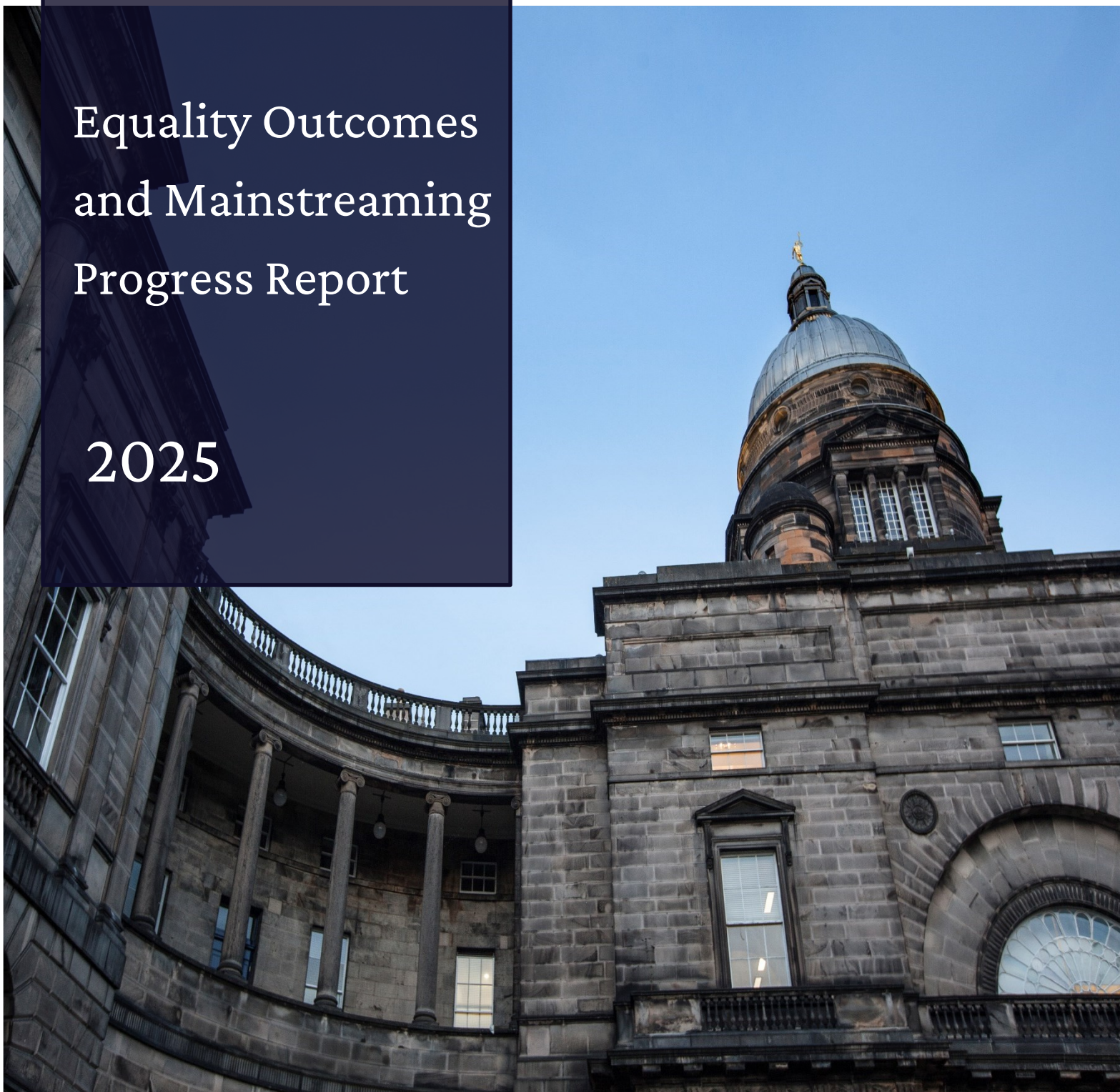# Equality Outcomes and Mainstreaming Progress Report

2025

THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Executive Summary

Introduction

The University of Edinburgh has a strong and long-standing commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and to promoting a positive environment, which ensures fairness, challenges prejudice, and celebrates difference. By mainstreaming EDI in all that we do, we deliver on the values set out in Strategy 2030, ensuring that

"we foster a welcoming community, where staff, students, alumni and friends feel proud to be part of our University" and that we are *"diverse, inclusive and accessible to all."*

The University furthers its equality duties under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 by publishing a set of Equality Outcomes every four years, and taking steps to mainstream EDI within our institution. We review our progress at the mid-point and end-point of each Equality Outcomes cycle.

This report provides an honest, comprehensive review of the progress we have made in advancing EDI against the four Equality Outcomes 2021-2025 (Section 1), and on progress made in mainstreaming EDI across the institution (Section 2). Both sections identify areas where we need to concentrate actions in order to make more progress in our future EDI work. We also include a report on gender representation of the University Court (Section 3), and equality data reports (Section 4).

Summary of Section 1

A summary of the key achievements described in Section 1 across the four Equality Outcomes:

1. Our staff and students feel confident and are supported to report harassment, hate crime, and gender-based violence

The University has taken significant strides in creating a safe environment for staff and students to report harassment, hate crimes, and gender-based violence (GBV). Achievements include:

- **Respect at Edinburgh:** Enhanced Dignity and Respect policy, including updates addressing sexual harassment, supported by new expected learning training modules for staff and students.

- **Digital Safety:** Resources such as the Digital Safety Supporter Toolkit have been developed to address online risks.

- **GBV Prevention:** Expansion of the Report and Support platform to address bullying, harassment, and racial discrimination, supported by dedicated roles of Sexual Violence Case Workers and the Intercultural and Anti-Discrimination Advisor.

2. Improve access to education, and reduce retention, progression, and awarding gaps for different groups of learners

Efforts have been made to reduce barriers to education, improve retention, and enhance belonging for diverse learners:

- **Widening Participation:** Introduction of initiatives like the Corporate Parenting Plan and targeted scholarships such as the Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program.

- **Inclusive Learning Environments:** Implementation of enhanced lecture recording with AI-captioning, improved disability support, and facilities for student carers.

- **Student Belonging:** Innovative campaigns like 'First in Family' and integrated support models have strengthened community and accessibility.

3. Increase the diversity of staff, including at senior grades, in leadership roles and on key decision-making bodies

The University is committed to increasing diversity in leadership and decision-making roles:

- **Diversifying Recruitment:** Launch of inclusive hiring guidelines and mainstreaming of related training.

- **Leadership Development:** Initiatives like the Aurora and Elevate programmes aim to support women and ethnic minorities into leadership.

- **Youth Employment:** Apprenticeships and student internships have increased workforce diversity and provided career pathways for underrepresented groups.

4. Ensure EDI is actively promoted throughout pandemic recovery and negative impacts are mitigated

Post-pandemic strategies embed EDI in recovery efforts, addressing disparities:

- **Staff Recognition and Flexibility:** Adjustments to promotion processes and a Hybrid Working Policy to support inclusive work practices.

- **Research Recovery:** The Chancellor's Fellowship Scheme has successfully met gender and ethnicity targets for new appointments.

Summary of Section 2

Key achievements that illustrate how EDI principles are embedded across the University's governance and operations are set out across five themes:

1. Mainstreaming: Governance
- Governance structure and Leadership roles.
- Recognition of the EDI work carried out by staff and students.
- A holistic approach to EDI.

2. Mainstreaming: Key Strategies and Initiatives
- Learning and Teaching.
- Student Experience
- Staff Experience
- Research and Innovation
- Digital Strategy

3. Mainstreaming: Services and Infrastructure
- Student Wellbeing and Support Services
- Staff Wellbeing and Support Services
- Disability and Learning Services for Staff and Students
- Building and Estate Initiatives
- Digital Estate Initiatives

4. Mainstreaming: EDI Literacy and Awareness
- Student EDI Learning
- Staff EDI Learning
- Our Diverse University: Raising Awareness
- EDI Community at the University

5. Mainstreaming: Evidence-Based Improvement
- Staff Equality Data Capture
- Surveys
- EDI Data Dashboards
- Una Europa Diversity Council Action Group on Diversity Data Collection

Conclusion

The University of Edinburgh remains dedicated to fostering a culture of inclusion and respect. Through targeted initiatives, training, and support systems, it is building a more diverse, equitable, and accessible community for staff and students. We have identified areas where we need to concentrate our efforts to progress our strategic aims. The report outlines plans to extend these efforts in the Equality Outcomes 2025-2029, to tackle persistent inequalities, continuing a long-term commitment to EDI.

Section 1: Progress of Equality Outcomes 2021-2025

In 2021, we set four equality outcomes to be advanced over a four-year period. These can be found at: Strategy and Outcomes | The University of Edinburgh. This section of the report reflects on the progress made against these outcomes.

Outcome 1: Our staff and students feel confident and are supported to report harassment, hate crime, and gender-based violence

The key topics highlighted in this report for Outcome 1 are:

- Respect at Edinburgh

- Digital Citizenship and Safety

- Preventing Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

- Tailored Support for Minority Groups

Respect at Edinburgh

We have made progress in improving understanding and giving practical steps to enable the fostering of a culture of dignity and respect, a key commitment made by the University. To support staff and students, the website Respect at Edinburgh | The University of Edinburgh serves as an evolving online platform, regularly updated with information to advance the expectations outlined in the University's Dignity & Respect policy, the processes for raising concerns, and available support, guidance and training to foster inclusive, respectful behaviour.

The Dignity and Respect Policy |The University of Edinburgh was updated in the final quarter of 2024 to include a specific appendix on preventing sexual harassment. This update also clarifies that employees can lodge complaints about harassment by third parties, such as consultants or visitors, as required by the new legal duty. We have added to our training with a new eLearning module for staff, titled *'Preventing Sexual Harassment at Edinburgh',* which was introduced as required learning for all staff. We also encourage staff and students to complete the eLearning module *'Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence'*. These measures will increase the confidence to report any wrongdoings, as staff will be fully informed about changes to the law and University policies.

Furthermore, a comprehensive review of the Dignity and Respect Policy is planned for 2025. This review will aim to ensure that the policy continues to meet our EDI objectives and remains fit for purpose. We are committed to embedding this work further into our Equality Outcomes 2025-2029, maintaining it as a priority for continued improvement.

Digital Citizenship and Safety

The shift to online platforms for work and study, accelerated by the pandemic, has become a central feature of the University's operations. To address this, our online learning Digital Citizenship and Safety | The University of Edinburgh has expanded to offer a variety of resources, such as guidance on 'Staying Safe While Learning and Teaching Online' and 'Digital Wellbeing While Hybrid Working'. These resources cater to diverse learning needs and styles.

In 2023-24, we updated our offerings to empower both staff and students to support each other in maintaining digital safety and wellbeing. This includes a Digital Safety Supporter Toolkit | The University of Edinburgh, which provides practical advice on understanding digital safety risks and ensure safeguarding, including specific resources for effective allyship to marginalised communities.

Preventing Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

Launched in April 2021, the Report and Support |The University of Edinburgh platform initially focused on encouraging the reporting of gender-based violence (GBV) within the student community, and offering access to safety and wellbeing support. Since then, the platform's scope has expanded to include reports of all forms of bullying, harassment, and victimisation. It provides valuable data insights into the prevalence, demographics, and nature of abuse, helping inform interventions and improve service provision.

To further address GBV, a Sexual Violence & Harassment Manager was appointed in August 2020, followed by two Sexual Violence Case Workers in February 2022, establishing the Equally Safe Team. This team has been instrumental in supporting survivors, working closely with both internal and external services to ensure comprehensive support. In recognition of its positive impact, the EST Manager received the EUSA Teaching Award for Support Staff of the Year in 2022. The team has also trained student conduct and disciplinary panels, which has led to improved outcomes for students involved in reporting processes. We continue to focus on research and service improvement in this area, and our ongoing efforts to maintain strong partnerships with both internal and external advice and support services are crucial in ensuring effective responses to GBV and providing clear referral pathways and risk assessments. Our participation in the White Ribbon Campaign reflects our ongoing commitment to engaging men in ending violence against women. Equally Safe - Our Work on GBV |The University of Edinburgh

Recognising the increased use of online spaces, we have also produced resources to help staff and students navigate online harassment and support survivors, Resources Against Online GBV |The University of Edinburgh. These resources complement our broader efforts to combat GBV.

Tailored Support for Minority Groups

In response to the success of the Report and Support platform, we have expanded its functionality to include reporting racial harassment and hate crime. This expansion is supported by a new role, the Intercultural and Anti-Discrimination Adviser, who has been in place since May 2023. This role provides crucial support to students who report racism and discrimination and provides training for staff on recognising and celebrating intercultural differences. The role has been positively received by both students and staff, and has fostered strong links with key student societies and university support services.

In summary, our commitment to fostering an inclusive, supportive, and safe environment for all staff and students remains at the core of our EDI work. We recognise that we still have work to do to improve student trust and faith in reporting and in our processes and we continue to invest in the development of resources, policies, and support systems to ensure the mainstreaming of appropriate and supportive behaviour, so that everyone at the University of Edinburgh can thrive without fear of harassment, discrimination, or violence. We plan to continue this important work further into our Equality Outcomes 2025-2029, continuing it as a priority for ongoing development.

Outcome 2: Improve access to education, and reduce retention, progression, and awarding gaps for different groups of learners

Strategy 2030 outlines the University's vision to '*be a place of transformation and self-improvement*' and to '*widen participation so that students from any background can come to study with us*'. This outcome focuses on improving access to education and ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, are supported throughout their academic journey to succeed and reach their full potential.
The key topics highlighted here for Outcome 2 are:

- Widening Participation

- Financial Support and Scholarships

- An Accessible and Inclusive Learning Environment

- Student Experience and Belonging

Widening Participation

The University has taken a leading approach to widening participation and has pioneered many different types of access programmes now common across the higher education sector. Our Widening Participation Strategy continues to strengthen our efforts, ensuring students from diverse backgrounds are supported from the moment they apply, throughout their transition into university, and across their academic journey. There has been steady but slow progress in the last few years in the recruitment of entrants from SIMD20 backgrounds (around 11% of our Scottish-domiciled UG intake), but we have not seen a return to the historic high intake of over 13% in 2022-23. Widening Participation | The University of Edinburgh

One of the significant outcomes of our Corporate Parenting Plan 2022-27 | The University of Edinburgh, is the impactful support it has provided to care-experienced and estranged students. The plan, informed by direct collaboration with students, includes key actions like providing start-up kits for new accommodation, offering dedicated mentors throughout their time at the University, and covering graduation gown and photo packages. In 2022, the University enrolled 65 care-experienced students, a significant increase from just 6 in 2017. The EDI Committee provides additional oversight to ensure the sustained inclusion of care-experienced students in our future strategies.

Financial Support and Scholarships

The University offers a wide range of financial support and scholarships to help students from underrepresented and disadvantaged groups access higher education. Some key initiatives include:

The Mastercard Foundation (MCF) Scholars Program | The University of Edinburgh provides scholarships to talented young people from Africa, prioritising women, those living with a disability, and those from a refugee or displaced background. The program will support 850 postgraduate students from 2023 to 2030.

Access Edinburgh Scholarships |The University of Edinburgh support low-income, care-experienced, and estranged UK undergraduate students with up to £5,000 per year. Since 2020, over 5,000 undergraduate students have benefitted from more than £14 million in financial aid, including over £8 million in the 2023-24 academic year.

The partnership with Unite Foundation | The University of Edinburgh enables undergraduate care-experienced and estranged students to receive accommodation funding for three years.

Scholarships and Student Funding | The University of Edinburgh outlines all scholarships available which includes The Cowrie Scholarship Foundation, British Standards Institute, and Andrea Levy Scholarships specifically support disadvantaged Black UK students. Also of note is the University's recently expanded offering of scholarships for students displaced by conflict, persecution or other serious human rights violations, with up to 30 postgraduate scholarships for displaced students and 4 undergraduate scholarships for asylum seekers.

An Accessible and Inclusive Learning Environment

The University remains committed to providing an accessible and inclusive learning environment. Some of our work in this area is noted in the mainstreaming section 1.2, later in this report. Several initiatives and resources have been introduced to support all learners, including:

The Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice, which includes core courses '*Becoming an Engaging Teacher'* and '*Designing curricula and learning environments'* both of which teach inclusive design, creating an inclusive classroom and supporting a sense of belonging.

Our CPD Framework for Learning and Teaching is accredited against the UK Professional Standards Framework and emphasises the importance of respecting diverse learners, promoting equity, and ensuring all students can reach their full potential. CPD framework: learning and teaching | The University of Edinburgh.

Our Institute for Academic Development (IAD) runs a IAD Practical Strategies |The University of Edinburgh series which has included sessions covering specific EDI-related topics such as Decolonising and Anti-Racism and Recognising and Counteracting Microaggressions. To further this work, IAD has developed a website: Supporting Programme and Course Design |The University of Edinburgh which brings together resources for staff to further developing their programme and course design to ensure EDI is mainstreamed in ways of teaching. We have over 150 EDI-themed Teaching Matters Blogs |The University of Edinburgh, covering topics such as inclusive cultures, assessment that discriminates and feminist teaching.

The University has pioneered wide coverage of lecture recording across more than 450 teaching spaces, ensuring that 98% of undergraduate lectures are recorded. In 2024, the University introduced enhanced captioning services by combining AI captions with human input to improve accessibility. The Information Technology Committee and the Knowledge Strategy Committee have agreed to make captions the default setting on all recorded media in 2024, significantly improving accessibility for students. Accessibility and Lecture Recording | The University of Edinburgh

The University has created facilities for student parents and carers, which will support their participation in education, such as the Carer and Child Room in the Main Library, and breastfeeding rooms across campus.

The British Sign Language (BSL) Development Officer delivered the first summer school for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, helping them to understand university life. The success of the initiative led to a second summer school in 2022. Additionally, the Disability Information Team has collaborated with the Staff Disability Service to improve accessibility for students using hearing aids. A Sign of Change | The University of Edinburgh

Student Experience and Belonging

A critical part of reducing awarding and progression gaps is ensuring that students feel they belong and are supported throughout their academic journey. In this area, the University has taken positive steps to foster a strong sense of community, which are evidenced in the following initiatives:

The Student Support Model |The University of Edinburgh, introduced in 2022, was a major change programme designed and delivered in consultation with students and staff. The model provides integrated support for students from academic staff, professional services, and peers. The model provides the dedicated, and differing, roles of Student Advisers and Wellbeing Advisers, who work closely with students to offer practical and emotional support at the point of need. The model has been successful in ensuring a clear route to help and support and serving to foster a strong sense of belonging for all of our students. We are encouraged by the positive feedback from students and we are pleased that the model is seen as sector-leading and has been influential on other higher education establishments' initiatives.

The Student Partnership Agreement |The University of Edinburgh with EUSA sets priorities to enhance the student experience. One of the main priorities for 2024-25 is to promote inclusion and belonging by making intentional efforts to meet the diverse needs of students and staff, acknowledging intersectionality, and celebrating the diversity of our community.
Our BAME PhD students are supported through the Staff BAME Network Mentoring Programme, which was launched in 2020. More on this initiative can be found in Outcome 3 (*Mentoring*) later in this report, as it has proved to be a beneficial scheme and so, has been extended to all BAME staff since 2024. Staff BAME Network Mentoring Programme |The University of Edinburgh

The First in Family | The University of Edinburgh campaign, launched in 2023-24, highlights the diverse academic backgrounds of University staff, allowing students to identify potential mentors and sources of informal support. Over 600 academic and professional services staff now wear pin badges to signal their academic journey, and to support to students who are also the first in their family to attend university.
In conclusion, the University of Edinburgh is committed to reducing gaps in access, retention, progression, and awards for underrepresented students. We enable targeted support, scholarships, and an enhanced, inclusive learning environment. By fostering a sense of belonging, the University strives to ensure all students, regardless of background, have equal opportunities to succeed and thrive. This is a cornerstone of Strategy 2030 and we will continue to progress this work in our Equality Outcomes 2025-29.

Outcome 3: Increase the diversity of staff, including at senior grades, in leadership roles and on key decision-making bodies

The University of Edinburgh has been actively working to diversify its staff, especially in leadership roles, and is committed to increasing diversity across all grades and key decision-making bodies. This long-term effort involves various strategies to ensure inclusivity and equality in the workplace. The key topics that the University is focusing on to achieve these goals are:

- Diversifying Recruitment

- Leadership Development

- Youth Employment

- Mentoring

- Attracting and Supporting International Staff

Diversifying Recruitment

The University launched its Diversifying Recruitment Guidance |The University of Edinburgh in November 2022, a step aimed at promoting equality in hiring practices. The guidance was developed with input from equality groups and has been well-received across the institution and externally. The guidance continues to be accessed by thousands of users and, since launch, has been further mainstreamed in both day-to-day practice and within projects. Recent examples of impact towards mainstreaming EDI include: alignment and integration of the guidance and key principles within the central Recruitment and Selection Guidance and other HR documents and processes; the pilot of an EDI self-assessment tool in our Corporate Services Group (as outlined below in Section 2.1 *Mainstreaming: Governance*), and specific questions in other internal surveys such as the Staff Engagement Survey. There is growing evidence of mainstreaming of diversifying recruitment principles in local recruitment panels' process and training for regular recruitment, promotion and flagship programmes, and in our expectations for external recruitment agencies.

Leadership Development

Analysis of our staff equality data shows modest increases in the proportion of women and staff from ethnic minority backgrounds at senior grades, with the biggest increases occurring at Grade 9. A link to our latest staff and student equality reports is provided in Section 4. We have made progress towards gender equality in key leadership roles. The University Senior Leadership Team has 45% (5/11) women. The Heads of Professional Services Groups and their Heads of Directorates are 53% women (18/33). On the academic side, across the roles of Provost, Heads of College and Heads of School, the proportion of women is 43% (12/28). However, progress towards greater racial/ethnic diversity across these leadership roles is slower, we note from our data that the senior level grades 8-10 are less ethnically diverse, and requires more dedicated positive action. Our data is currently limited in enabling us to assess the proportion of disabled staff or LGBT+ staff in leadership roles.

The University aims to increase leadership capability, as a mechanism for improving diversity in leadership roles and on key decision-making bodies within the University. Positive action in this area includes our engagement with Advance HE leadership development programmes, as well as our internal programmes: Leadership and Management Programmes |The University of Edinburgh . Participation in the national Aurora leadership programme for women has been consistently popular, with an average of 62 participants each year in the 2021-2025 period. The participants' feedback is very positive, with most feeling that they have benefitted from the programme and are equipped to become better leaders. The 5 places offered on the national Diversifying Leadership programme for BAME staff remained unfilled in 2023-2024, however our in-house leadership programme for women of colour, as described below, has proved popular.

The University's Elevate: A Senior Leadership Programme for Women of Colour |The University of Edinburgh initiative has grown from its inception in 2021, when initially 19 of the University's female academics of colour

came together to create a new six-month Senior Leadership for Women of Colour Programme to identify new collaborations, broaden their ambitions and develop their leadership skills. The initiative has since been mainstreamed into the University, with 20 places available each academic year for a six-month immersive programme which enables raising the profile of academics from diverse ethnic backgrounds with potential collaborators, colleagues, funders, students and networks.

Youth Employment

The University is committed to Youth Employment. We are a [Young Person's Guarantee (YPG)](#) employer and we provide various apprenticeships and student employment opportunities to support young people, particularly from underrepresented backgrounds:

The [Unitemps |The University of Edinburgh](#) service within Information Services Group (ISG) provides part-time and full-time paid internship employment for students. Due to the diversity of the student population, these positions are often awarded to students from groups which are underrepresented in the staff population. For example, the 2023 summer internship survey reported that student interns from minority ethnic backgrounds accounted for 38% of interns compared to 13% for staff and more likely to have a known disability (19% compared to 5%). The internships help provide valuable work experience for our students, as well as improve the diversity of staff in the University, ensuring we are including a broader perspective. The [Careers Service | The University of Edinburgh](#) also run the Employ.Ed summer internship programme, employing even more student workers in the summer.

The [Modern Apprenticeships Programme |The University of Edinburgh](#) has been recognised as best practice and helps provide career opportunities for young people, with tailored support for apprentices and managers, offering essential resources for every stage of the apprenticeship journey from onboarding to completion. The University is also committed to supporting [Career Ready](#), a social mobility charity that supports high school students in S5 and S6, giving insight into the world of work and bridging the gap between school and the workplace. We currently have 43 mentors signed up to engage with school pupils over 18 months, which includes the pupils undertaking a four-week, paid work placement. Feedback from those involved in these initiatives has been very good and we will continue to support these programmes going forward.

Mentoring

Mentoring plays a crucial role in supporting the career development of staff, especially those from underrepresented groups. The University offers several mentoring programs:

The [Staff BAME Network Mentoring Programme |The University of Edinburgh](#) began as an initiative to pair staff and PhD students from BAME backgrounds with mentors to address challenges related to discrimination, racism, and loneliness. The success of this initiative means that it has now been expanded to include all staff. At the time of writing, it has 105 active participants, 35 of whom are mentors, 40 of whom are mentees, and 28 who are both. In 2024-25, we will particularly focus on engaging underrepresented non-desk-based staff, such as cleaners and accommodation staff, to encourage wider participation in the programme.

We continue to participate in [KPMG's Cross-Company Allyship Programme (CCAP)](#) which enables reciprocal mentoring relationships between University BAME colleagues and mentors and mentees from KPMG.

Sponsorship for Inclusion workshops were run in 2023 to address systemic barriers in career progression for minoritised groups, encouraging leaders to actively support diversity in leadership roles. Following on from these workshops, in 2024 we launched the [Interview Shadowing Principles |The University of Edinburgh](#) programme

which offers aspiring leaders the chance to observe interviews, gaining valuable insights into the recruitment process and to inform their own future interviewee performance, enhancing their career prospects.

Attracting and Supporting International Staff

The University recognises the importance of attracting global talent as a way to mainstream diversity and inclusion, and offers substantial support for international staff, including:

The Staff Immigration Service |The University of Edinburgh, provides free and impartial specialist advice on UK immigration matters including checking visa applications, for prospective and current staff and their accompanying dependants. Financial support is given to offset visa and immigration fees, ensuring a smoother relocation process.

We also have a dedicated program to assist managers in recruiting international experts when relocation is not feasible, and supporting staff whose work is located abroad Working Abroad | The University of Edinburgh

We have a long history of supporting scholars impacted by conflict or displaced by distressing global circumstances. The University is proud to be a University of Sanctuary |The University of Edinburgh, and to work with Scholars At Risk and the Council for At Risk Academics (CARA) to provide a welcoming culture for those seeking refuge, including scholars displaced by conflict or other distressing global events.

To summarise, the University's commitment to increasing staff diversity at all levels has seen some notable successes and also is an ongoing commitment, with a focus on creating an inclusive environment that supports the professional development and progression of underrepresented groups. We are aware that we need to improve in some areas such as progressing diversity in key leadership roles and we are committed to improve. Through these initiatives, the University is laying the foundation for a more diverse and equitable workforce in higher education and we will continue to progress this work in our Equality Outcomes 2025-29.

Outcome 4: Ensure equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is actively promoted throughout pandemic recovery and negative impacts are mitigated

The Covid-19 pandemic had a disproportionate impact across different communities, and the University of Edinburgh has been actively working to address these disparities as part of its recovery efforts. Throughout the pandemic, EDI considerations were embedded into decision-making, ensuring that the recovery process recognised the varied needs of staff, researchers, and the wider community. Below are the key actions taken by the University to promote EDI in pandemic recovery:

- Staff reward and promotion process actions

- Initiatives to support researchers to recover from the impact on research

- Development of the Hybrid Working policy and framework

Staff Reward and Promotion Process Actions

To acknowledge the efforts made by staff during the pandemic, several measures were introduced. In June 2022, all staff received an exceptional payment in recognition of their hard work during the challenging pandemic years.

Additionally, the University doubled its investment in the annual staff contribution reward scheme, allowing more staff to be recognised for their contributions. This was aimed at enabling greater inclusion, encouraging focus on sustained excellence salary increments in ways that reduce pay gaps linked to protected characteristics, where such gaps exist.

The academic promotions process was adjusted to account for the impacts of Covid-19 on productivity and personal circumstances. Applicants were invited to provide details on how the pandemic had affected their work, ensuring that the process was fair and considerate of these challenges.

Initiatives to Support Researchers to Recover from the Impact on Research

The pandemic disrupted research activities across the globe, and the University has implemented several initiatives to support researchers in recovering.

The Chancellor's Fellowship Scheme |The University of Edinburgh is designed to offer tenure-track positions to internal candidates, ensuring job security for talented researchers who may have been impacted by the pandemic. Recognising the unequal impact of the pandemic, the University set ambitious gender and ethnicity targets for the recruitment of Chancellor's Fellows, aiming for 50% female and 20% BAME fellows. These targets were fully met, and recruitment panels received comprehensive equality guidance to support these goals. Unsuccessful candidates have been supported by our Institute for Academic Development through a newly developed programme tailored to support research staff on fixed-term contracts.

We also offer fellowships within the Edinburgh Career Development Scheme (ECDS) |The University of Edinburgh which includes Diversity Fellowships to target under-represented groups.

Development of the Hybrid Working Policy and Framework

The Hybrid Working Framework, which had its roots in post-pandemic working practices, was developed through staff consultation via two surveys which provided evidence around the impacts, both positive and negative, of home/hybrid working for different staff groups. The framework has since informed the Hybrid Working Policy (noted in the Mainstreaming Section 1.3,) which will ensure that our working practices continue to support inclusion and accessibility, and meet the needs of all staff across all protected characteristics.

By focusing on these initiatives, the University has worked to ensure that the continuing impacts of the pandemic are being mitigated in ways that promote EDI. Through these initiatives, the University seeks to create a supportive and inclusive environment for all staff and researchers as they recover and adapt to the changing landscape of work and academia.
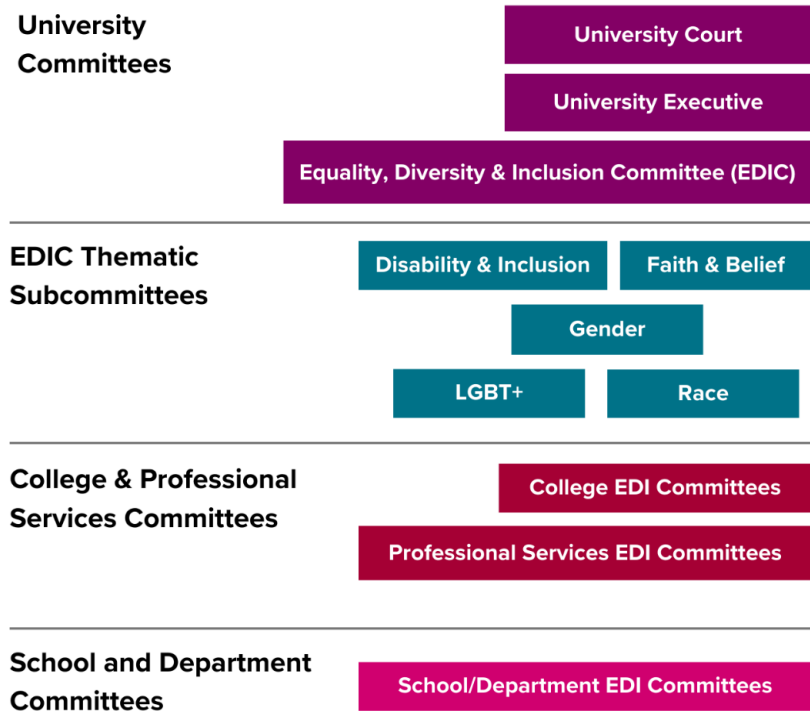
Section 2. Progress on Mainstreaming Equality

This section of the report considers mainstreaming progress under five themes and sections:

2.1 Mainstreaming: Governance

The University of Edinburgh has embedded EDI within its strategic priorities, as reflected in its University Strategy 2030, our Equality Outcomes as noted above, and successive Outcome Agreements with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). The governance structure of the University, illustrated below, enables the mainstreaming of EDI at all levels of the University, ensuring employee voice, accountability and continuous progress towards improving EDI.

University of Edinburgh EDI Governance

University Committees
- University Court
- University Executive
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee (EDIC)

EDIC Thematic Subcommittees
- Disability & Inclusion
- Faith & Belief
- Gender
- LGBT+
- Race

College & Professional Services Committees
- College EDI Committees
- Professional Services EDI Committees

School and Department Committees
- School/Department EDI Committees

University Court, the University's governing body, actively monitors the institution's progress in mainstreaming EDI by reviewing all published bi-annual and cyclical EDI reports, supplemented by updates on specific EDI topics, activities and themes. The University Court, and the University Executive, oversee progress against key performance indicators which include equality-related measures. The University Court is committed to improving the representation of the communities the University serves within its membership. Further information of its membership is provided in Section 3.

The University Executive, which meets monthly, is a key decision-making body that ensures EDI is integrated into all aspects of the University's work. Every paper presented to the Executive must consider EDI dimensions, ensuring EDI is embedded across the University and that all areas are expected and supported to deliver on objectives and the mainstreaming of EDI.

A dedicated EDI Lead has been in place since 2019. In February 2025, the role was expanded into a full-time director-level position, underscoring the University's commitment to mainstreaming EDI at the highest levels of leadership. The EDI Lead is also a member of the University Executive, ensuring that EDI considerations are present in all key decision-making processes.

In 2021, the University introduced the role of Provost, with the inaugural post-holder starting in June 2022. The Provost is a member of the University Executive and as Chief Academic Officer, holds responsibility for promoting a positive and inclusive academic culture, further enhancing the mainstreaming of EDI in the academic portfolio and ensuring accountability for achieving EDI goals.

The EDI Lead convenes the EDI Committee (EDIC), an Executive Standing Committee which presents policy papers and reports to the University Executive and provides a strategic overview of the University's EDI actions for both staff and students. EDIC's membership includes key budget holders, directors, and representatives from across the University community, including the Edinburgh University Students Association (EUSA), Trade Unions, and Staff Networks. EDIC meets regularly to discuss and ensure the progression of EDI initiatives.

EDIC's work is further supported by Thematic Equality Subcommittees, which focus on specific communities and develop targeted action plans. In 2024, three new subcommittees were established: the Faith and Belief Subcommittee, the Disability and Inclusion Subcommittee and the LGBT+ Subcommittee. These subcommittees ensure that action plans are tailored to address the needs of specific groups within the University. The HR EDI team has worked to enhance the oversight and management of these subcommittees, promoting cross-subcommittee collaboration and creating a more intersectional, holistic approach to EDI initiatives.

At the next level of governance, active EDI committees exist within each of the three Colleges and the three Professional Services Groups (PSG). These local committees report to EDIC and work on EDI initiatives within their respective areas. There are also EDI staff committees at the school and department level, which ensure that local contexts and specific needs are considered in the implementation of EDI practices.

Local EDI Leads play an important role in progressing EDI initiatives within their departments or schools. These leads collaborate to ensure that EDI goals are met at the local level, tailoring efforts to the unique needs of their areas. In 2024, the Corporate Services Group (CSG) piloted an initiative to assess the specific EDI work and areas needing improvement within three of its departments. The initiative involved designing an EDI self-assessment tool for senior leaders to reflect on their own EDI practices. Following its success, this pilot will be expanded across other CSG departments during 2024-25, with the possibility of university-wide adoption in the future.

The University acknowledges the importance of EDI work carried out by staff and students. Recognition is integrated into workload allocation models for academic staff, academic promotion processes, and staff

contribution awards. In 2024, ISG began an initiative awarding digital badges to recognise staff and students' achievements in EDI activities. These are awarded for activities such as speaking at EDI seminars and organizing EDI events and can be added to CVs and LinkedIn profiles.

The University's governance structure fosters a joined-up, holistic approach to mainstreaming EDI, allowing for input and consultation across various levels of the institution. The structure allows for a direct voice from the diverse student and staff communities, helping to align policies and practices with the real needs of the people it serves. We are delighted to have been invited to participate in the development of AdvanceHE's project Holistic Approach to EDI, where, during 2024, key senior leaders from the University shared knowledge and experience related to the EDI work that we progress at the University.

The University is committed to employing consideration and evaluation systems to confirm that we are genuinely mainstreaming EDI. By engaging both staff and students in EDI-related matters, the University ensures continuous oversight and monitoring of progress towards EDI mainstreaming. Our improved governance structure including the key appointments of EDI Lead and Provost is a key system, ensuring that the mainstreaming of EDI remains a central focus in all aspects of the University's actions.

2.2 Mainstreaming: Key Strategies and Initiatives

The University ensures that EDI principles are fully integrated within its key strategies, projects, and initiatives. This integration occurs through the establishment of dedicated EDI workstreams, community consultations, and the widespread use of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) for strategic projects. The following five key strategic areas address various University initiatives and operations, all aimed at promoting an inclusive environment for both students and staff:

- 2.2.1   Learning and Teaching
- 2.2.2   Student Experience
- 2.2.3   Staff Experience
- 2.2.4   Research and Innovation
- 2.2.5   Digital Strategy

2.2.1 Learning and Teaching

The Curriculum Transformation Programme (CTP) |The University of Edinburgh is an ambitious initiative designed to enhance the educational experience of our students. At its heart is collaboration and dialogue with staff, students and other stakeholders internally and externally to construct a curriculum that continues to challenge and support all students to thrive and fulfil their potential. We believe it should be a joy to deliver and reflect an ambition to be the best and most progressive we can, as a place to study and as a place of work. We appreciate that it is imperative that EDI principles are embedded throughout the core objectives of the CTP, influencing its design, governance, and implementation. A key initiative is the development of a Challenge Course: *Understanding Decolonisation in a Globalised World*. The course is novel in the collaborative and co-creation approach in its development involving academics and professional services staff and students from different disciplines. The experiential dimensions integrated into the course delivery expand student learning beyond the immediate learning environment. Initiatives within the Curriculum Transformation Programme will contribute to the progress of Equality Outcomes 2 and 4.

Additionally, the [Principal's Teaching Award Scheme (PTAS) | The University of Edinburgh](#) and the annual [Learning and Teaching Conference |The University of Edinburgh](#) promote and reward EDI in teaching practices, with themes such as inclusive cultures and decolonising the curriculum being central topics.

2.2.2 Student Experience

EDI principles are at the heart of our aims to provide an inclusive student experience by ensuring equality of opportunity and fostering a sense of belonging among all students. The Deputy Secretary Students heads up the [Student Experience Services Team |The University of Edinburgh](#) that implements the strategic initiatives to ensure that all our students are given equality of opportunity, to give all students a voice, and to actively encourage all students to learn about, appreciate and celebrate communities, groups and individuals different to their own or themselves. Our approach to supporting our students is through the development of their independence, identity and sense of belonging through the provision of inclusive and inspiring opportunities for academic, social and cultural connection. This means embedding EDI values throughout our student-related policies, processes, communications and support.

Successful implementation of our strategy will mean that:
- students of all backgrounds feel a sense of safety, cohesion and belonging to the University and to the city;
- our spaces support and improve our sense of community and wellbeing;
- we provide a strong sense of welcome and support for the development of friendships and personal networks.

Many of the key initiatives to improve student experience are outlined in Outcome 2 above (in the section *Student Experience and Belonging*). This includes the implementation of the new [Student Support Model |The University of Edinburgh](#) which has had a positive change on how students are heard, supported and helped. The model has had positive feedback, is seen as sector-leading and has been influential on other higher education establishments' initiatives.

2.2.3 Staff Experience

The [People Strategy |The University of Edinburgh](#) was developed in 2023 collaboratively through extensive consultation with people across the University and is designed to underpin the mission and values of Strategy 2030 by creating an environment that fosters a warm community, where everyone feels proud to be part of our University. The three strategic themes of *Enhancing Our Working Environment, Developing Our Potential* and *Strengthening Our Community* are furthered by many of the initiatives described in this report, and we highlight a few more initiatives here that enable a more inclusive staff experience.

A Hybrid Working organisational change programme began in October 2020 to rethink the way that we work and deliver our services that fairly supports our dynamic community of learners, educators, researchers, and professional services staff and better meets their individual needs alongside those of the wider community. The programme carried out a Strategic Equality Impact Assessment in consultation with EDI colleagues and engagement with staff equality groups to develop the Hybrid Working Framework, in July 2021.

The framework informed the [Hybrid Workplace Policy](#), launched in July 2023, in recognition of the benefits of more flexible ways of working. The University is committed to supporting a blended approach to work location where it is operationally feasible and where it is of benefit to the organisation, its staff and students. The Policy

provides a route for employees to request patterns of work that will involve working on and off-campus. More formal contractual requests for flexible working can be made through the Flexible Working Policy, which was also updated.

In April 2024 the first phase of the University's new Grade Scale was implemented to ensure fair and appropriate pay for each grade on our salary scale. We carried out an [EqIA: Grade Scale Change |The University of Edinburgh](#) which included consultation with equality groups and trade unions. By August 2025, when the grade scale changes will have taken full effect, there will be a positive impact for nearly every staff member working at the University. Over 8,000 employees received a salary increase in April 2024, with a number of staff being moved to the new starting salary of each grade and over 15,000 employees now able to achieve a higher ceiling of earning within their grade as a result of the extended grade structure, enabling us to attract and retain staff. For staff at Grade 10, the most senior grade, progression through the first five grade steps was changed from every two years to annually, resulting in a quicker salary progression, this enables faster pay progression in the grade with our largest gender pay gap. Additionally, we are working to improve the academic promotion process with an aim to improve the distribution of staff by gender and ethnicity across all the grades which is the biggest driver of our pay gaps.

The [Athena Swan Charter](#), a tool to promote gender equality, has been pivotal in advancing EDI within staff experience the University. The University has engaged with AS for almost two decades and has maintained its institutional Silver award [Athena Swan | The University of Edinburgh](#). We are working on progressing the institutional action plan 2024-29, with awareness that embedding the action plan is critical to the University's capacity to deliver on gender equality and its intersections with other protected characteristics in order to mainstream EDI. Across the University there are a large number of School/Department submissions ranging from Bronze through to Gold which are supported through a Gender Equality & Athena Swan shared practice group. Gender equality work is further highlighted in Outcome 3 above.

2.2.4 Research and Innovation

Research is at the core of the University's mission, forming one of the four pillars in our Strategy 2030. The [Research & Innovation Strategy 2030 |The University of Edinburgh](#) integrates EDI by fostering inclusive research cultures and addressing historical and contemporary challenges in research practices. The strategic action plan and initiatives incorporate learning from the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021, the Research Cultures activities and sectoral best practice to ensure EDI is at the heart of all our research activity. The activities support progress in Equality Outcomes 3 and 4.

Our submission made to the REF2021 incorporated an EqIA of the proposed approach with further detailed analysis and monitoring of EDI impacts post-submission. The analysis showed that it was more inclusive of female and BAME academics than the previous REF2014 submission. The University recognises there are significant gaps in data for religion/belief, sexual orientation and disability in relation to our research communities, and further work will be undertaken to improve staff equality data, as outlined below in this report in section 2.5.1 which will improve our ability to analyse the inclusivity of activities, such as REF, in the research space.

The [Research Cultures |The University of Edinburgh](#) initiative progresses an ambitious and actionable approach to fostering positive and inclusive values, expectations and behaviours that shape how we support, deliver and communicate research. The experiences of researchers, including those from particular equality groups, have been captured via surveys and discussion groups, covering EDI-related topics such as bullying and harassment, support for disabled researchers, and research assessment metrics.

The Review of Race and History Group |The University of Edinburgh is a comprehensive and inclusive, academically led and engaged examination of the University's relationship with coloniality and enslavement and its legacy today. This work will deepen our responsibility to understand and tackle contemporary and historical issues around race and racism at our University, and support our commitment to mainstream anti-racism. The Research and Engagement Working Group (REWG) Interim Report REWG Interim Report 2024 |The University of Edinburgh, provides a summary of findings to-date and points towards the work that will take place prior to the final report presented in 2025. The report will include recommendations derived from communities of reparatory justice, with a view to discussing how to put its recommendations into effect and sustain this work beyond 2025. In March 2024 REWG proposed the following three initial recommendations: (1) Creating a Research and Community Engagement Centre to Tackle Racial Injustice, (2) Improving Access to University of Edinburgh's Material Archives and (3) Decolonising and Sustaining Learning.

2.2.5 Digital Strategy

Digital innovation is a key component in delivering the University's Strategy 2030. Following a two-year University-wide consultation, the Digital Strategy has been defined and launched in 2024. A key aim of the Digital Strategy |The University of Edinburgh is to identify and address inequalities that exist within our digital environments and progress a more accessible and inclusive campus. The University has committed, through the Digital Strategy, to develop and provide digital and data services that are accessible and useable by the widest possible range of users.

Key to the Digital Strategy's ongoing development and successful implementation is ensuring that every member of our community can continue to input their views, thoughts and ideas and thereby shaping and continually improving the digital future of the University. To ensure this, great attention has been paid to providing accessibility, of all related materials and consultation methods, and providing access to those who do not use our digital estate as part of their roles and could be described as digitally disenfranchised.

The accessibility improvements that we are making will enable compliance with specific UK legislation and standards that apply to the University as a public sector body, as well as moral and ethical principles. Ongoing development of the University Digital Strategy will be an iterative process, responding to the requirements of our community as we adapt and embrace the opportunities and challenges of the changing digital landscape. The strategy will contribute to progressing Equality Outcomes 2 and 4, noted earlier is this report.

As the University now moves into enactment of the Digital Strategy, EDI is a critical pillar of the implementation. An example of activity in this area was a project undertaken during 2024 to review Digital Accessibility within the Centre of Open Learning with a view to producing a Digital Accessibility Toolkit that can be adopted by other areas of the University.

2.3 Mainstreaming: Services and Infrastructure

This section highlights some of the University's initiatives to integrate EDI into services and infrastructure. The aim of these services is to enhance student and staff day-to-day activity, so that a more inclusive and accessible experience can be had across these various areas:

- 2.3.1   Student Wellbeing and Support Services
- 2.3.2   Staff Wellbeing and Support Services
- 2.3.3   Disability and Learning Services for Staff and Students
- 2.3.4   Building and Estate Initiatives
- 2.3.5   Digital Estate Initiatives

2.3.1 Student Wellbeing and Support Services

The Student Wellbeing Service |The University of Edinburgh is a pivotal part of the University's efforts to improve student support as part of the University's new Student Support Model, described in Outcome 2 above (in the section *Student Experience and Belonging*). This model ensures that students receive consistent pastoral care through Student Advisors across Schools, Colleges, and the broader University. The Wellbeing Advisors enhance the service by offering more specialised support for students with heightened wellbeing concerns. A key feature of this model is the proactive collaboration with students, advisors, supervisors, and external services, enabling the provision of holistic care. Since its full implementation in 2024, the service has effectively streamlined support and created clear routes for escalating wellbeing concerns.

Additionally, the Student Counselling Service |The University of Edinburgh has diversified by hiring more counsellors from ethnic minority backgrounds, reflecting the University's commitment to EDI. The service engages with the Black, African and Asian Therapy Network to enhance provision and has expanded to meet increasing demand, including remote counselling from a third-party provider, A Problem Shared. This enhanced provision allows the University to match students' preferences, including offering BAME counsellors, Mandarin or Cantonese-speaking counsellors and services for British Sign Language (BSL) users.

2.3.2 Staff Wellbeing and Support

A new role of Deputy Director of Health and Wellbeing was filled in December 2023 with remit including the Occupational Health Service and the Staff Disability Service. The role-holder oversaw the updating of the Staff Health and Wellbeing Hub |The University of Edinburgh which brings together information, resources and services.

A notable staff wellbeing service is the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) |The University of Edinburgh which was piloted in October 2021, and has been a crucial tool in addressing staff wellbeing, particularly during the pandemic. Offering support for personal and work-related issues, including counselling and access to legal, financial, and bereavement support, the EAP has significantly reduced wait times for counselling. The programme's success has led to its permanent continuation, with a new contract from November 2024. It now provides counselling sessions within 5 working days for over 95% of cases, demonstrating the programme's positive impact on staff wellbeing.

The Menopause Policy |The University of Edinburgh was launched in September 2024. A series of events during World Menopause Awareness Month, October, embedded the policy launch including blogs and guest speakers. The policy, and related guidance and events aim to create a more inclusive working environment by reducing the stigma and misunderstanding around menopause and to help improve awareness and ensure the University supports and retains talented members of staff at all stages of their working lives.

In February 2025 the University launched a new Reasonable Adjustments Policy for staff, alongside the Trans Policy (Staff) and Trans Policy (Students).

The Reasonable Adjustments Policy evolved pre-existing guidance into detailed Policy and Managerial Guidance. Through consultation with disabled staff and key service and support providers the Reasonable Adjustments Policy has brought much-needed clarity for both disabled staff and managers. The Policy also created an Individual Adjustments Plan (IAP) – a new document that can be used to keep a record of adjustments and streamline adjustments for staff moving across the organisation.

Our long-standing Trans Equality Policy was reviewed and developed into two staff and student-specific policies. Consultation with trans individuals, key stakeholders and process-owners shaped the policies to become

support-centred, greatly increasing the transparency of the wide-range of support available to trans students and staff, while clarifying the roles and expectations of key teams and individuals.

2.3.3 Disability and Learning Services for Staff and Students

The [Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS), |The University of Edinburgh,](#) renamed in 2022, supports both students and staff with disabilities. The service has streamlined its processes, introduced a new registration system, and allocated more resources to meet growing demand. This has led to significant improvements in delivering support, with 89% of students satisfied with the service. The University has also seen a rise in disability disclosure, from 18% of the student population in 2022-23 to 22% in 2023-24.

The Disability Information Team works in conjunction with DLSS to provide disability awareness training and review, which includes testing websites including use of assistive software and providing training on writing Accessibility Statements, EqIAs and creating accessible content. They also advise on procurement of accessible software and making IT adjustments, and work with Estates to review accessibility of buildings for disabled students.

Additionally, the [Staff Disability Advisory Service (SDAS) |The University of Edinburgh](#) launched in August 2023, provides tailored advice for disabled, deaf, or neurodivergent staff. It has received positive feedback, with 208 referrals in its first year. The University continues to improve its provisions for British Sign Language (BSL) users and offers disability awareness training to staff.
The University has extended the [BSL Resources| The University of Edinburgh](#) available to all areas to support individuals who use British Sign Language, in line with the University's BSL Plan 2018-2024. [British Sign Language (BSL) Plan 2018-2024 at the University of Edinburgh](#)

2.3.4 Building and Estate Initiatives

The Estates department is committed to making University buildings as inclusive as possible. The department's renamed EDI fund (formerly the Accessibility Fund) supports adjustments like door automation and the introduction of gender-neutral toilets and shower facilities in new developments.

A new post of Assistant Design Manager (ADM) was created in February 2024. The role-holder oversees the enabling of inclusive design, raising awareness of accessibility issues, undertaking design reviews and advising on physical adjustments. The ADM leads strategic reviews of accessibility issues of key buildings such as Old College, the outcomes of these reviews will feed into wider discussions which will shape the next 10-year Capital Plan.

Adoption of the RIBA Inclusive Design Overlay to the Plan of Works is being encouraged to ensure that inclusion is embedded into all projects from the start. Estates also requires design teams to design to current best practice in BS8300:2018 Inclusive Environments, a level which is advancement of statutory compliance. Existing accessibility design guidance is being updated and expanded into Inclusive Design Guidance, to reflect issues around hidden disabilities (aiming for publication in early 2025). Best practice and key learnings from other Universities are being adopted where appropriate. The Estates department has a dedicated EDI email account as a route for staff and students to raise building related accessibility issues.

To ensure safe access and egress for disabled staff and students, the Health and Safety department liaise closely with the ADM in Estates is part of discussions around the accessibility of teaching space, and the Fire Safety Unit. We have introduced a clear process to manage the Personal Emergency Evacuation Process (PEEP) to ensure that staff and students can safely use as many buildings as possible on the University estate, and clearly identify buildings that may have access and egress issues due to their layout, age, conservation status etc. DLSS take the

lead for instigating student PEEPs, Accommodation, Catering and Events (ACE) undertake additional PEEPs for students within accommodation and line managers are responsible for staff PEEPs. Since the process began in 2019, there have been 227 student and 122 staff PEEPs recorded which is an improved overview of staff and student needs and enables measures to ensure people are given the support required.

Estates are mapping our Changing Places Toilets provision across the University. We currently have Changing Places facilities in the Wellbeing Centre, with works in the Main Library planned to begin in Autumn 2024. The ambition is to have a Changing Places facility on every campus to support our students, staff and visitors to our buildings. Also, free period products are provided in over 150 University buildings across all our campuses to give as many students and staff access to these products as possible.

2.3.5 Digital Estate Initiatives

In addition to the work within our Digital Strategy (as described in section 2.2.5 above), we highlight here some Digital Estate initiatives which enhance accessibility and digital inclusion. The Digital Skills Programme |The University of Edinburgh offers workshops to improve digital literacy, with sessions focused on making digital content more accessible. Topics include subtitling, learning analytics, and accessibility in learning technologies. These sessions have been well-received, with nearly 7,800 students and 4,300 staff attending since 2021. Following analysis of attendee data, we found that some groups of staff or students may be unaware or missing out on the training, and we're going to make changes to the programme in 2024-25 in response to those data findings.

The 2023 upgrade of our Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) was successful in improving accessibility across programmes of teaching. The upgrade implemented the 'Ally' accessibility tool to help students access alternative formats of course materials, while also offering guidance for staff on improving course accessibility. Accessibility audits of courses are conducted each summer, by employed student interns, with feedback used to track progress and encourage continuous improvement. In 2023 this consisted of reviewing 1,441 courses against a standard accessibility matrix of criteria. The findings inform an overall University report and individual reports for each participating School/Deanery.

Through these initiatives, the University is striving to create an inclusive environment for both students and staff, ensuring that support services, physical infrastructure, and digital tools are accessible to all, contributing to a culture of EDI across the institution.

2.4 Mainstreaming: EDI Literacy and Awareness

We have a broad range of resources and initiatives to mainstream EDI literacy and awareness across our institution, with some learning and initiatives created specifically for staff and for students where appropriate, recognising the different needs of these groups. These resources and initiatives aim to ensure that the University community remains informed and empowered to contribute positively to an inclusive environment. The key areas highlighted in this section are:

- 2.4.1 Student EDI Learning
- 2.4.2 Staff EDI Learning
- 2.4.3 Our Diverse University: Raising Awareness
- 2.4.4 EDI Community at the University

2.4.1 Student EDI Learning

To complement our suite of student EDI learning, in 2023-24, we piloted two essential micro-courses aimed at incoming students: '*Consent'* and '*Active Bystander'*. These short, engaging courses were designed to increase awareness of key diversity and inclusion issues, encouraging students to foster a positive community environment. In the pilot year, over 10,000 students completed the '*Consent*' course, and more than 5,000 completed the '*Active Bystander'* course. During 2024-25, these courses will be extended to include Post Graduate Research (PGR) students, ensuring all students are offered this valuable learning experience.

Additionally, the University launched the [Learning Together as Equals |The University of Edinburgh](#) online course in 2023-24. This course provides students with a platform to reflect on equality, inclusivity, and decolonising the curriculum. It features content co-created with students, addressing issues like barriers to equality, enablers of equality, and the importance of empathy. Early feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, with students noting a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives.

2.4.2 Staff EDI Learning

We have an established core offering of [Staff EDI Learning | The University of Edinburgh](#). Our new HR and Finance system, launched in November 2021, includes a Learning Management System which has improved our ability to set and monitor completion of expected learning for staff. All new staff are assigned EDI learning to be completed as a priority when they join us, and current staff are prompted by the system to refresh expected learning every 3 years. Line Manager dashboards provide overview of staff learning to inform probationary and annual review conversations.

We continuously review our offering of EDI-related learning to ensure it is useful, relevant and up to date and respond to requests for particular learning from our community. In October 2024, we launched a suite of bespoke eLearning courses which updated the two expected EDI learning courses ('*Inclusion at Edinburgh*' and '*Understanding Unconscious Bias'*) and provided five new courses which enable understanding and literacy of various EDI-related topics, and their intersectionality, for our staff.

To further understanding among leaders and future leaders, we provided the workshops '*Understanding Race and Racism'*, and '*Identity, Privilege and Intersectionality'* to our Leader and Manager communities during 2021-24. Feedback from attendees showed they felt motivated to act and would welcome further support for behaviour change. These workshops were complemented by a series of '*Are you ready to Talk/Listen?*' sessions to increase the preparedness of staff at all levels for informed conversations around EDI. Participants were given opportunities to share their own experiences of inclusion and exclusion and learn from the experiences of others, to recognise their agency in change, and identify actions that they could take at an individual, departmental, and institutional level as appropriate to their role.

We have also launched a series of EDI Conversations workshops which enable facilitated discussion and sharing of ideas and observations on EDI topics, such as '*EDI and Me'*, '*Trust*' and '*Fostering Inclusive Behaviours'* within our staff community. All materials used in our workshops are made available to participants and we encourage local areas to work with these materials and adapt them for the local context, to enable EDI Conversations within their areas and aid the mainstreaming of these initiatives.

2.4.3 Our Diverse University: Raising Awareness

EDI awareness is further promoted through a range of celebratory events to honour the diversity of our community which are an integral part of the University calendar. The University annually celebrates LGBT+ History Month, Black History Month, Disability History Month, and International Women's Day, cultural festivals

such as Chinese New Year, hosts student-led celebrations such as Latin America week and Africa Week, and raises relevant celebratory flags at Old College.

The initiative Naming Spaces After Inspirational Women | Information Services, serves to honour pioneering women in history and to raise awareness of these women. Notable examples include the Charlotte Murchison and Bessie Watson Lecture Theatres.

The Editorial Style Guide |The University of Edinburgh was expanded in June 2022 to include inclusive language guidelines, ensuring that all communications reflect respect and sensitivity towards diverse groups. The guide was developed collaboratively with staff and students and aims to ensure that when we talk to, and about, our diverse communities in our corporate internal and external communications we do so with respect, sensitivity, consistency and care. This guidance represents a snapshot in a continuing conversation and will be revised as related language evolves.

The University recognises the importance of academic freedom and freedom of expression within its community. We recognise the current challenging world situation and in common with broader society that there are strongly held divisive views on social and geopolitical issues. To support an environment of academic freedom and freedom of expression, the University convened an Academic Freedom & Freedom of Expression Working Group |The University of Edinburgh to review the ways that the University can welcome a wide variety of perspectives and respectfully acknowledge opposing views within the academic environment as outlined in our Commitment to Freedom of Expression. The working group includes a specific workstream which explores the intersection between academic freedom, freedom of expression and EDI. The working group also includes a specific task and finish group which will ensure effective and consistent pastoral support of individual students, academics, and professional services colleagues who find themselves the focus of adverse attention due to their exercise of academic freedom or freedom of expression, or who experience distress due to somebody else exercising their academic freedom or freedom of expression. To enable respectful debate and discussion, we have published guidance for staff and students on the interaction of the University's Dignity and Respect Policy with these obligations. The Guidance explains what factors the University may consider and balance when there is a tension between the exercise of rights of freedom of expression, and other legal obligations such as ensuring staff and students are not subject to unlawful harassment; and how relevant policies may apply and be upheld in such circumstances.

2.4.4 EDI Community at the University

We have a vibrant EDI Community | The University of Edinburgh that plays a key role in promoting awareness and engagement with diversity and inclusion. This includes Staff Networks, our Students' Union, student societies, and research and knowledge exchange hubs, which contribute significantly to the promotion of EDI literacy and awareness. The cross-disciplinary networks RACE.ED and GenderED produce regular blogs, podcasts, and seminars, such as the annual GenderED blogathon to mark the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, and the popular RACE.ED podcast 'Undersong – Race and Conversations Other-wise'.

Our various Staff Networks meet regularly and initiate a range of activities. The Staff Pride Network (SPN) organises events and initiatives to raise awareness of LGBT+ issues and to support LGBT+ staff and allies. In 2023, SPN produced new Pride Progress rainbow lanyards for staff and students which are available for anyone to collect at our libraries and receptions and have proved to be popular. Both the Edinburgh Race Equality Network (EREN) and the Jewish Staff Network organise lectures and talks, such as EREN's Lunchtime Biography series which spotlights staff from diverse cultural backgrounds. The BAME staff network provides a mentoring programme alongside other activities to support anti-racism and race equality. The Disabled Staff Network (DSN) holds regular meetings and has produced an excellent short video '*Disability is not a barrier'*.

The Edinburgh University Students' Association (EUSA) has Liberation Officers who work to represent marginalised communities of students. They lead and support our five Liberation Campaigns (which cover Black and Minority Ethnicity; Disability; LGBTQ+; Trans and Non-Binary; and Women) which exist to create a space where self-defining students can come together, discuss the issues affecting them, and campaign to improve their student experience. This is alongside the full-time annually elected role of VP Welfare.

This section of the report highlights the University's commitment to fostering a culture of inclusivity through education, awareness-raising, and community engagement. By providing staff and students with the necessary tools and opportunities for learning, the University ensures that EDI principles are embedded throughout its operations and activities.

2.5 Mainstreaming Evidence-Based Improvement

The University of Edinburgh is committed to utilising robust evidence to identify and address barriers to equality, track progress, and implement initiatives and interventions which will enable mainstreaming of EDI. While there has been significant progress in building a solid evidence base, the University acknowledges that there is still work to be done, particularly in improving both quantitative and qualitative data collection and supporting their effective use. We highlight here key initiatives to progress an improved evidence-base:

- 2.5.1 Improving our Staff Equality Data Collection
- 2.5.2 Surveys
- 2.5.3 EDI Data Dashboards
- 2.5.4 Una Europa Diversity Council Action Group on Diversity Data Collection

2.5.1 Improving Our Staff Equality Data Collection

The University launched a new institution-wide HR and Finance system, *People and Money* (P&M), in November 2021, which allows staff to update their equality data at any time via a self-service portal. There are disparities in the rates of known data across the protected characteristics; for example, ethnicity is relatively high but religion has a low disclosure rate. To encourage staff participation, guidance has been published to support individuals in providing their personal equality information. This initiative has led to improvements in the completion rates of equality data, and further efforts are underway to build trust and confidence around the disclosure process. Working closely with staff networks and communities, the University aims to continue improving data collection, which is vital for effective monitoring of progress in fostering equality for all staff groups.

2.5.2 Surveys

To capture the experiences of staff regarding EDI and to inform future actions, the University regularly conducts all-staff surveys. The next survey is scheduled for the first quarter of 2025 and will include specific questions on staff experiences related to EDI, alongside demographic data to capture any differences across equality groups. The results of these surveys are made available to Schools and Departments, ensuring anonymity, and are accompanied by guidance to help managers interpret the data, communicate the findings to their teams, and align actions with existing strategies to foster sustainable change.

In addition to the all-staff survey, the University conducts various other surveys as needed, such as the Hybrid Working Survey (2022), local working culture surveys in Schools engaged in the Athena Swan Charter, and a Discrimination Survey to explore everyday racism and inform actions aimed at reducing discrimination.

2.5.3 EDI Data Dashboards

Since 2008, the University has published annual EDI statistical reports for both staff and student communities which can be found in Section 4. In June 2024, we completed work to develop associated EDI dashboards, for staff and student data, which are accessible to all University staff. We anticipate receiving more feedback as time passes and their usage becomes more mainstream as a reference point, but initial responses have been that these have been helpful in providing context for more local conversations and provide a starting point for deeper exploration of specific questions such as in relation to Equality Impact Assessments. The dashboards are able to supply more detail than our publicly-available (static) annual reports, but have worked had to strike a balance between accessibility, meaningful data and responsible publishing. A DPIA (Data Protection Impact Assessment) and LIA (Legitimate Interest Assessment) were completed, after consultation with internal stakeholders. Having established these, we aspire to develop limited access equivalent dashboards, with more granular data and intersectional analysis to further meet the needs of the University.

2.5.4 Una Europa Diversity Council Action Group on Diversity Data Collection

The University is a member of the Una Europa University Alliance of European research universities, and we are very active within its Diversity Council and associated programme of work. The Diversity Council established the Action Group on Diversity Data Collection in 2021, and the University of Edinburgh was one of the seven participating institutions in the work of this group and a co-author of the final report. The goal of the Action Group was to investigate and identify good practice in diversity data collection and make recommendations that could strengthen the evidence base within the Una Europa universities, and in the wider higher education sector to better support the achievement of EDI ambitions. Diversity Data Collection: Exploratory Mapping & Reflection Report The University has representation on the Diversity Council and was also a member of its Research Action Group. We contributed to the final report of the Diversity Council: Engaging with Diversity in European Universities | Una Europa (una-europa.eu)

The initiatives outlined above illustrate the University's ongoing commitment to strengthening its evidence base, improving the collection and use of data, and ensuring that EDI-related efforts are informed by accurate, reliable information. Through these efforts, the University aims to enhance its ability to monitor progress, identify challenges, and implement effective mainstreamed solutions that support an inclusive and diverse academic environment.

Section 3. Report on the Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018

This section of the report is for the purposes of compliance with the reporting requirements of The Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018, as set out in The Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018 (Commencement No. 2) Regulations 2020. It covers the period 1 May 2023 to 30 April 2025.

The Act applies to those non-executive members of the University's governing body, the University Court, who are appointed by the University Court itself but who have not been 'appointed only by virtue of being the winning candidate in an election for membership or by virtue of being nominated for membership by another person'.[1] The following categories of University Court members are in scope:

- Co-opted Members;
- Senior Lay Member (as the appointment involved a two-stage process of interview followed by election for those who passed the interview stage rather than a single stage process of an election only); and,
- General Council Assessors.

The Act sets a 'gender representation objective' that 50% of the membership of Scottish higher education institutions' governing bodies within the certain membership categories explained above are women[2]. Subsequent Regulations added that Scottish higher education institutions must publish by 30 April 2021 and subsequently, at intervals of not more than every two years, a report which includes:

(a) a statement of whether at the date of publication the gender representation objective has been achieved,

(b) a statement confirming the number of vacancies for non-executive members which arose during the period covered by the report,

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[1] The Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018, Schedule 1

[2] The Act had included a definition of "woman" but the Court of Session later found this to be outwith the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament. The Act was amended in April 2022 to remove the definition. Updated statutory guidance then advised that: '"woman" in the Act has the meaning under section 11 and section 212(1) ["a female of any age"] of the Equality Act 2010. In addition, in terms of section 9(1) of the Gender Recognition Act 2004, where a full gender recognition certificate has been issued to a person that their acquired gender is female, the person's sex is that of a woman, and where a full gender recognition certificate has been issued to a person that their acquired gender is male, the person's sex becomes that of a man'. A UK Supreme Court judgment on 16 April 2024 found that 'the Guidance issued by the Scottish Government is incorrect. A person with a GRC [Gender Recognition Certificate] in the female gender does not come within the definition of "woman" for the purposes of sex discrimination in section 11 of the EA [Equality Act] 2010.' The University is not aware of any impact on the figures included in this report.

(c) a statement confirming for each vacancy referred to in sub-paragraph (b) how many recruitment competitions were held with a view to fill the vacancy and, for each competition—

 (i) the number of applications received and, where applications were received, the percentage which were from women, and

 (ii) confirmation of whether an appointment was made and, where an appointment was made, whether a woman was appointed,

(d) details of any steps taken by the appointing person under section 5(1) of the Act to encourage applications from women to become non-executive members of the public board, and

(e) details of any other steps taken by the appointing person under section 6(2) of the Act with a view to achieving the gender representation objective[3].

This is the third biennial report, with the first and second reports published on the University's webpages. To answer the reporting requirements in turn:

(a) a statement of whether at the date of publication the gender representation objective has been achieved

The gender representation objective was achieved by the publication of the first report, in April 2021. At the publication of this report, the gender representation objective is not currently being met as 27% of the present University Court members within the scope of the Act are women and 73% are men.

The current position for the membership of the University Court as a whole is as follows:

April 2025 University Court Membership	No.	%
Women in reportable categories	3	27%
Men in reportable categories	8	73%
Sub-total	**11**	**100%**
Women not in the reportable categories	5	42%
Men not in the reportable categories	7	58%
Sub-total	**12**	**100%**
All Women	8	35%
All Men	15	65%
Total	**23**	**100%**

The diversity of the University Court membership with regard to two other protected characteristics, race and religion, has increased over the reporting period. Seeking to increase the diversity of University Court membership with regard to protected characteristics has been a feature of recruitment competitions, including the steps taken covered under the response to (d) and (e) below.

(b) a statement confirming the number of vacancies for non-executive members which arose during the period covered by the report

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[3] Scottish Statutory Instrument 2020/120 (Equality Public Bodies, The Gender Representation on Public Boards (Scotland) Act 2018 (Reports) Regulations 2020), Regulation 3

Three vacancies for positions on the University Court within the scope of the Act arose during the period covered by this report.

(c) a statement confirming for each vacancy referred to in sub-paragraph (b) how many recruitment competitions were held with a view to fill the vacancy and, for each competition—
> *(i) the number of applications received and, where applications were received, the percentage which were from women, and*
> *(ii) confirmation of whether an appointment was made and, where an appointment was made, whether a woman was appointed,*

Two recruitment competitions have been held to fill the three vacancies:
1. Two Co-opted Member vacancies, filled from 1 August 2023
2. One General Council Assessor vacancy, filled from 3 February 2025

Details of these are set out in the table below:

Recruitment competition	Applications received	% Applications from women*	Appointments made	Appointments of women
1	29	36%	2	0
2	19	28%	1	0
Total	**48**	**31%**	**3**	**0**

* Calculated from those who opted to declare this information when applying, which was: 14 of 29 applicants for competition 1 and 18 of 19 applicants for competition 2.

A further recruitment competition is nearing completion and has been conducted in line with the requirements of the gender representation objective. The outcome will be included in the next reporting period.

(d) details of any steps taken by the appointing person under section 5(1)[4] of the Act to encourage applications from women to become non-executive members of the public board, and

(e) details of any other steps taken by the appointing person under section 6(2)[5] of the Act with a view to achieving the gender representation objective by 31 December 2022 [note: this no longer applies and the University of Edinburgh had met the gender representation objective by the publication of the first report in April 2021.]

The following steps have been taken:

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[4] "An appointing person for a public board must take such steps as it considers appropriate to encourage women to apply to become non-executive members of the public board."

[5] "An appointing person for the public board must, in addition to anything done under sections 3 to 5, take such other steps as it considers appropriate with a view to achieving the gender representation objective by 31 December 2022"

- Advertisements for the vacancies were placed on the board recruitment platforms established by [Changing the Chemistry](#) and [Women on Boards](#), which are focused on improving board diversity and gender representation on boards in particular;
- Advertisements included text encouraging applicants from diverse backgrounds and drew upon new guidance from sector body AdvanceHE, the [Higher Education Board Diversity and Inclusion Toolkit](#);
- A search agency was used for first recruitment competition with a mandate to assist in the encouragement of suitable applicants from diverse backgrounds, including gender. In the second recruitment competition there was particular encouragement from both the University and the University's General Council for women to apply for the vacancy;
- The University is a launch partner in the [Governance Apprenticeship Programme](#), with a governance apprentice shadowing the University Court each year; and,
- Information on progress in meeting the gender representation objective is included in relevant papers to the Governance & Nominations Committee, the committee responsible for oversight of the recruitment process for new members within the scope of the Act.

Section 4. Monitoring and Data Reports

This section provides links to related reports required under the Scottish Specific Duties of the Public Sector Equality Duty. We are working to enhance our generation and use of data, as outlined in the data reports. This includes developing data dash boards for use across the institution to provide granular data to support action planning and to monitor progress and also developing our benchmarking work. We are reactivating our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Research Monitoring and Reporting subcommittee (EDMARC) to provide oversight of these developments, identify areas for further research and to improve use of data across the University. As we continue to develop our EDI strategy, action plans and outcomes, we need to ensure we have appropriate evaluations in place and are able to monitor progress in key areas, both qualitatively and quantitatively and use evidence effectively to guide our future work.

The **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Data Reports** provide analyses of student and staff on available equality protected characteristics data. The reports support the monitoring of progress on equality, diversity and inclusion at the University of Edinburgh. [EDMARC | The University of Edinburgh](#)

Equal Pay Audit 2025: Details of the University's Equal Pay Audit & Equal Pay Statement 2025. [Equal Pay Audits | The University of Edinburgh](#)