportunity and outcomes for all (for more detail on the legal and regulatory context, see Appendix 1).

We want to build a culture and community that is kind, committed to fairness and open to change. Our aim is that everyone is:

- Well-Informed
- Respectful
- Enabling
- Inspirational
- Integrating
- Self-reflective

This new strategy succeeds the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2015 – 2020 and is the continuation of Brunel's EDI journey. It defines these themes, our progress to date and our priorities for the future. It is accompanied by an action plan which will set clear targets and priorities with named leads and key performance indicators. It should act as a rolling strategy with progress routinely monitored including having sufficient flexibility to respond to any unexpected developments and / or events.

The University recognizes that the pandemic Covid-19 is significantly affecting how we work, and we need to constantly monitor any negative impact on students and staff who are from disadvantaged or marginalized communities and are at particular risk.

We want students, staff and other members of the Brunel community to feel a real sense of ownership of this strategy and to use the strategy and the action plan that accompanies it to hold the University to account about progress towards realising the strategy's aims and initiatives. Progress will be formally reviewed and refreshed on an annual basis by the Equality and Diversity Management Committee and reported to the relevant University committees i.e. student affairs to Student Experience and Welfare Committee up to Senate, and employee issues to the Equal Opportunities and HR Committee up to the Executive Board. It is hoped that the Advisory Group in a formal capacity and other members of the University community will continue to bring issues of concern to the University's attention.



# Well-Informed

Building an inclusive cohesive community requires knowledge and familiarity with diversity and difference: everyone needs to feel safe and included, and be confident in studying and working with people from a wide range of different backgrounds. As part of an ongoing dialogue, cultural competence, awareness raising and training are key, as are clear messages to all students, employees and others about organisational culture, responsibilities and expectations.

## We already:

- promote our equality and diversity policies, initiatives and events through university communications
- provide mandatory diversity training for all employees
- deliver a range of diversity courses to employees to further raise awareness around unconscious bias, dignity at work, equality impact assessments, and more tailored approaches for departments.

## We aim to:

- continue to deliver communications to students and employees on our equality and diversity initiatives ensuring that they are fully inclusive such as in language, images and case studies reflecting our diverse community
- update our current suite of training to focus on priority areas for Brunel and become sector leaders in EDI
- coordinate events, campaigns and initiatives to raise awareness and celebrate diversity
- continue to collaborate with our employee network groups, trade unions, the Union of Brunel Students and student societies and clubs to champion EDI across the University so all students and employees become role models promoting a fully inclusive environment.

# Respectful

Being part of our diverse community at Brunel means that everyone should feel welcomed, safe, included and respected so that they are able to study / research / work to the best of their ability and have the best learning environment / work place experience.

## We already:

- aim to ensure our buildings, facilities and online services are inclusive and accessible including making any additional reasonable adjustments
- have policies and guidelines in place for both students and employees
- provide dignity at work training for all employees and tailored sessions for departments on what is acceptable behaviour
- coordinate a Changing the Culture Working Group with representation from across the university
- receive regular feedback on issues of culture across the University from the trade unions, Union of Brunel Students and employee network groups.

## We aim to:

- encourage individuals to seek help and report any behaviour which is not acceptable
- map barriers for students and employees with particular protected characteristics and other important aspects of identity which currently prevent them from having a positive experience at Brunel and address any issues / needs identified
- build confidence and enhance data collection, monitoring, reporting and follow-up on how students and employees with protected and other characteristics fare at Brunel
- promote a culture which is open to change and committed to fairness and kindness where individuals are comfortable to be their true selves at study / research / work and feel safe to disclose a social or cultural characteristic if they wish.

# Enabling

We aim to recruit and engage students and employees from a wide variety of backgrounds on a level playing field and enable them to have full access to Brunel's opportunities and realise their potential. This requires eliminating any barriers that disadvantaged or marginalised groups may face in access and recruitment, retention, outcomes, pay and progression by the University. We aim to promote good student and employee mental health and wellbeing as well as be a university of choice that encourages flexibility.

## We already:

- provide Access and Participation projects to engage and recruit prospective students from a wide variety of marginalised or deprived groups
- recruit students and employees through fair and transparent processes supported by advice and expertise from our membership of the Disability Confident Scheme, Stonewall and other equality agencies
- provide unconscious bias and diversity training for all students and employees involved in recruitment and decision-making processes, and performance initiatives e.g. REF, NSS, WAM, TEF and PDR
- work to enable all students and employees to succeed through activities such as providing an accessible campus and inclusive community experience, conducting Curriculum Reviews, the Liberate the Library Campaign and provide Success for All workshops targeted at under-represented groups at the senior levels of the University
- track annually the performance of all students and employees and identify any groups that are not progressing at the same rate as their counterparts such as student awards, academic promotion round criteria, gender and BAME pay gap
- deliver a range of mental health and wellbeing initiatives to support students and employees throughout their studies / research / work
- provide advice and support to students and employees for their career development.

## We aim to:

- take a whole institution approach to embedding EDI into the planning processes of teaching, learning, research and policy development
- set up an anti-racism working group to tackle institutional racism
- continue to support students, doctoral researchers and employees from a wide variety of social and cultural characteristics with their career development and further education and apply positive action measures if necessary in line with equality and diversity best practice
- continue to deliver a fair and equitable performance, promotion and reward process for all
- hear the voices of our employee and student diversity groups, and identify and tackle inequalities between these groups





# Inspirational

The commitment of the senior leadership team to trail blaze EDI at all levels across the University will aim to ensure that inclusion is developed, embedded and promoted. As well as being role models for Brunel they should build inclusive teams and a university culture that challenges discrimination, bullying and harassment so that everyone, from any background can bring their authentic self to study / research / work and reach their full potential.

## We already:

- engage with headhunters for senior roles to ensure their commitment to diversity
- provide diverse longlists
- measure progress in our work and communicate through our annual reports
- partner with external agencies that can help us build our internal efforts to build inclusivity.

## We aim to:

- work with our senior leadership team and external members of council to improve diverse representation and place EDI at the heart of the University's governance
- prioritise the senior leadership team's visibility, commitment and accountability for EDI
- be transparent around our recruitment and selection processes and prioritise areas where we identify the university is not meeting its own EDI commitments
- keep up to date with key EDI issues through top table engagement, Vice Chancellor events.

# Integrated

All departments and colleges must integrate equality issues into all academic and business matters. They will all be monitored and reviewed regularly and any issues addressed promptly.

## We already:

- have an Equality and Diversity Management Committee and routinely keep the Equality Opportunity and HR Committee and Student Experience and Welfare Committee updated on all EDI key issues
- provide a suite of accessible EDI policies and practices to deliver cultural change, make Brunel a fairer place to work, study or visit, and tackle discrimination, bullying or harassment. They are reviewed regularly to ensure they are relevant and meaningful.

## We aim to:

- monitor and review EDI data regularly to enable the University to address any trends or issues promptly, act on emerging information and concerns, and meet our legal and social responsibilities
- monitor the implementation and consistency of application of policies across the University using tools such as the Athena SWAN accreditation, Stonewall Equality Index, the Disability Confident Scheme, the Student Services Impact Evaluation Tool
- embed the consistent and transparent use of Equality Impact Assessments across the University effectively and regularly review.

# Self-Reflective

Regular self-reflection by students and employees of their EDI attitudes and behaviour is essential at all levels of the University to build a reflective habit and mindset to embed EDI into our goals, values and objectives.

## We already:

- provide training opportunities for students and employees which encourage self-reflection practices
- have a Performance Development Review process in place for employees across the University.

## We aim to:

- develop and embed a EDI self-reflective toolkit for students and employees across the university
- provide subject specific training and opportunities for self-reflection.

We would like to thank the members of the Advisory Group and all the staff and students who have contributed their time, ideas and energy to the development of the strategy by contributing to meetings, responding to surveys and sharing their insights and personal experiences at focus groups.

# Appendix 1

## Legal and Regulatory Context

The UK political and educational framework sets out a range of equality duties to which universities are required to demonstrate their commitment. The key duties are:

### 1. Equality Act 2010

#### The University must have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act of individuals with a protected characteristic in work and education, or an individual's association with another person belonging to a protected group
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic\* and those who do not
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The protected characteristics are age, race, religion / belief, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage / civil partnership, pregnancy / maternity.

### 2. In addition, the Equality Act (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011 requires the University to publish:

- equality objectives at least every four years
- information to demonstrate their compliance with the equality duty, at least once a year. This should include information relating to people who share a protected characteristic who are either in employment or education affected by its policies and practices such as annual information relating to pay.

### 3. In addition to the Public Sector Duty, the University has a duty under the Human Rights Act 1998 not to act incompatibly with rights under the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (the Convention).

### 4. The Regulator, the Office for Students (OfS), requires institutions to deliver positive outcomes for students ensuring that:



- all students, from all backgrounds, and with the ability and desire to undertake higher education, receive a high quality academic experience, with their interests protected while they study (or in the event a provider, campus or course closes)
- all students are able to progress into employment or further study, and their qualifications hold value over time.

In order to achieve this equality of opportunity the OfS has set long term ambitious targets to eliminate inequalities with a particular emphasis on the following:

- the gap in entry rates and participation at higher tariff providers between the most and least represented groups
  - the gap in non-continuation between the most and least represented groups
  - the gap in degree outcomes between white and black students
  - the gap in degree outcomes between disabled and non-disabled students.
5. **The Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) in its recent Good Practice Framework for Disciplinary Cases stated that: “Providers should raise awareness of the behaviour and conduct expected of students, using educational initiatives to challenge negative attitudes and stereotypes, and equip staff and students to identify and challenge unacceptable behaviour.”**
  6. **In line with the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) Higher Education Code of Governance, the University has a duty to promote equality and diversity in all aspects of our community life and work.**



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