



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report

2024/25



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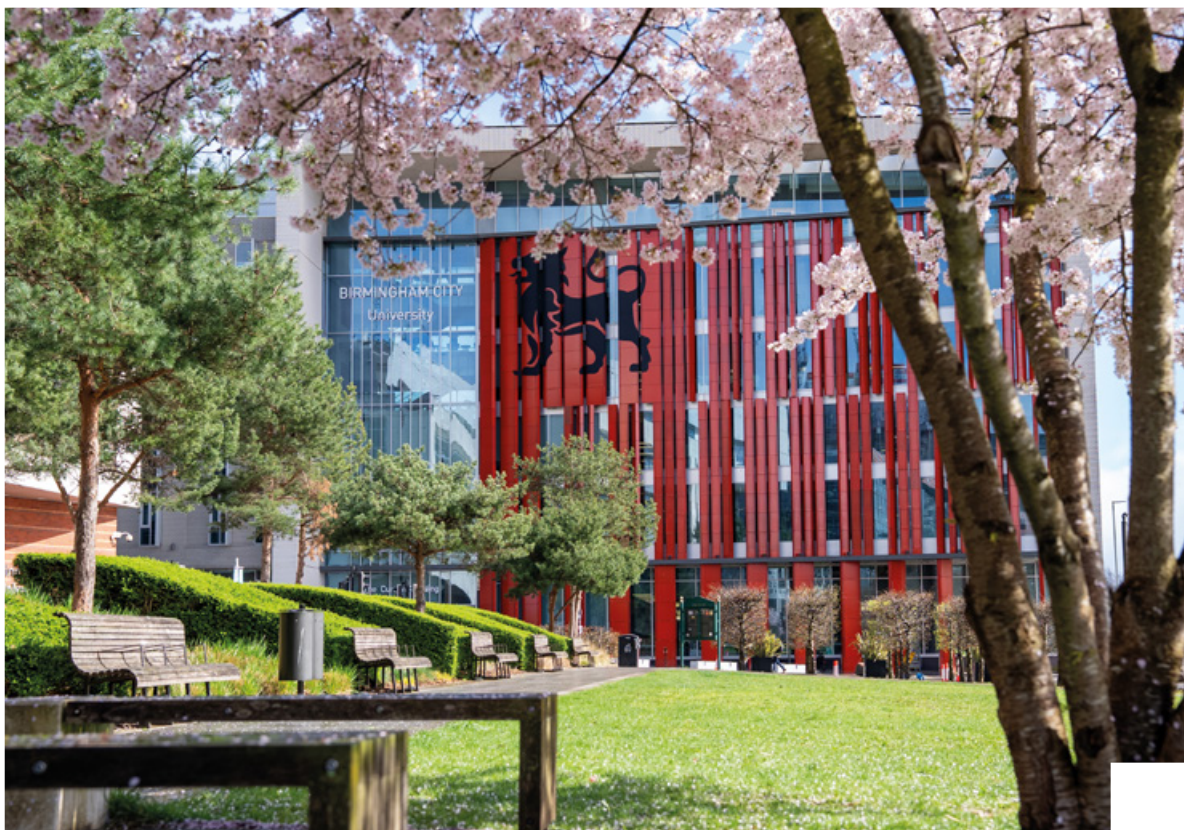
Introduction

At Birmingham City University (BCU), we remain steadfast in our commitment to fostering an inclusive environment where every student and staff member feels safe, supported, and empowered to reach their full potential. Across our faculties and professional services, we continue to prioritise improving outcomes for members of our diverse community who are underrepresented or face systemic disadvantage.

Our strategic focus, sustained through our recently launched [Strategy 2030](#), includes a bold and evolving set of ambitions aimed at dismantling structural barriers, strengthening partnerships with communities and organisations, and embedding equality into our institutional decision-making, commitments, and development.

Our actions and objectives reflect these ambitions and underpin our commitment to driving progress in key areas:

- Closing the degree awarding gap
- Enhancing graduate outcomes
- Building a workforce that reflects the diversity of our student body and region
- Embedding fair, equitable, and transparent processes across our strategy, operations, and service delivery



Following the launch of our [Strategy 2030](#), we are committed in our pursuit of effective and measurable progress in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). We are dedicated to ensuring EDI is central to our mission and remain accountable to both internal standards and external benchmarks, including the Race Equality Charter, Athena Swan, and Disability Confident.

Our senior leaders actively sponsor and champion our dynamic array of EDI priorities, ensuring that it is not only achievable and measurable, but also deeply embedded into the culture and practices of our university. We remain passionate about creating inclusive environments that enable all members of our community to thrive and succeed.

At Birmingham City University, we remain deeply committed that EDI is not a singular person or team's responsibility. It is a shared priority to uphold equality, challenge discrimination and harassment, and foster an environment where everyone is empowered to thrive. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion are not secondary and are instead central to our institutional mission **to create and share knowledge for a better and more inclusive society.**

As a university rooted in the heart of Birmingham city, we are proud to lead the sector in embedding inclusive, accessible, and practice-based teaching that creates social mobility and uplifts communities. Our vision to become an exemplar anchor institution is bold, but it is driven by conviction and a clear sense of purpose. With more students than ever from underrepresented backgrounds progressing and succeeding at BCU, our role in delivering public benefit is not only enduring but also transformative.

Over the past year, we have strengthened our partnerships and deepened our engagement to reflect the richness and diversity of Birmingham's communities. We continue to celebrate and elevate inspiring role models locally and globally. This ignites our ambition and empower our students to strive for excellence. Together, we are focused on creating a generation of Beyonders: individuals who transcend expectations, break new ground, and lead with courage – **individuals who choose to go further.**

In the past, BCU has also been rated the best university for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in the Midlands, and is among the top 10 universities in the UK, according to the inaugural Honordex report. The digital platform formed its rankings based on available organisational data on EDI performance, allowing prospective and current employees to assess how diverse and inclusive an organisation is. The external scoring framework scored universities out of 100 and across the following key areas: Actions and data, leadership, inclusivity of the leadership team, explicit EDI support, working and learning conditions, social media presence and scores on other ranking sites.

Within the Honordex Top 20 Universities Overview, BCU achieved 58.2 to gain 'intermediate' status, which means it has taken several positive actions on EDI and has great opportunities to develop its work further. These findings demonstrate the significant strides we have made in embedding inclusion and diversity into the strategy, culture and operations at BCU.





Executive summary

Each year, public institutions are required to publish evidence of compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty. This report outlines Birmingham City University's performance against its equality objectives during the academic year 2024/25, as we conclude the final year of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy 2020–25. The strategy sets out the University's commitment to advancing equality and fulfilling its legal obligations, with progress monitored quarterly by the EDI Committee and the Human Resources Committee, a subcommittee of the Board of Governors.

The report presents a detailed demographic profile of BCU's student and staff communities, including data disability, gender identity, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background. While there have been improvements, the composition of our workforce still does not fully reflect the diversity of our student population or the wider Birmingham region. This underrepresentation may influence how individuals experience identity, inclusion, and belonging within the University.

Performance against our equality objectives shows positive progress in several areas, with five out of ten objectives achieved and RAG rated as Green from our last strategy. Notable successes include increased representation of students with disabilities, strengthened institutional accreditations, and a growing momentum in championing EDI, driven by leadership and support from the University Executive Team. The report also highlights the creation of a safer university environment, where students feel confident in reporting harassment and discrimination. Our approach to tackling inequality is both proactive and responsive, combining the development of targeted initiatives with robust support mechanisms that ensure accountability and care for individuals who faced with discrimination and/or harassment.

Recognising our continued progress, it is important to note that areas where targets were not fully met still demonstrated substantial improvement within a single academic year. Most notably, our ethnicity awarding gap decreased by 9.1%, and the degree outcome gap between disadvantaged and less disadvantaged students reduced by 10.8%. While these targets were unmet in accordance with our Access and Participation Plan, these outcomes reflect the significant effort and commitment the university has invested in driving continuous improvement. Advancing equitable access and outcomes remains central to our mission and values, and these improvements highlight the meaningful strides we are making toward that goal.

At BCU, education remains central to advancing equality of opportunity. Mandatory training on the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty continues to be completed to a high standard by our core workforce, although we recognise that outreach efforts are ongoing to extend this training to visiting lecturers and students. Looking ahead, we recognise the need to accelerate progress in narrowing the ethnicity awarding gap and the attainment gap between students from the most and least disadvantaged neighbourhoods. To address this, BCU has launched an ambitious Access and Participation Plan (2024/25 – 2027/28), designed to improve outcomes in attainment, continuation, completion, and progression for students most at risk of inequality. This plan is complemented by Project Zero, our business improvement programme focused on closing the Ethnicity Degree Awarding Gap. With Phase 2 of this programme launched, Project Zero will adopt a more proactive, targeted, and holistic approach to addressing inequality across the student experience.

BCU remains committed to ensuring that progress in equality is both measurable and meaningful. We balance quantitative metrics with qualitative insights, recognising the importance of harmonising lived experiences and humanistic values in shaping an inclusive university culture. Our recent submission for the Silver Athena Swan Award reflects our continued commitment to gender equality, while refinements to our Race Equality Charter submission aim to ensure a unified and SMART approach to tackling racial inequality. We are also advancing our position in the Disability Confident and Disabled Student Commitment schemes, pursuing external and internal inclusion progress for LGBTQ+ inclusion, and exploring accreditation as a University of Sanctuary.

We acknowledge that EDI is a continuous journey. While we are proud of the progress made, we remain focused on areas requiring further attention, including pay gaps affecting women, staff from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic backgrounds, and staff members with declared disabilities. Our commitment to EDI is unwavering, and we will continue to work towards becoming a university that **develops talent for tomorrow, creates knowledge for good, and powers prosperity in everything we do.**

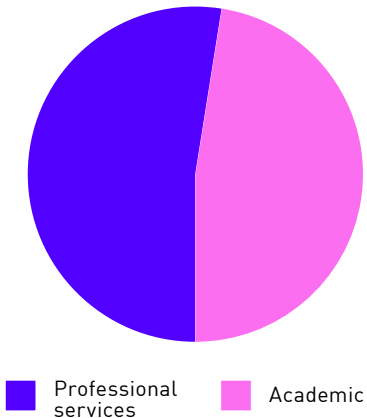


Diversity profile of staff

Total salaried staff population

BCU employs 3,319 salaried members of staff, which is split roughly evenly between Academic and Professional Services staff.

Salaried staff type	Headcount	Percentage
Academic	1,743	53%
Professional services	1,576	47%
Total salaried staff	3,319	



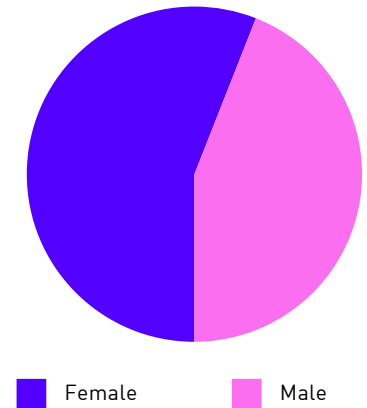
Salaried staff proportions by characteristic

Salaried staff headcount proportions

Sex:

When considering sex, there are slightly more female staff, 56%, than male staff, 44%.

Salaried staff type	Headcount	Percentage
Female	1,858	56%
Male	1,461	44%



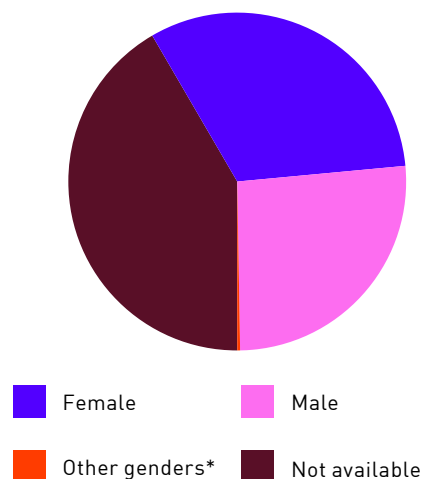
**Data source for all staff data: ERP 2024/25 staff data*

Gender identity

Only 58% of staff have shared their gender identity with us, with 32% of staff sharing their gender as female and 26% as male. 0.3% of staff have recorded another gender. In this context, gender is self-identified, does not require any sort of legal or documented status and may or may not correspond to sex assigned at birth.

Salaried staff type	Headcount	Percentage
Female	1,059	32%
Male	870	26%
Other genders*	9	0.3%
Not available	1,381	42%

**Due to the small number of responses (fewer than 10), data for non-binary and other gender identities have been combined under a broader category of Other Genders, to protect staff confidentiality. This combination does not imply that these identities are the same but is a reporting measure to ensure anonymity.*



Sexual orientation

37% of staff have shared their sexual orientation with the university, with 3% refusing to provide the information and 60% not having filled out the form. Approximately 1% of staff are bisexual, 1% gay men, 1% gay women or lesbian, and 0.3% identify with another sexuality. The remaining 34% are heterosexual.

Sexual orientation	Headcount	Percentage
Bisexual	30	1%
Gay man	29	1%
Gay woman/lesbian	22	1%
Heterosexual	1,123	34%
Other	8	0.2%
Information refused	116	3%
Not available	1,991	60%

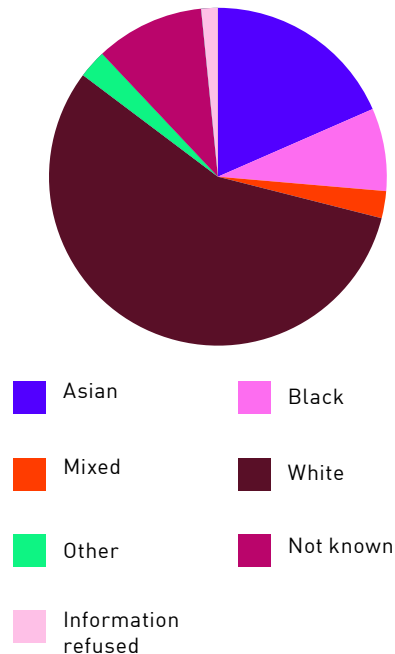


Ethnicity

The majority of salaried staff are white, 56%. 18% of staff are Asian, 8% are Black, 3% are of mixed ethnicities and 3% of other ethnicities. 2% refused to share their ethnicity.

Ethnicity	Headcount	Percentage
Asian	612	18%
Black	263	8%
Mixed	86	3%
White	1,869	56%
Other	90	3%
Not known/not available*	346	10%
Information refused	53	2%

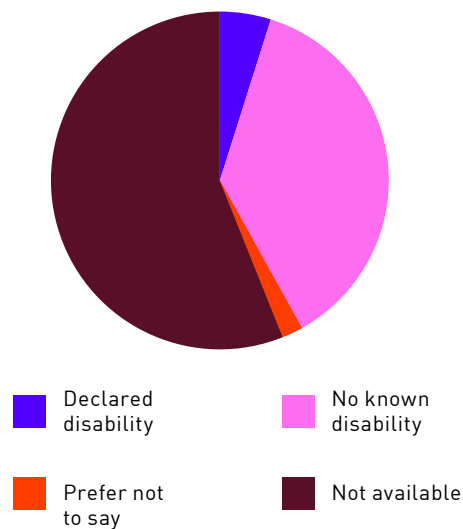
**10% of staff have unknown ethnicity; due to previous data migration processes this combines staff who themselves do not know their ethnicity with those who have not provided any information to the university (not available).*



Disability

Only 44% of staff have shared their disability status, with 2% actively preferring not to say and 55% not providing any information. 5% of the total staff headcount have shared that they have a disability while 37% have no known disability.

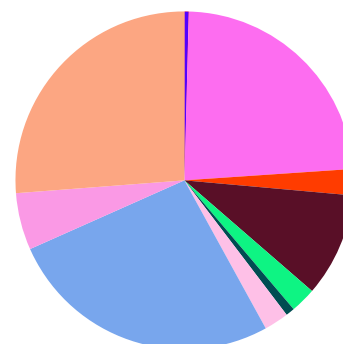
Disability status	Headcount	Percentage
Declared disability	162	5%
No known disability	1,229	37%
Prefer not to say	67	2%
Not available	1,861	56%



Religion

69% of staff have shared their religion or belief with the university, including 26% of staff who have no religion. 43% of staff shared that they do have a religion or belief and this is comprised of 0.4% Buddhist, 24% Christian, 3% Hindu, 10% Muslim, 2% Sikh, 1% spiritual and 2% other religions and beliefs.

Religion	Headcount	Percentage
Buddhist	14	0.4%
Christian	780	24%
Hindu	83	3%
Muslim	330	10%
Sikh	81	2%
Spiritual	28	1%
Any other religion or belief*	78	2%
No religion	874	26%
Information refused	181	5%
Not available	870	26%



**There are fewer than 10 staff who have shared their religion as Jewish; to protect anonymity, they have been added to the 'Any other religion or belief' category. This combination does not imply that these identities are the same but is a reporting measure to ensure anonymity.*

Trans status

Fewer than 10 members of staff have shared that they have a gender identity that does not match their sex assigned at birth, often described as being trans. Although 42% have not provided an answer either way. To protect anonymity this information is not presented in a table or chart.

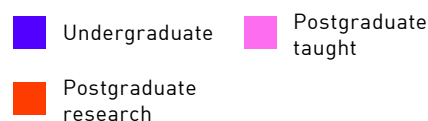
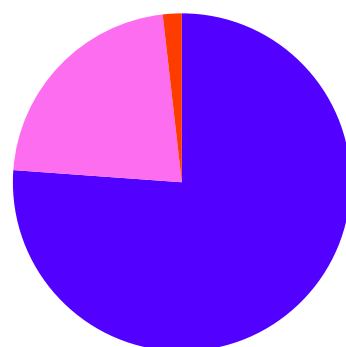
Diversity profile of students*

Total salaried staff population

BCU has a total of 30,798 students. The majority (76%) of these are undergraduate (UG) students, with the remainder being postgraduate students, 22% of that being postgraduate taught (PGT) and the remaining 2% postgraduate research (PGR).

Student type	Headcount	Percentage
Undergraduate	23,452	76%
Postgraduate taught	6,789	22%
Postgraduate research	557	2%
Total	30,798	100%

**Data of current student profile relates to the year 2024/2025 and is current and up to date as of 23 January 2025.*



Student proportions by characteristics

Sex

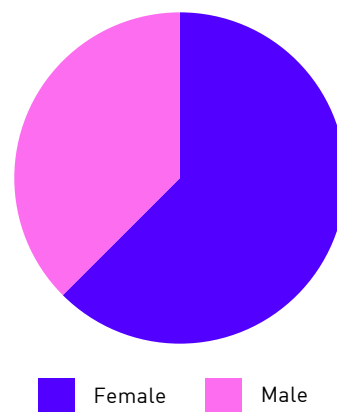
In this report, due to the current availability of data, we have utilised data categorised by sex rather than gender. We acknowledge that sex and gender are distinct concepts, with sex typically referring to biological attributes and gender relating to one's identity and social roles.

The percentage of female students is relatively consistent between undergraduate and postgraduate research students with 63% and 62% respectively. There is then a drop of around 6% for postgraduate taught students to 56%.

Undergraduate

63% of undergraduate students at the University are female and 37% are male.

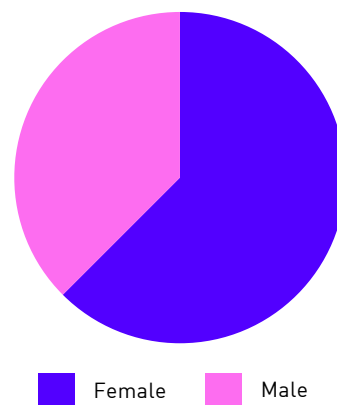
Sex	Headcount	%
Female	14,658	63%
Male	8,794	37%



Postgraduate taught

56% of postgraduate taught students at the University are female and 44% are male.

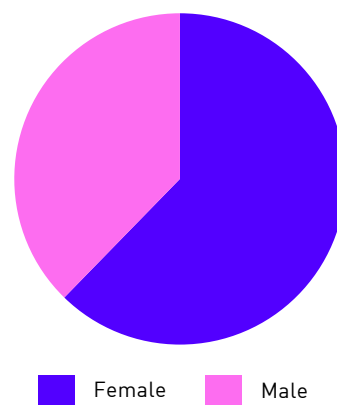
Sex	Headcount	%
Female	3,813	56%
Male	2,976	44%



Postgraduate research

62% of postgraduate research students at the University are female

Sex	Headcount	%
Female	347	62%
Male	210	38%



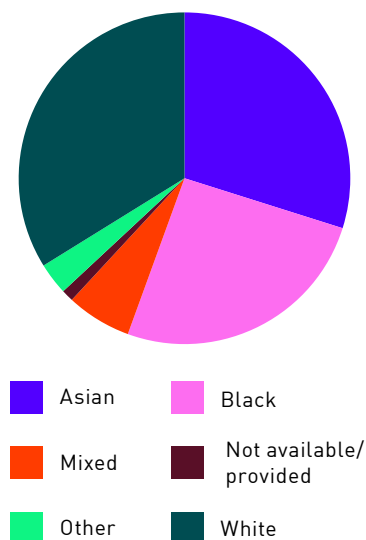
Ethnicity

Ethnicity is only collected for UK-domiciled students, i.e. students with a permanent address in the UK.

Undergraduate

65% of undergraduate UK domicile students at the University are of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (B.A.M.E) ethnicities, including 30% Asian, 26% Black, 6% mixed and 3% other ethnicities. 34% are white and 1% ethnicities are not available/provided.

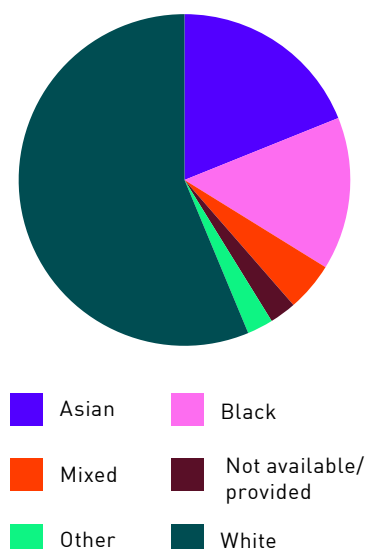
Ethnicity	Headcount	Percentage
Asian	6,642	30%
Black	5,711	26%
Mixed	1,410	6%
Not available/provided	260	1%
Other	692	3%
White	7,521	34%



Postgraduate taught

41% of postgraduate taught UK domicile students at the University are of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (B.A.M.E) ethnicities. Including 19% Asian, 15% Black, 5% mixed and 3% other ethnicities.

Ethnicity	Headcount	Percentage
Asian	634	19%
Black	500	15%
Mixed	160	5%
Not available/provided	87	3%
Other	85	3%
White	1,887	56%



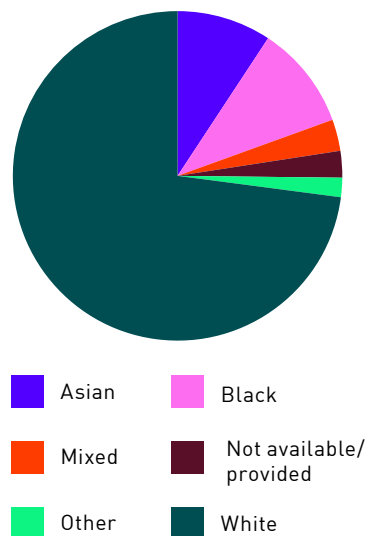
Postgraduate research

24% of UK postgraduate research domicile students at the University are of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (B.A.M.E) ethnicities. Including 9% Asian, 10% Black, 5% from mixed, and other ethnicities.

The number of B.A.M.E students at PGR is much lower than at UG or PGT levels.

Ethnicity	Headcount	Percentage
Asian	39	9%
Black	43	10%
Mixed and other*	21	5%
Not available/provided	11	3%
White	307	73%

**Due to the small number of responses (fewer than 10) in certain ethnic categories, data for Mixed and Other ethnic identities have been combined under a broader category to protect participant confidentiality. This combination does not imply that these identities are the same, but is a reporting measure to ensure anonymity.*



Index of multiple deprivation

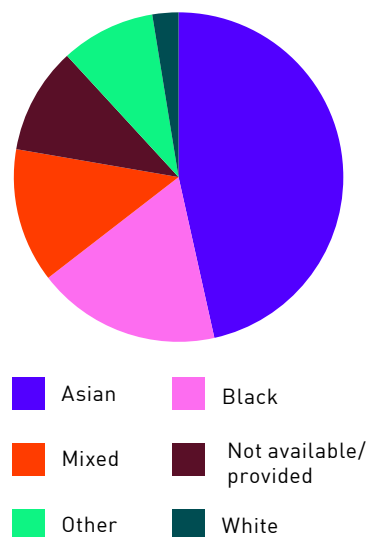
The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is the official measure of relative deprivation in England and is part of a suite of outputs that form the Indices of Deprivation (IoD). It follows an established framework in broadly defining deprivation to encompass a wide range of an individual's living conditions, across seven different domains of deprivation. Postcode areas are ranked from the most deprived area (rank 1) to the least deprived area (rank 5) and students' home addresses are used in calculating total headcounts. Undergraduate students show a strong skew toward representation from the most deprived quintiles, with 47% of students coming from IMD 1, compared to just 9% from IMD 5. Postgraduate taught students are more evenly distributed but still have a higher representation from IMD 1 30%, with less representation from IMD 5, 14%. Postgraduate research students are more balanced across quintiles, with 24% from IMD 1 and 19% from IMD 5.

Undergraduate

Nearly half of our undergraduate students are from the most deprived areas in England, with 10,342 students coming from areas with IMD rank 1 (most deprived), accounting for 47% of undergraduates.

18% of the students come from IMD rank 2, 13% from rank 3, 10% from rank 4 and 9% from rank 5.

IMD rank	Headcount	Percentage
1	10,342	47%
2	4,006	18%
3	2,933	13%
4	2,324	10%
5	2,062	9%
Postcode outside of England	569	3%

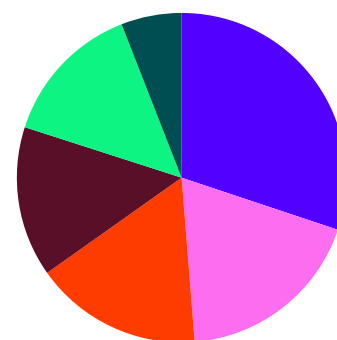


Postgraduate taught

Over a quarter of our postgraduate taught students are from the most deprived areas in England, with 1,010 students coming from areas with IMD rank 1 (most deprived), accounting for 30% of undergraduates.

19% of the students come from IMD rank 2, 16% from rank 3, 15% from rank 4 and 14% from rank 5.

IMD rank	Headcount	Percentage
1	1,010	30%
2	624	19%
3	552	16%
4	495	15%
5	473	14%
Postcode outside of England	199	6%

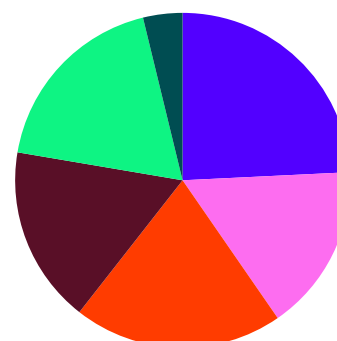


Postgraduate research

Around a quarter of our postgraduate research students are from the most deprived areas in England, with 102 students coming from areas with IMD rank 1 (most deprived), accounting for 23% of our postgraduate research students.

16% of the students come from IMD rank 2, 20% from rank 3, 17% from rank 4 and 19% from rank 5.

IMD rank	Headcount	Percentage
1	102	24%
2	68	16%
3	85	20%
4	72	17%
5	78	19%
Postcode outside of England	16	4%



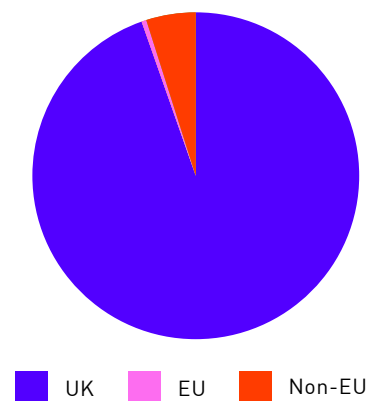
Domicile

Domicile refers to a students' permanent address when they've enrolled on their course. These have been grouped into UK, EU and non-EU countries.

Undergraduate

Most of our undergraduate students (95%) come from the UK, with the remaining being non-EU (non-European Union) at 5% and EU (European Union) at 0.5%.

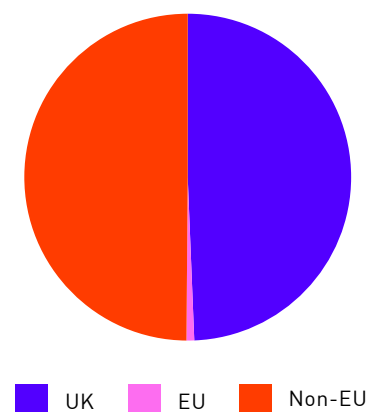
Domicile	Headcount	Percentage
UK	22,236	95%
EU	113	0.5%
Non-EU	1,151	5%



Postgraduate taught

At postgraduate taught the students, the percentage of EU (European Union) remains similar to undergraduate at 0.8%. We then see more non-EU (non-European Union) students at 50% compared to 49% UK students.

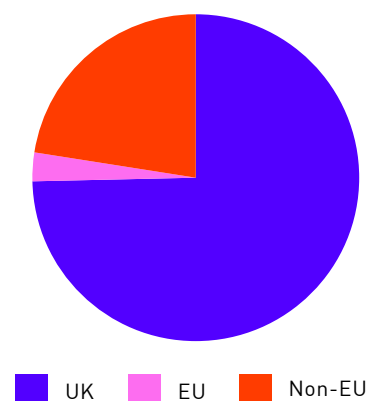
Domicile	Headcount	Percentage
UK	3,353	49%
EU	52	0.8%
Non-EU	3,388	50%



Postgraduate research

The majority of our postgraduate research students (75%) come from the UK, with the remaining being non-EU (non-European Union) at 23% and EU (European Union) at 3%.

Domicile	Headcount	Percentage
UK	421	75%
EU	16	3%
Non-EU	127	23%



Sexual orientation

Undergraduate

A large proportion of undergraduate students (74%) identify as heterosexual, with 19% not declaring their orientation. Bisexual students make up 4%, while gay/lesbian students represent 1%.

Sexual orientation	Headcount	Percentage
Bisexual	853	4%
Gay/lesbian	311	1%
Heterosexual	17,424	74%
Not declared	4,543	19%
Other	369	2%



Postgraduate taught

Around a quarter of postgraduate taught students (28%) have not declared their sexual orientation, with 61% identifying as heterosexual. The percentages of bisexual (4%) and gay/lesbian (1%) students are similar to those at undergraduate level.

Sexual orientation	Headcount	Percentage
Bisexual	300	4%
Gay/lesbian	99	1%
Heterosexual	4,158	61%
Not declared	1,932	28%
Other	304	4%



Postgraduate research

Most of postgraduate research students (67%) identify as heterosexual, with a notable 22% who have not declared their sexual orientation. Bisexual make up 4% and gay/lesbian students make up 4% of this group.

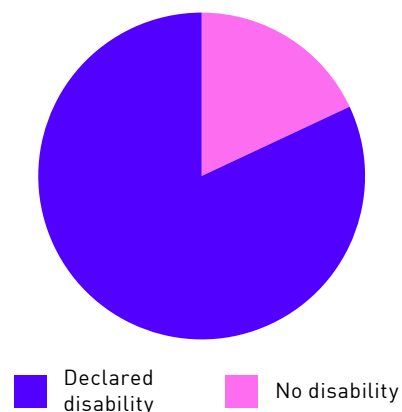
Sexual orientation	Headcount	Percentage
Bisexual	21	4%
Gay/lesbian	23	4%
Heterosexual	380	67%
Not declared	124	22%
Other	16	3%



Disability

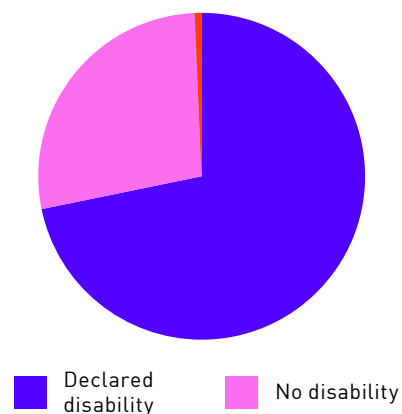
18% of our students have a declared disability, sourced from HESA. This may not match data held by our Student Inclusion team.

Disability	Headcount	Percentage
Declared disability	5,563	18%
No disability	25,294	82%



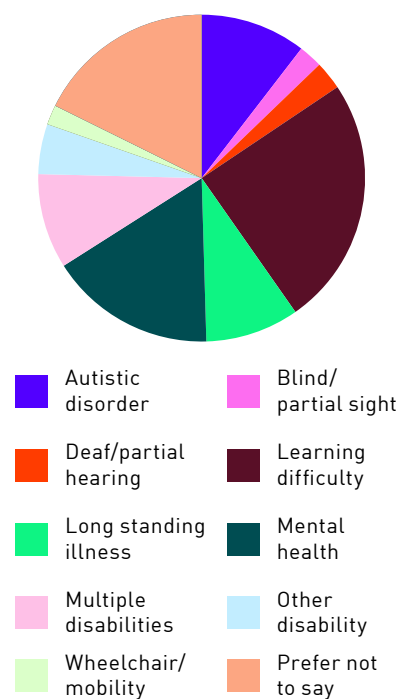
Female students make up 72% of our declared students when they are 61% of our student population.

Disability	Headcount	Percentage
Female	3,993	72%
Male	1,532	28%
Other	38	0.7%



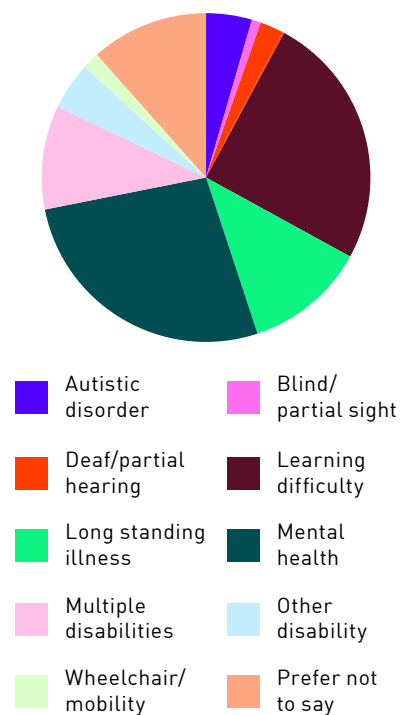
Male students with declared disabilities.

Disability - male	Headcount	Percentage
Autistic disorder	160	10%
Blind/partial sight	36	2%
Deaf/partial hearing	43	3%
Learning difficulty	378	25%
Long standing illness	142	9%
Mental health	252	16%
Multiple disabilities	144	9%
Other disability	76	5%
Wheelchair/mobility	30	2%
Prefer not to say	271	18%



Female students with declared disabilities

Disability - female	Headcount	Percentage
Autistic disorder	180	5%
Blind/partial sight	36	1%
Deaf/partial hearing	92	2%
Development Condition	7	0%
Learning difficulty	1,002	25%
Long standing illness	477	12%
Mental health	1,076	27%
Multiple disabilities	408	10%
Other disability	194	5%
Wheelchair/mobility	66	2%
Prefer not to say	462	12%

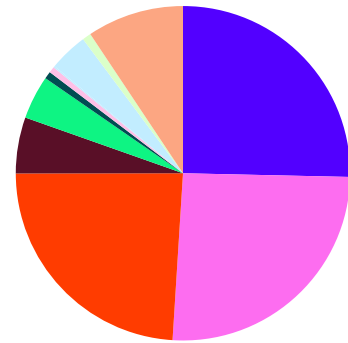


In this report, data related to 'development condition' has been combined with other disabilities due to the small number of responses in this category. This approach helps ensure privacy and allows for more meaningful analysis. We acknowledge that development conditions and other disabilities are distinct, and future reports will aim to disaggregate this data where possible. Although other is recorded due to the small numbers across the categories we are unable to report a breakdown of disabilities type similar to what we have for male and female.

Religion

The largest group of our students are Christian, making up 26% of our student population. This is below the national data for 2022-23 provided by OfS giving the national Christian student population at 31%. This is followed by our 'no religion' population at 25%, this is far lower than the national average of 46%. This is followed by our Muslim population at 24% which is above the national average of 13%.

Religion	Headcount	Percentage
No religion	7,823	25%
Christian	7,913	26%
Muslim	7,401	24%
Hindu	1,674	5%
Sikh	1,301	4%
Spiritual	220	0.7%
Buddhist	180	0.6%
Jewish	44	0.1%
Refused	1,155	4%
Other	260	0.8%
Not known	2,886	9%



Our equality objectives

The University has ten equality objectives that are aligned with key plans and strategies including: the University Strategy 2025, the Access and Participation Plan, Learning and Teaching Strategy, and the University's Black Lives Matter Antiracist Commitment Plan. Performance in relation to the equality objectives is documented throughout the report, detailing the progress made in relation to equality targets, equality charters, the implementation of Report and Support - the online reporting tool used to manage incidents of bullying, harassment, discrimination and victimisation - and the work of the EDI Committee and colleague support networks/steering groups.

The table below provides an overview of progress to date. The colour code indicates the following status: **Red** = behind target; **Amber** = in progress; and **Green** = on target. The EDI Strategic Objectives 1 - 4 align with the targets approved in the BCU Access and Participation Plan. These indicators are overseen by the APP and Project Zero Oversight Group. Additional information about the APP and Project Zero can be found on pages 27-29, and page 43-44 of this report. BCU continually monitors its progress towards its APP targets through data analysis. Wide-ranging statistical analysis of data provides a range of metrics which assist BCU in the evaluation and effectiveness of our interventions. Our interventions focus on areas* including:

- Courses contributing to widening our gaps
- Individual modules contributing to widening our gaps
- Student confidence with assessment and submission
- Student transition from vocational qualifications such as BTEC

No.	Equality objectives 2020/25	Update	RAG
1	Reduce the awarding gap between students from White and students from Black Asian and Minority Ethnic communities.	Target: 3.8% Actual: 15.5%	
2	Reduce gaps in degree outcomes between disadvantaged and less-disadvantaged students.	Target: 10.0% Actual: 14.5%	
3	Increase attainment and progression rates for care leavers.	Target: 71.0% Actual: 57.75	
4	Increase reporting of disabled entrants.	Target: 16.4% Actual: 16.5%	
5	Review and assess the equality impact of key organisational policies and decisions for differential outcomes.	It is identified that there is an increase of staff members who are engaging with EIA procedures. In line with that, the EDI unit has restructured and outlined a two-tier EIA document that facilitates an accessible process towards embedding EIAs within our initiatives, policies, and systems. The revised EIA, along with a new screening form, offers clearer guidance and provides a structured assessment processes alongside streamlined decision-making tools. However, we acknowledge that there is progress to be made in continuing to increase uptake on EIAs, and a continued review of our EIA documents to ensure that it is fit for purpose and complies with our due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty.	

No.	Equality objectives 2020/25	Update	RAG
6	Seek external accreditation by actively participating in equality standards:		
	Athena Swan	Throughout 2023/2024, BCU has continued to progress and embed Athena Swan principles across the University, at both university and college level through a range of actions and initiatives. We have continued to implement our Bronze (renewal) Action Plan (2022-2027) achieving progress across a range of priority areas and, with the support of the University Executive Team, and made a submission for the Athena Swan Institutional Silver Award.	
	Disability Confident	We renewed and affirmed our status as a Level 1: Committed last year. In the next academic year, we remain committed towards attaining progress on the actions required to achieve Disability Confident Level 2: Employer, with the aim of completing our self-assessment for the award and actioning key changes needed to realise this objective and ensuring that we advance on creating an inclusive environment for applicants and employees.	
	Race Equality Charter	The University is undergoing significant change in terms of structure and leadership. Therefore, this has resulted in changes to the structure of REC SAT. We are finalising the revision to our Bronze Award REC submission, with added contextual analysis of our data our priorities, a SMART Action Plan, and a strong governance framework to drive forward progress and accountability of our race equality objectives. This includes the development of five key institutional priorities surrounding the Race Equality Action Plan, aligned with wider institutional goals like Strategy 2030, Project Zero, and the Access and Participation Plan.	
	Stonewall Workplace Equality Index	In 2023 the University received a Gold employer award for demonstrating its continued commitment to LGBT+ inclusion. Moving forward, BCU is scoping an LGBTQ+ Inclusion Action Plan and weighing different options available on signing on to external accreditations.	
7	Implement effective mechanisms for students and staff to report harassment and discrimination.	The Report and Support system was implemented in 2021. Tracking and monitoring reports form part of the work undertaken by the EDI Committee. The data presented in quarterly reports includes a demonstration of reporting patterns over time, alongside analyses of what reporting patterns show, and how the University responds to them.	
8	Provide comprehensive learning and development opportunities to improve knowledge, understanding and awareness of best practice in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion.	Mandatory EDI training for all staff was launched in January 2022. All salaried staff are required to complete this training. Continuing progress from last year, the mandatory completion rate continues to hover at around approximately 94%. Following emerging trends and regulatory developments in EDI, the overall EDI training offer is currently being reviewed to be consistent with our strategies as well as in compliance with Freedom of Speech provisions.	

No.	Equality objectives 2020/25	Update	RAG
9	Ensure our workforce reflects the students and citizens we serve at all levels.	The university has seen progress in diversifying our workforce to better reflect our student and community population. As of August 2025, our male-female colleague percentages were at 44% and 56% respectively. In terms of ethnicity, 56% of colleagues were of white backgrounds whereas 32% of colleagues were from B.A.M.E groups. The University Executive Team has since approved on an EDI in Recruitment KPI that aims to increase staff representation from B.A.M.E backgrounds to 40% by 2030. An extensive set of actions and analysis of data has been produced to help advance this priority. We affirm that there is work to be done to increase staff demographic information disclosure figures, as we deduce that many colleagues have not disclosed these to us, especially colleagues who have a disability or colleagues who identify as LGBTQ+. To support this, we will strive to embed inclusive terminology, build trust amongst colleagues to share this information, and use the information to advance on EDI for our staff members.	
10	Develop a Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for students and staff.	BCU's Learning and Student Experience Strategy is nearing completion and will be published soon. This strategy outlines key service enhancements across the student lifecycle and includes initiatives aimed at improving wellbeing and mental health as part of the broader student experience. Discussions are ongoing regarding the development of a dedicated Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy. While a standalone strategy has not yet been formalised, the Student Services team continues to implement improvements aligned with the University Mental Health Charter, ensuring best practice is embedded. These actions are strengthening the student experience and will serve as a foundation for any future strategy development.	

**For clarification, this section reflecting our progress would pertain to targets set in the previous institutional strategy, as opposed to the recently published and released Strategy 2030.*

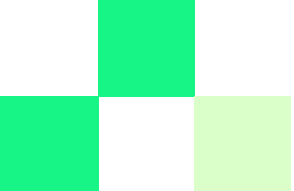
The colour code indicates the following status:

Red = behind the target

Amber = in progress

Green = on target

**The figures listed within Equality Objectives 1-4 are HESA accredited.*



Access and Participation Plan

BCU's Access and Participation Plan sets out how we aim to achieve equality of opportunity for our students by addressing gaps in student outcomes at various stages of the student lifecycle. Our APPs, along with an accessible summary, can be accessed in full [here](#).

2024/25 was the first year implementing BCU's new Access and Participation Plan for 2024/25 to 2027/28, with objectives and targets covering continuation, completion, attainment, and progression of our students. Six student groups will be our key focus, which have been identified as most at risk of inequality of opportunity at BCU:

- Black students
- Asian students
- Young (U21) students entering BCU with a level 3 vocational or technical qualification
- Young (U21) male students eligible for free school meals prior to joining BCU
- Mature entrants aged between 21 and 25 years of age living in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in the UK
- Young (U26) students who declare they have care experience before their 16th birthday

A range of new initiatives were delivered throughout 2024/25 to improve outcomes for these student groups. A success survey was piloted on target courses, which measures student confidence in personal effectiveness, academic engagement and digital literacy and signposts to support bespoke to students' needs. Following early successes, this diagnostic tool will be made available to all students in 2025/26.

A package of assessment redesign was also piloted on modules at Level 5 and Level 6. This initiative enhanced assessment literacy among teaching staff, with workshops structured around inclusive pedagogical principles, equity in assessment and authentic tasks that reflect diverse learner needs. This activity was also the focus of our engagement with a [TASO-funded evaluation project](#), in which BCU produced exemplar resources for the sector in how to close ethnicity degree awarding gaps (EDAG). An early view of results indicates that students on modules targeted for assessment redesign experienced an uplift in module attainment. This activity will now be made available across BCU in 2025/26, with plans to further research its impact and potential to improve students' outcomes.

A comprehensive package of support was also launched for any student that declared care experience in their application to higher education, with each receiving a booklet of financial and personal support information. Those students verified as care leavers are also offered a guaranteed place in BCU accommodation, as well as a bursary to support them throughout their studies, with a support network embedded across the university to ensure no student is left behind.

Many other activities were implemented too, including but not limited to:

- A revised Welcome Week and extended induction to support transition to higher education
- Thrive Tutors on target courses to support engagement with academic study
- An Accelerate bursary for students from low participation and disadvantaged backgrounds
- Peer Navigators to help students integrate into university life
- A Digital Support Fund to alleviate digital poverty
- Embedded micro-placements and mentoring programmes to enhance employability

BCU's APP contains overarching objectives to close gaps in attainment, continuation, completion and progression between the student groups most at risk of inequality of opportunity and their advantaged peers. APP objectives related to the ethnicity degree awarding gap have been of particular concern, especially for Black and Asian students.

In 2024/25, great strides were made towards achieving those objectives:

- The awarding gap between Black and White students closed by 14 percentage points, reducing from 34.6pp to 20.6pp
- The awarding gap between Asian and White students closed 8.2 percentage points, reducing from 21.6pp to 13.4pp
- The awarding gap between students who enter BCU with vocational and technical qualifications and those entering with A Levels closed by 3.5 percentage points, reducing from 23.2pp to 19.7pp

All BCU's APP attainment gaps have now returned to or improved upon pre-pandemic levels, indicating that the range of actions BCU is taking to achieve equality of opportunity in higher education are effective. Work to further improve attainment to close degree awarding gaps continues, alongside ongoing efforts to improve continuation, completion and progression rates for those groups most at risk.

In fulfilment of new regulatory requirements to share fit-for-purpose approaches with the higher education sector, BCU's activities towards improving equality of opportunity were showcased at national evaluation and teaching and learning conferences throughout AY2024/25. More opportunities to advance development a culture of evaluation at BCU and evidence the effectiveness of our interventions are planned for AY2025/26.

Despite these successes, a variation to BCU's Access and Participation Plan was submitted to and approved by the Office for Students in Summer 2025. The updated plan integrates BCU's new strategic approach, following launch of BCU Strategy 2030. It acknowledges our change of leadership and acts on insights from APP evaluation activities. The plan continues those interventions that we believe are contributing to improved equality of opportunity and proposes new and improved activities that will further advance access and participation at BCU. Stronger and clearer commitments to evaluation are outlined, along with closer integration between the APP and BCU's Project Zero, which is an ambitious business improvement programme focused on closing the Ethnicity Degree Awarding Gap (EDAG) at BCU.

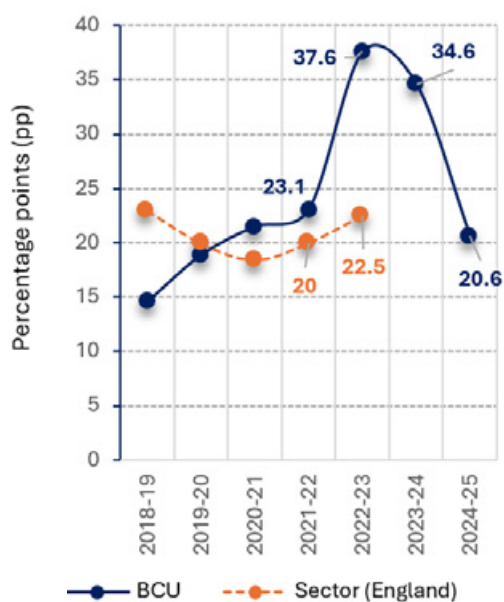
BCU's success is measured by our students' experiences, and we are committed to reducing gaps in student access, continuation, completion, attainment and progression. BCU aims to become a sector leader in evaluating APP interventions, establishing and demonstrating sector best practice in ensuring positive outcomes for students facing the greatest challenges to equality of opportunity in higher education. A robust evaluation loop and constant review of effectiveness throughout the implementation of BCU's Access and Participation Plan 2024/25 to 2027/28 will continue to ensure that we take a 'what works' approach, with agility in response to maintain focus on delivering effective interventions.

For the first time, students were active co-creators in the process of drafting the APP, and a student submission was also included. The student voice, their experiences and insights have helped to shape the strategic priorities and actions the University has committed to.

Going forwards, BCUSU will play a central role in co-delivering many of the activities outlined in the APP, ensuring that student leadership and partnership remain at the forefront of BCU's approach.

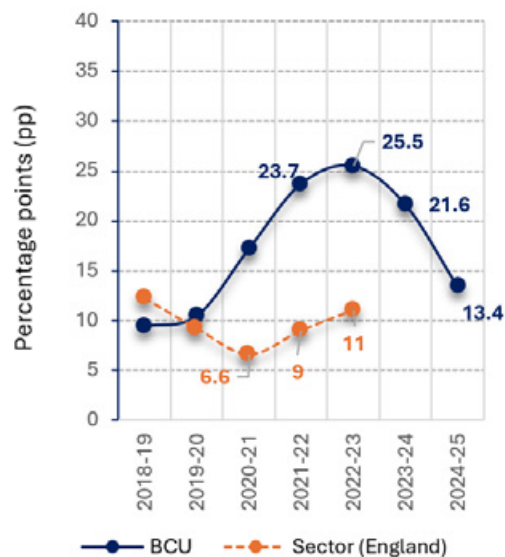
UK domiciled Full-Time First Degree qualifiers

White: Black 1st/Upper 2nd
awarding gap



UK domiciled Full-Time First Degree qualifiers

White: Asian 1st/Upper 2nd
awarding gap



UK domiciled Full-time First Degree qualifiers

GCE A Lvl: VTQ 1st/Upper 2nd
awarding gap



Review of work on harassment and discrimination

Objective 7 of the University's [EDI Strategy 2020-25](#) is to 'Implement effective mechanisms for students and staff to report harassment and discrimination. Ensure complaint procedures are fit for purpose and offer effective redress'; the relevant success measure is 'Yearly increase in reporting of harassment and discrimination 2020/25.'

The University uses the [Report and Support](#) online reporting system to capture reports of all unacceptable behaviours. The system is available to students, staff, and third parties to report any incidents of concern, regardless of their location or the involvement of other members of the University community e.g. a student can report harassment experienced outside the University, from a third party, and will be offered support accordingly.

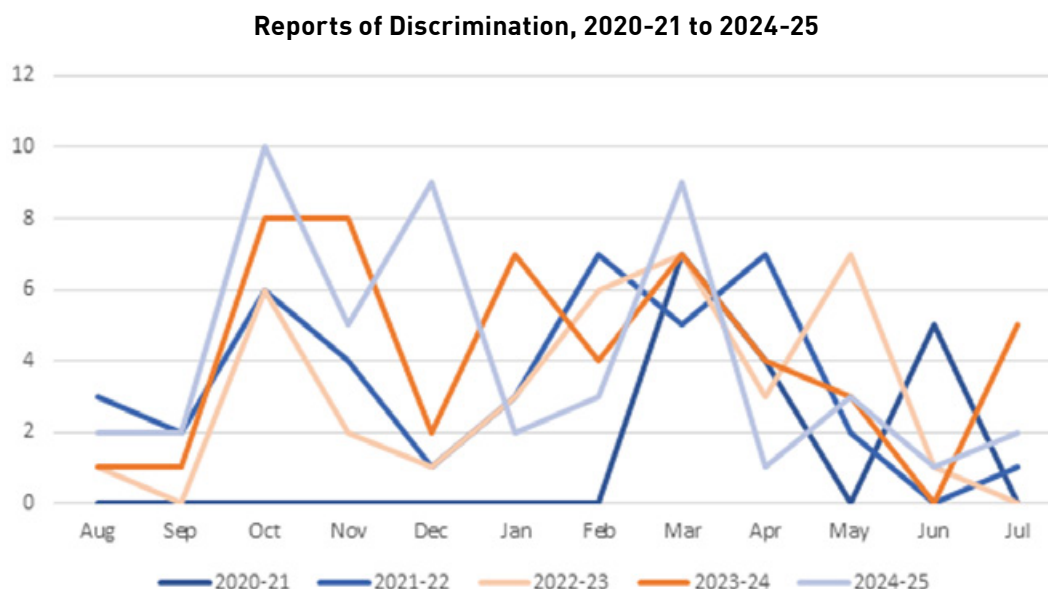
The total number reports of discrimination and harassment received through Report and Support across the last five years is as follows:

	2020-21*	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Discrimination	16	41	37	50	49
Harassment	8	55	73	86	93

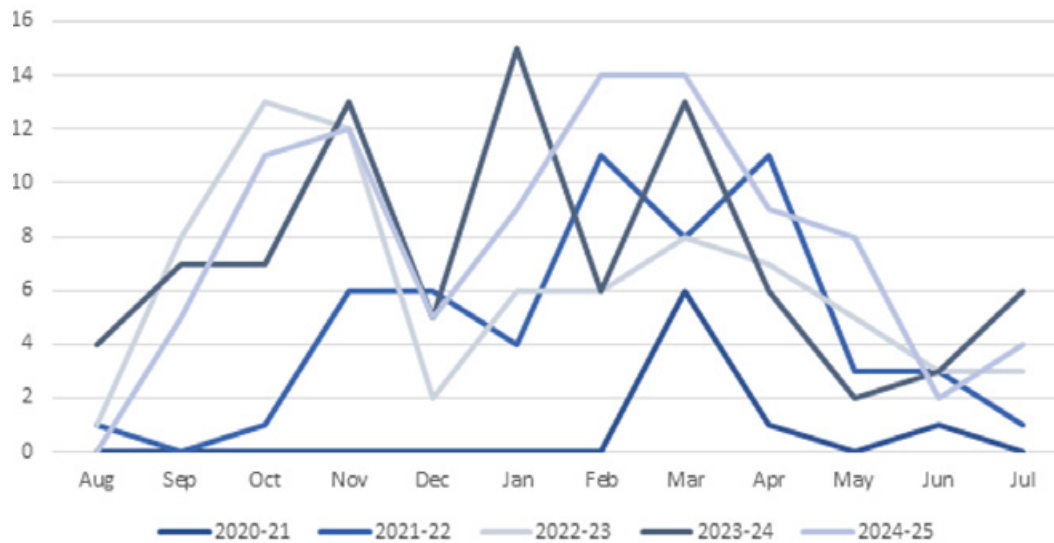
** Report and Support launched in March 2021*

Across the five-year period of the Strategy, the University has therefore been able, with minor exceptions, to meet the published success measure of year-on-year increases in reporting of the types of behaviours.

The following charts demonstrate the pattern of reporting of discrimination and harassment across the five-year period (2020-21 to 2024-25):



Reports of Harassment, 2020-21 to 2024-25



There has been no clear pattern in reports of discrimination or harassment across the five-year period, although the volume of reports generally decreased at times when students were not engaged in study i.e. across Christmas and summer. These are times when students are less likely to be on campus and / or in accommodation and may be less likely to encounter these behaviours as a result (although reports are not limited to on-campus incidents). They are also times when students are in less direct contact with staff and are therefore less likely to make disclosures of harmful behaviour which are subsequently reported through Report and Support.

Across the past year, quarterly reports on data captured through Report and Support have been presented to the EDI Committee to provide data and trend analysis, helping to inform action planning.

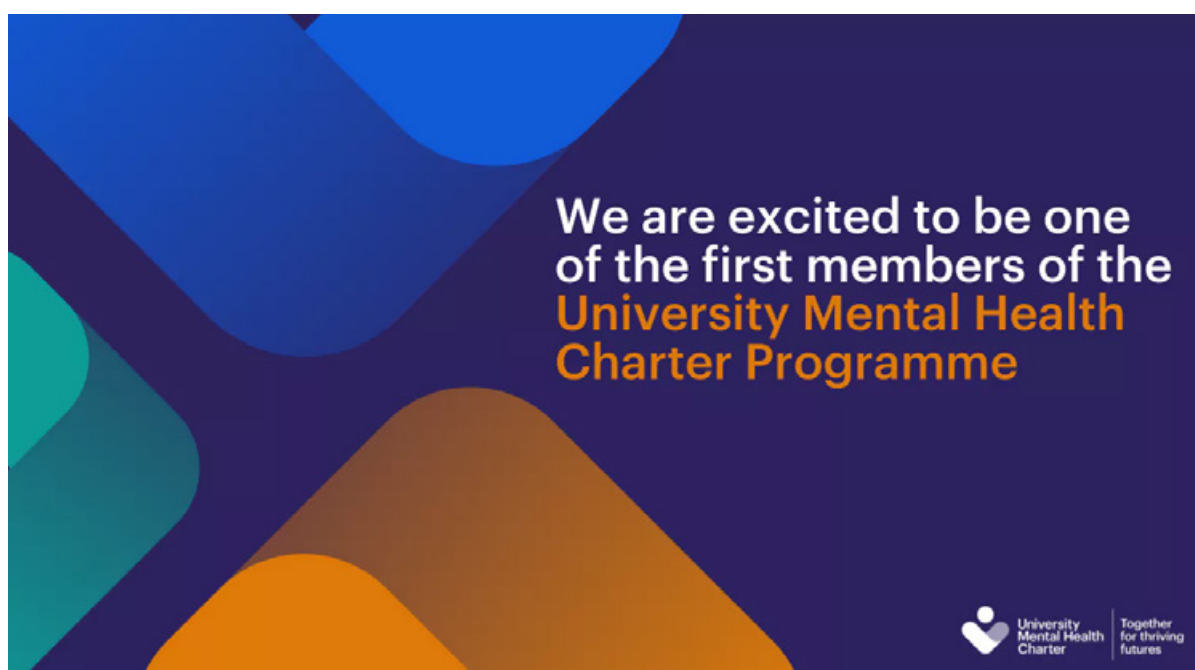
During 2024/25 the University has undertaken a variety of actions to address discrimination and harassment, including (but not limited to):

- Creation of new digital and physical assets to support awareness of Report and Support, with assets displayed on digital screens and in prominent locations such as Student Support Centres, BCU Students' Union spaces, and toilet blocks across the University's estate
- Delivery of training sessions on Report and Support to a total of 491 attendees, including 154 student Course Representatives
- Participation in the [Emily Test Charter](#) pilot scheme for England. Emily Test is a Scottish organisation dedicated to eliminating gender-based violence in education
- Introduction of new policies on student gender-based violence and student bullying and harassment
- Update of Student Complaints Procedure and Student Disciplinary Procedure, with additional detail added on how the University responds to complaints of harassment
- Creation of the new [University Community Agreement](#), setting out what the University expects from its students, and what students can expect from the University and Students' Union
- Publication of a [Definitions of Harmful Behaviours and Related Issues](#) document, including content on discrimination and harassment
- Launch of a [new webpage](#), acting as a single comprehensive source of information for students, applicants, and others on the University's approach to sexual misconduct, harassment, and other harmful behaviours

Mental Health Charter

The University continued its membership of the University Mental Health Charter Programme during 2024/25 and remains dedicated to developing and maintaining a whole-institution approach to mental health, and to shaping a future in which all students and staff can thrive.

In October 2024, we launched our new [Student Suicide Prevention Strategy](#), helping us to talk about and tackle suicide amongst students, and to deliver best practice in keeping with sector guidance and the framework of the Mental Health Charter. We continue to work on the development of a broader strategy on student mental health, aligned with the institution's Strategy 2030 and future strategy on learning and teaching.



Progress on gender, ethnicity, and disability pay gaps

Gender pay gap

Gender pay gap reporting is an annual statutory requirement for all UK employers who have more than 250 employees. The gender pay gap shows the difference between the average earnings of all men and women in the university regardless of their role or grade.



The University's mean gender pay gap has improved this year from being 7.9% lower for women to now be 6.1% lower for women.



The University's median gender pay gap has improved this year from being 8.0% lower for women to now be 5.0% lower for women.

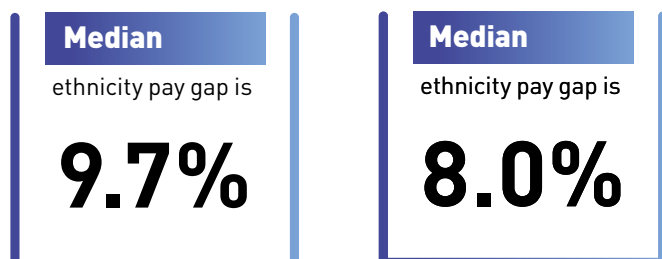
This compares with the gender pay gaps, as of 31 March 2022, of 12.3% at the median and 14.8% at the mean in the Higher Education sector and 14.9% at the median for the whole economy (UCEA January 2024), Equality and Pay Gaps.

What is causing our gender pay gap?

The main factor contributing to our gender pay gap is the current distribution of men and women across our pay grades, where we have a greater number of female staff in our lower grades and a greater proportion of male employees in more senior positions, which is reflected in the figures for the division of males and females for the pay quartile bands.

Ethnicity pay gap

This is the second year that the University has voluntarily chosen to publish its ethnicity pay gaps to champion openness, transparency, and consideration of our wider EDI agenda for advancing equal opportunities.



BCU has chosen to report its ethnicity pay gap in two different formats:

1. An aggregated grouping methodology comparing White and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic groups collectively for simplicity and ease of comparison with other organisations who frequently adopt this methodology
2. Adopting the Office for National Statistics (ONS) methodology of five high-level ethnic groups to provide a greater insight into the issues facing specific ethnic groups

The reported figures are based on data taken from the same snapshot dates as the gender pay gap snapshot dates.

BCU's ethnicity pay gaps comparing White to Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic groups collectively for the past few years are found in the table below:

Pay gap calculation	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Snapshot date	31/03/2021	31/03/2022	31/03/2023	31/03/2024
Publish date	30/03/2022	30/03/2023	30/03/2024	30/03/2025
Median ethnicity pay gap	9.4%	11.2%	5.9%	8.0%
Mean ethnicity pay gap	12.1%	11.7%	11.9%	9.7%

Median ethnicity pay gaps divided into the five high-level ethnic groups:

Ethnic group	2023/24	2024/25	Year on year change
Asian to White	12.1%	8.0%	-4.1% improvement
Black to White	15.3%	12.9%	-2.4% improvement
Mixed to White	2.8%	2.2%	-0.6% improvement
Other to White	-4.9%*	-9.6%*	-4.7% improvement
Not known to White	2.8%	5.0%	2.2% worsening
Information refused	4.2%	8.0%	3.8% worsening

*The negative figure for the 'Other to White' ethnicity pay gap shows that the pay gap is in favour of the Other ethnic group.

Mean ethnicity pay gaps divided into five high-level ethnic groups:

Ethnic group	2023/24	2024/25	Year on year change
Asian to White	12.6%	11.5%	-1.1% improvement
Black to White	17.6%	14.9%	-2.7% improvement
Mixed to White	9.0%	0.4%	-8.6% improvement
Other to White	-4.2%*	-7.1%*	-2.9% worsening
Not known to White	8.3%	5.4%	-2.9% improvement
Information refused	7.8%	10.2%	2.4% worsening

*The negative figure for the 'Other to White' ethnicity pay gap shows that the pay gap is in favour of Other ethnic group.

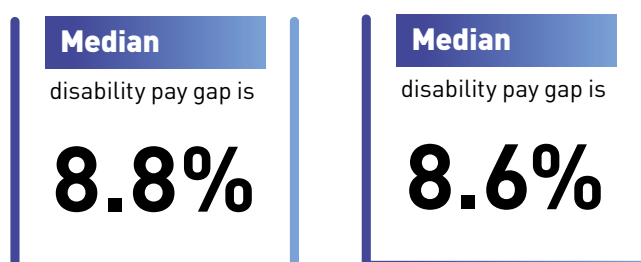
What is causing our ethnicity pay gap?

The largest contributing factor to our ethnicity pay gaps is the current distribution of staff by ethnicity across our pay grades, with a greater proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic group staff collectively compared to White ethnic group staff being in the lower pay grades compared to the higher pay grades, as shown in the proportion of staff by ethnicity group in each pay quartile band.

Disability pay gap

For the first time, Birmingham City University is proud to voluntarily publish our disability pay gap figures. This marks a bold and progressive step in our journey toward transparency, accountability, and equality. As a university committed to going beyond legal compliance, we are setting a precedent in the sector, demonstrating that meaningful change begins with openness.

By publicly sharing this data, we reaffirm our dedication to creating an inclusive workplace where all colleagues, regardless of disability, have equal access to opportunity, recognition, and reward. This milestone reflects our values and our ambition to lead by example in advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion across higher education.



What are our disability pay gaps?

BCU's disability pay gaps comparing staff who declared they did or did not have a disability for the past few years are found in the table below:

Pay gap calculation	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Snapshot date	31/03/2022	31/03/2023	31/03/2024
Publish date	30/03/2023	30/03/2024	30/03/2025
Mean disability pay gap	8.2%	9.8%	8.8%
Median disability pay gap	5.2%	8.3%	8.6%

What actions are we undertaking to reduce our pay gaps?

The actions the University is taking to improve our pay gaps are:

- Continuing with the Athena SWAN action plan to make further progress on gender equality
- Implementing the Race Equality Charter action plan to improve ethnicity equality
- The University currently has Level 1: Disability Confident Committed and is working towards Level 2: Disability Confident Employer to strengthen disability equality
- Advancing and reviewing university-wide EDI training
- Implementing recruitment EDI action plans to increase diversity in job advertising and in shortlisting and interview panels, delivering staff anti-racist allies training sessions and workshops, use of targeted advertising where appropriate to attract applicants from underrepresented communities, performing a review of the candidate assessment process to combat unconscious bias, performing a review of the candidate selection process and conducting regular exit feedback
- Ensuring our pay structure and progression through it is fair and equitable including performing a review of the academic promotions processes
- Focus on equality in professorial appointments and pay
- Positive action training and support for under-represented groups
- Leadership and mentoring programmes for female and B.A.M.E staff including implementing an accelerated leadership programme and secondment opportunities linked to diverse leadership
- Supporting female colleague's development with the Women in Higher Education Network (WHEN) programme
- Keeping our family friendly policies under review to see how we can support more colleagues
- Improving internal processes for implementing reasonable adjustments for staff including better communications and training for manager

What progress have we achieved for these actions?

- The University has submitted its application for the institutional Athena SWAN Silver Award, advancing our commitment to gender equality across all levels of staff
- A revised SMART Race Equality Charter Action Plan has been designated, with a colleague-focused priority. This priority aims to narrow our ethnicity pay gaps through a series of specific and measurable actions
- We have renewed our Disability Confident Level 1 status and remain committed to creating accessible and equitable working environments for staff members with disabilities. We are planning to submit for Level 2: Disability Confident Employer status
- Our EDI training is currently under review to ensure that updated information and education are shared, aligned with legislation, and consistent with our policies
- The University is changing its approach to recruitment by making multi-element selection mandatory for all roles, moving away from interview-only processes. The university has also approved a new recruitment target to increase recruitment and onboarding of colleagues from diverse backgrounds
- BCU is embedding diverse recruitment panel compositions to ensure representation that reflects our city and student population in terms of gender and ethnicity
- As part of our continued commitment from last year, job adverts are written with greater sensitivity, using inclusive language and including positive action statements where under-representation is identified within the hiring department or College

Charters and benchmarks

Athena Swan

The Athena Swan Charter recognises the advancement of gender equality within higher education in terms of representation, progression and success for all. The Transformed Charter (2021) recognises not just barriers to progression that affect women but also work undertaken to address gender equality more broadly. It covers women, men where appropriate, and trans staff and students in academic, professional and support roles. This support is in relation to:

- Representation
- Journey through career milestones
- Working environment for all staff
- Progression of students into academia

Throughout 2023/2024, Athena Swan principles have continually been embedded and deepened across the University, both at college and institution-wide levels, through a range of actions and initiatives.

We continue to advance our commitment to gender equality through active engagement with the Athena Swan Charter. In July 2025, Royal Birmingham Conservatoire submitted its application for a Bronze Departmental Award, with the outcome expected in October. Additionally, Birmingham City University's Institutional Silver Award application was submitted on 24 September 2025.

Among the achievements highlighted in our Silver submission is the increase in the proportion of female Professors, now exceeding the national benchmark. This progress reflects our sustained efforts to support the female career pipeline; one of five key priorities embedded in our new five-year Action Plan.

Athena Swan activity has been successfully mapped to the University's new academic structure. While leadership and resources are still being confirmed in some areas, we remain committed to fostering university-wide engagement with the Charter throughout the new academic year.

The Athena Swan Steering Committee (ASSC) co-chaired by Professor Maxine Lintern (Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research)) and Dr Kate Carruthers Thomas (Athena Swan Project Manager) continues to oversee the implementation of the University's Athena Swan Institutional Action Plan and provide overall direction to the gender equality agenda. ASSC membership is reviewed annually to ensure it is representative and responsive to changes within the University.

BCU is delighted to confirm that the university successfully secured the Silver Athena Swan charter award in December 2025. While beyond the standard reporting cycle for this annual report, we are proud to have accomplished this equality objective. We are also thankful for the commitment and dedication our colleagues and charter leads have championed in progressing our University's commitment to inclusion and equal opportunity.



Race Equality Charter

The University signed up to the Race Equality Charter in November 2020. The Charter provides a vehicle for understanding the lived experiences of students and staff to enhance insight and knowledge of the culture of the University through the lens of race equality and inclusion.

Gearing up to our submission, qualitative and quantitative data was collected from BCU systems, surveys and focus groups conducted with students and staff to identify challenges and highlight areas in need of focus to advance race equality. The breadth of areas and information included in the submission covered different aspects of the student journey and employee lifecycle, resulting in a Race Equality Action Plan that prioritised institutional culture, monitoring and accountability of actions, an inclusive employee lifecycle, equitable student experiences, and a strong community and partnership outreach.

We submitted our Birmingham Institutional Bronze Award application on 29 November 2024. Following our submission, we received Feedback from Advance HE to revise our submission to more clearly identify our race equality priorities, strengthen our evidence base, and present a more comprehensive and actionable plan for advancing race equality.

The feedback also highlighted the need for a more compelling demonstration of institution-wide commitment, ownership, and resourcing to support our ambitions. In response, we have undertaken a thorough revision process to ensure our resubmission reflects a robust and strategic approach.

Key areas of focus in our revised submission include:

- Ensuring that the submission is evidence and data driven
- Creating a strong linkage between our submission with our newly developed Access and Participation Plan, and Strategy 2030
- Ensuring that appropriate ownership is assigned to our ambitions to advance race equality
- Development of specific, measurable, appropriate, realistic, and time-based (SMART) objectives within our Action Plan, ensuring that the Action Plan embeds a solution focused theory-of-change approach

The REC revised submission will be complementary to our range of approaches and institutional strategies aimed at reducing barriers for our B.A.M.E. staff and students, facilitating an intersectional and 'One-University Approach' to institutional race equality.

BCU is delighted to confirm that the university successfully secured the Bronze Race Equality Charter award in January 2026. While beyond the standard reporting cycle for this annual report, we are proud to have accomplished this equality objective. We are also thankful for the commitment and dedication our colleagues and charter leads have championed in progressing our University's commitment to inclusion and equal opportunity.



Disability Confident Accreditation

Birmingham City University has maintained its Disability Confident Level 1: Committed status and is currently scoping and preparing for the Level 2: Employer accreditation for the next academic year. This reflects a strengthened commitment to disability inclusion across recruitment, workplace adjustments, culture, and leadership.

Key achievements that support our target to ascend to the Level 2 accreditation includes the following:

Theme 1 - Getting the right people for our university

We have continued to embed clear and accessible recruitment practices that promote confidence and transparency. All job adverts reference our participation in the Disability Confident scheme, signalling our commitment to inclusion and encouraging applications from disabled candidates. Our recruitment processes offer alternative formats where required, and all interview invitations include the option to request reasonable adjustments. In line with the scheme's commitments, we continue to guarantee interviews for disabled candidates who meet the essential criteria.

To extend the reach of our recruitment activity, we have introduced advertising through specialist platforms such as DisabilityJob.co.uk and NeurodiversityJobs.co.uk, broadening access and ensuring that our messaging reflects our inclusive values.

Theme 2 - Keeping and developing our people

This year we have focused on building organisational confidence and capability in supporting disabled colleagues at every stage of the employee life cycle. Our enhanced guidance for managers promotes straightforward and confidential processes for requesting and implementing adjustments, with further support available through Occupational Health and the Access to Work scheme.

The new reasonable adjustment passport continues to support staff and managers in proactively recording and reviewing adjustments, with the process promoted through induction materials, the staff newsletter, and digital screens across campus.

The EDI Unit leads on celebrating and raising awareness of Disability History Month each year, contributing to the promotion of a culture of being Disability Confident. Activities this year have highlighted inclusive teaching, digital accessibility, and staff experiences, helping to foster understanding and dialogue across the University.

Our collaboration with the Disability Steering Group remains central to shaping our approach. The group provides valuable feedback on accessibility, awareness, and policy development, and continues to be a key forum for staff voice and co-creation.

Looking ahead, BCU remains dedicated towards:

- Completing Level 2 accreditation and embedding actions across recruitment and staff development
- Improving disability disclosure rates and data analysis on representation, pay, and progression
- Expanding training on disability awareness and inclusive communication
- Strengthening leadership visibility and accountability in promoting disability inclusion



Areas of focus	Success measures
Recruitment and onboarding	Accessible systems, inclusive adverts, guaranteed interviews, pre-start adjustments
Workplace adjustments	Clear policies, manager tool kits, central funding, Access to Work promotion
Culture and awareness	Training, inclusive leadership, staff networks, visibility campaigns
Data and progression	Safe disclosure, data tracking, talent development, system audits
External recognition	Progress to Level 2, benchmarking, transparent reporting

University of Sanctuary accreditation

The University of Sanctuary (UoS) initiative is a national network that recognises higher education institutions which are committed to creating a culture of welcome, safety, and inclusion for people seeking sanctuary — including asylum seekers, refugees, and those with humanitarian protection.

The University's Diversity and Inclusion Committee endorsed the proposal to progress our application to become an established University of Sanctuary. This aligns directly with the University's 2030 Strategy and EDI objectives by promoting inclusion, diversity, and social mobility for sanctuary seekers, refugees, and those forcibly displaced.

A University of Sanctuary Working Group has been advanced with representation from across the institution. With a project timeline agreed, we are working towards a formal application submission in early 2027. BCU has also signed the City of Sanctuary Pledge, marking its public commitment to building a culture of welcome, safety, and solidarity.

In 2025/2026 as part of our University of Sanctuary commitment we are exploring the following:

- Delivering tailored training for staff supporting sanctuary students, focusing on immigration awareness, trauma-informed practice, and inclusive support mechanisms
- Reviewing our processes identifying any barriers to access or progression for our UoS eligible students
- Launching a Student Action for Refugees (STAR) society during 2025/26, supporting peer advocacy and awareness-raising
- Introducing two annual Sanctuary Scholarships (one undergraduate and one postgraduate taught) from the 2026/27 academic year, providing tuition fee waivers and living cost support
- Developing a dedicated online Sanctuary Hub to communicate scholarship information, student stories, and community engagement activities
- Launching Refugee Week 2026 activities in partnership with local networks, highlighting research and student contributions to social justice and inclusion



Project Zero

Project Zero is an ambitious business improvement programme that focuses on closing the Ethnicity Degree Awarding Gap (EDAG) at BCU. The project was commissioned by Academic Board in January 2024 and has created a cross-university focus on reducing the EDAG both through professional services and academic colleges.

Building upon the foundational success and recommendations from Phase 1, as listed in [page 34 of the 23/24 EDI Annual Report](#), Phase 2 of Project Zero marks a strategic shift from evaluating our feedback and approaches to implementation and impact assessment.

Key developments in Phase 2:

Framework relaunch

Originally launched in January 2025, the Project Zero Framework has been revitalised to align with ongoing institutional change. A more proactive approach is now being adopted to support staff across faculties in embedding anti-racist, inclusive, and student-centred practices.



Faculty and institutional action plans

Recommendations from Phase 1 have informed the development of tailored action plans across faculties. These plans are currently under review and will be evaluated for their effectiveness in driving equitable outcomes.

Evaluation of EDAG interventions (February 2025)

Interventions aligned with the Access and Participation Plan (APP) are being actively monitored. A variation focused on EDAG activities was submitted and accepted in Spring 2025, enabling more targeted evaluation of impact.

Seed corn funding for co-created research

A £7,000 grant has supported the development of co-created course-level action research projects. These initiatives aim to enhance student belonging, improve module outcomes, and contribute to sector-wide research outputs.

Resource development

Staff-focused resources:

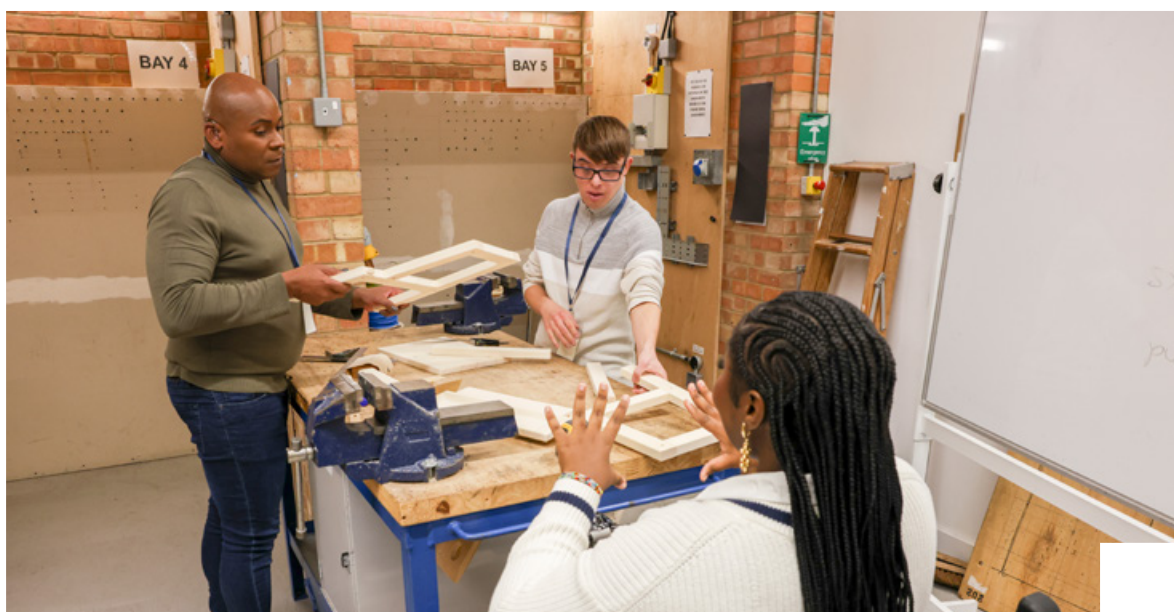
- A comprehensive workshop series
- An eLearning module
- Discipline-specific academic practice guides
- A student co-creation framework
- Development of the BCU Fellows Programme

Student-focused resources:

- A leadership programme specifically designed for students of African descent

Community building and knowledge sharing

Phase 2 of Project Zero places strong emphasis on cultivating communities of practice and disseminating evaluated success stories. External partnerships, including with TASO, are being explored to support broader sector engagement and knowledge exchange.



LGBT+ inclusion

Building on the progress of the Going for Stonewall project launched in 2019, the University continues to embed LGBTQ+ inclusion as a core part of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy. Our focus this year has been on strengthening visibility, allyship, and inclusive practice across the University community while continuing to collaborate with sector partners and our staff network.

Key highlights for 2024/25

- **LGBT+ History Month:** In February 2025, we celebrated LGBT+ History Month with a rich and varied programme of events exploring activism, visibility, and lived experience across the LGBTQ+ community. Highlights included a panel discussion featuring activists who have made significant contributions to LGBTQ+ equality in the UK and abroad; a screening of TransIndia followed by discussion; and talks on body image in bisexual trans men, HIV and PrEP Awareness, and issues affecting transgender communities in Schools. Alongside these events, the EDI unit delivered workshops on inclusive language and supporting trans and non-binary colleagues and facilitated a follow-on session for staff who had previously completed the LGBT+ Allyship e-learning. The month also featured contributions from members of the LGBT+ staff network and senior leaders, reinforcing visible leadership support and fostering understanding across the University
- **Birmingham Pride:** BCU once again proudly joined UNIfied at Pride—a collaboration between seven local higher education institutions, to march together at Birmingham Pride. Our participation this year included a dedicated giveaway for staff and students to attend the parade, ensuring equitable access and broadening community involvement. We were joined by members of the LGBTQ+ Student Society, whose presence alongside colleagues demonstrated strong student-staff partnership and representation. Student content creators also took part, sharing their experiences and amplifying BCU's message of inclusion and visibility. We also continued our partnership with Birmingham Pride to sponsor the Low-Income Ticket Scheme, offering a 50% reduction on general admission tickets for individuals in the West Midlands receiving certain benefits or allowances. This initiative helps remove financial barriers and ensures that everyone, regardless of their circumstances, can celebrate Pride
- **Embedding inclusion across the University:** This year also marked progress in embedding inclusion within our systems and processes. Pronouns have now been enabled across Microsoft Teams, and a new field has been introduced within SITS to allow staff and students to record their pronouns, improving visibility, reducing misgendering, and normalising inclusive practice across our digital platforms





LGBT+ Staff Network

Over the past year, the Network has focused on both staff advocacy and creating more social opportunities and in-person events. We also have worked with colleagues to produce a range of internal communications which recognise LGBT+ identities, share individual experiences, and promote allyship and resources.

Staff advocacy

Network members identified a priority campaign to enhance gender neutral facility provision across campuses, with the aim of putting forward practical suggestions to better meet the needs of staff, students and community users of BCU facilities. This work was put on hold by national developments and the EHRC response to the Supreme Court Judgement on sex as defined in the Equality Act, which has caused significant concerns for some staff.

The Network gathered members' views and supported trans staff feeling unsafe and unsure of the facilities they are allowed to use. These concerns were shared and there is ongoing dialogue seeking reassurances for staff and students. We also supported colleagues to make individual responses to the EHRC consultation.

Events and social activities

The Network holds monthly hybrid member meetings and regular in-person social events including after work meals and bowling, and lunchtime walks including a visit to the Birmingham Botanical Gardens to make use of free access for BCU Staff.

For LGBT History Month in February, we organised multiple social activities and a series of three lunchtime academic talks showcasing relevant research and practice, featuring education and psychology colleagues.

The Network again worked with the EDI Team to coordinate BCU's attendance at Birmingham Pride in May, the largest community event in Birmingham, including a festival stall and the fifth annual joint-universities parade collaboration.

2024-25 LGBT+ staff articles:

- [International Pronouns Day \(16th Oct\) – Staff perspectives article](#)
- [Trans Day of Remembrance \(20th Nov\) – Trans staff perspectives article](#)
- [Holocaust Memorial Day \(27th Jan\) – Network blog](#)
- [Lesbian Visibility Week \(28th Apr – 5th Mar\) - Lesbian Visibility Week page](#)
- [International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia \(17th May\) – Network blog](#)
- [Birmingham Pride 2025 \(24th May\) – Pride round-up article](#)
- [PTSD Awareness Day \(27th Jun\) – Network blog](#)
- [International Non-binary People's Day \(14th Jul\) - Network blog](#)

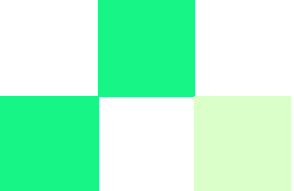


Disability Steering Group

Established in spring 2020, the Disability Steering Group continues to play a vital role in progressing disability equality for staff and students. The group comprises disabled staff and allies, with representation from professional services, academic colleagues, and the Students' Union.

Throughout 2024/25, the group has actively contributed to shaping a more inclusive environment across the University:

- **Accessibility advocacy:** The group received regular updates from the Estates Department and raised access concerns, several of which were submitted for consideration in the development of the Estates master plan
- **Staff voice and support:** It provided a consistent forum for disabled employees to share concerns, which were escalated to the EDI Team and Human Resources to inform institutional response
- **Disability History Month engagement:** Members participated in UK Disability History Month 2024, including a recorded roundtable discussion on working with a disability, delivered in collaboration with the EDI Team and the Students' Union
- **Policy development:** Group members contributed to the Reasonable Adjustments Group, helping to improve the implementation of the University's Reasonable Adjustments Policy and supporting the centralisation of Access to Work funding for staff
- **Intersectional collaboration:** Members supported the University's first Tea Break session, a cross-network initiative that created space for staff to share how identity shapes their workplace experience
- **Inclusive branding:** The group provided detailed feedback to the EDI Team on the accessibility of the University's re-brand, ensuring that inclusion remains central to institutional communications



Disabled Student Commitment

To support continuous efforts to improve the experiences of disabled students, the University has signed up to the Disabled Student Commitment, with the support of Vice-Chancellor Professor David Mba.

The Disabled Student Commitment is the legacy of the Disabled Students' Commission, which spent several years researching the experiences of disabled students and the barriers they encounter in HE.

The Commitment is a call to action for higher education providers (HEPs) to address those barriers by measuring the experiences of disabled students against the Commitment and drawing up a university action plan to remove barriers for disabled students and improve their experiences.

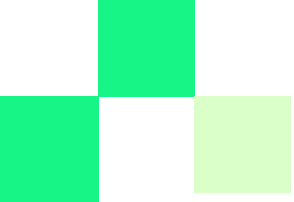
Last year's submission and the Commitment's recommendations around the holistic approaches to improve the experiences of disabled students included the following:

1. Students sharing information about their disability
2. Enabling students to make an informed choice about what and where to study, and how to access support
3. Enabling successful transition into HE and through their course, including supporting social and extra-curricular activities
4. Enabling students to achieve positive outcomes - inclusive curriculum design, staff training, processes / policies / procedures that don't create barriers
5. Supporting successful transition into further study or employment

In progressing these improvements, BCU has completed the following:

1. We have established a working group of colleagues from across the University to deliver on the recommendations in making BCU more disability friendly for our students
2. We have conducted surveys with disabled students to understand their lived experiences of pursuing their education at BCU
3. We have conducted staff surveys to receive insights on additional tools and steps to enable staff members to better support disabled students
4. To ensure student representation and coproduction, we have established a diverse panel of disabled students to provide feedback and champion student voices within our service improvements

While the student disability action plan is not yet published, the University has commenced work on some of the key actions that presented themselves as a priority. BCU is hoping to have the action plan published in the next academic year.



EDI Committee progress updates

Professional Services

Following the recruitment of College Academic Leads for Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) in 2023, a parallel approach was developed for Professional Services Departments (PSDs). This began its roll out across the University from Summer 2024.

To strengthen our institutional commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), each Professional Services department has been asked to nominate an EDI Change Champion. These champions act as departmental advocates, helping to embed our institutional equality objectives into everyday practice and ensuring that EDI is recognised as everyone's responsibility.

The refreshed Professional Services EDI Committee, composed of these Change Champions, convened for the first time in November 2024. Some key areas that were discussed during the meeting included:

- Departmental EDI activity – several departments provided updates on their internal initiatives, groups, and events
- Engagement and challenges – departments discussed their involvement, challenges, and opportunities for embedding EDI and feeding into wider institutional efforts
- Collaboration and communication – departments voiced a need for improved sharing of ideas and resources
- Future direction – the group expressed interest in a structure of meetings that is more informal, with a focus on empowerment and open discussion amongst colleagues

Overall, the PSDs Committee provides a collaborative space for addressing shared EDI challenges and advancing inclusive practices across the University's professional services. EDI Champions play a key role in:

- Promoting key messages and initiatives from the central EDI Committee
- Sharing and modelling good practice within their departments
- Facilitating the dissemination of important EDI information across the organisation

This coordinated approach supports a unified and inclusive culture, ensuring that EDI principles are embedded throughout our professional services and aligned with broader institutional goals.

Due to ongoing institutional restructuring, progress has been limited, and the Committee has not reconvened since its initial meeting. However, we remain committed to building on this foundation in the upcoming academic year, with renewed support from the central EDI Unit and EDI Business Partners. This will ensure that the Committee continues to play a vital role in driving forward institutional equality objectives across Professional Services.

Faculties and Colleges

College Academic Leads for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), work collaboratively, to communicate and chair the EDI Faculty Committee (FEDIC), sharing the responsibility to chair the meeting and set the agenda. The leads also attend the BCU EDI Central Committee and Faculty Executive Team (FET), to provide a voice on EDI-related matters, to communicate updates on progress and provide detail on actions. To support the function of this activity, the EDI leads meet regularly, to support the FEDIC Committee and Faculty EDI initiatives.

The key roles of the College Academic Leads for Equality Diversity and Inclusion are to:

- Coordinate, and develop the College's approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion, in line with the University Vision and Strategy, and in response to external drivers, liaising with relevant stakeholders
- Lead, coordinate and implement activities which support the development of a collaborative, collegiate and inclusive culture and community across staff and students within the College
- Coordinate and lead on the College's approach to developing a consistently positive staff culture, wellbeing, induction, and development
- Liaise as appropriate with the Head of College, Athena SWAN D-SAT, College team and services, such as Human Resources

Faculty of Arts, Design and Media

Collaborative College Academic Lead EDI initiatives:

Montage 1. A montage of images taken during the Reimagine EDI Symposium 2 on 25 June 2025:





Montage 1

Re-imagine Symposium

The ADM Faculty secured 75 places booked for the Re-imagine Symposium, aimed at shifting perspectives on EDI in the faculty and beyond. Funding was advanced for each college academic lead to lead on an event during 2024/25 academic year. The event, which included keynote speakers, interactive workshops and opportunities to network, received positive feedback and acclaim. Colleagues shared that they had soon after implemented several listed proposed best practice within their teams.

An overview from Colleges within the Faculty of Arts, Design and Media:

College of Architecture

The data dashboard and PowerBI

Communicating with course teams and colleagues regarding the importance of recording and communicating course metrics, navigating, and using Power BI and reflecting on course and module performance.

Attainment and awarding gaps

The college celebrated the success of the courses within the School of Architecture and Design, with a particular focus on addressing awarding gaps, discussing the challenges colleagues face within course teams and the strategies staff have adopted to ensure the mitigation of these gaps.

Ramadan report

The college showcased how courses adapted to cultural needs and challenges, including attendance. This was reflected in the revision of teaching schedules, and assessments.

Athena Swan applications

Colleagues within the college are working collaboratively, to develop an Athena Swan application for Bronze Award. Colleagues are working on the draft application which is earmarked for submission in Autumn 2025.

Ensuring gender equality

The college shared and collaborated with SMT colleagues to promote EDI - Celebrating support and inclusion for faith, cultures, and address the gender balance and this is reflected within the school.

College of Art and Design

Athena Swan Bronze Departmental Award

In January 2025 the college was successfully awarded the Athena Swan Bronze Departmental Award. This followed a period of assessment which included two departmental culture surveys, and an analysis of staff and student data.

EDI and APP working group

The college developed a working group for the College which included academics, professional services, and technical staff. We met bi-monthly to focus on issues which spanned across EDI and access and participation.

Ramadan focus

In line with good practice from the College of Architecture, information and best practice was circulated to staff in the run-up to Ramadan.

Local issues

The college has worked to tackle local issues relating to EDI such as the broken disabled lift at the School of Art.

College of English and Media

Athena Swan

Following the departmental award of the Athena Swan Bronze in January 2024, a new Athena Swan action team was formed with a new lead, Kirsten Forkert. In November 2024 the Staff Culture survey for CoEM was distributed. Those saw an increase in the response rate. There are three key areas the college needs to address but require further data from staff. These were careers and progression, bullying and harassment, and workload, support and flexibility. To address this the Athena Swan team will collect further data through focus groups and anonymous feedback collection.

Events and initiatives

Four of our EDI events were organised for CoEM:

- A talk with English alumnus Corey Brotherson for Black History Month. Corey discussed his career; the event was open to students
- We organised two events for Disability History Month. One was with Kate Waugh on the University of Bristol v Abrahart case (co-organised with Louise Martin). The second was a screening of 'When Barbara Met Alan' in the afternoon
- To celebrate LGBTQ+ History Month, a faculty member, Meera Darji, screened her film, 'Transindia: the story of India's Hijras', which took place on Wednesday 12 March

The college has installed a free food fridge in the College, where catering services can put unsold packed food at the end of each day, free for students to consume.

Working with the CAL EDI colleagues, we distributed posters throughout the College during Ramadan to raise awareness.

College of Jewellery, Fashion and Textiles

Athena Swan Award

In September 2023, CoJFT was awarded the Bronze Athena Swan Charter Award. BCU's first under the AS Transformed Charter, first in ADM, and the only UK award for the joint disciplines of jewellery, fashion and textiles.

EDI College Committee

- The CoJFT EDI Committee was established and has met bimonthly since February 2024
- The committee has 16 members including two students, AIRs, and external industry representatives
- Focus areas include staff wellbeing and student poverty, with collaborative action planning involving HR and the senior leadership team

EDI BCU film and poster campaign: celebrating student stories (September 2024)

- A dedicated film and accompanying poster campaign were launched to highlight positive EDI student stories at CoJFT
- The project showcased real student experiences of inclusion and success
- Promoted across BCU's website, social media, and open days, the campaign had national reach and was endorsed by the central EDI team

Sensory room

- A student sensory room (MP365B) was created to support students needing space to de-escalate and manage wellbeing
- This is scheduled for launch in September 2025
- Contacts: Kevin Nicholls and Dawn Loizou

OJFT EDI training initiatives

Awarding Gap Planning Workshop (December 2024)

- Course and Module Leaders attended the workshop to develop SMART actions aimed at reducing awarding gaps
- A two-year action plan was established, and a student profile data spreadsheet was introduced college wide

Equity in Higher Education Workshop (January 2025)

- This was led by Dr Ifedapo Francis Awolowo
- The event was attended by CoJFT staff, ADM EDI CALS, and BCU EDI leadership and received positive feedback and continued demand

Decolonising the Curriculum Workshop (June 2025)

- This workshop provided a comprehensive understanding of decolonisation, featuring interactive activities

EDI Breakfast - Listen, Learn and Share (Monthly, launched March 2025)

- A pilot project advanced by Professor Marcia Wilson
- The primary aim of this initiative is to raise academic staff's awareness of the protected characteristics and their behaviours to create a more inclusive environment and connection with students
- This Involved 1-hour breakfast sessions with podcasts, guest speakers, and discussions focused on protected characteristics

- Topics included:
 - o March 2025: Coaching and Listening Skills – Nichola McKay
 - o April 2025: Neurodivergence Awareness – Faye Langston
 - o May 2025: Disability Inclusion – Kate Waugh
 - o June 2025: Socioeconomic inclusion – Alice Storey (Working-Class Network)

Disability Month drop-in session (5 December 2024)

- A safe space was offered for disabled students and allies, with crafting, mindful activities, and refreshments

Provided by the College Academic Leads for Equality Diversity and Inclusion:

- College of Architecture - Nicholas Irvin
- College of Art and Design - Ally Standing
- College of Digital Arts - Cathy Easthope
- College of English and Media - Karen Patel
- College of Jewellery, Fashion and Textiles - Louise Martin

Faculty of Business, Law and Social Sciences

The Faculty of Business, Law and Social Science (BLSS) consists of 5 colleges: Law, Social and Criminal Justice (LSCJ); Psychology; Accounting, Finance and Economics; Business, Digital Transformation and Entrepreneurship; and Graduate School of Management. The Faculty EDI committee reports to the faculty leadership team on progress in relation to the University EDI objectives and their implementation in the faculty.

Key initiatives by BLSS

APP/ Awarding Gaps:

Several of initiatives and pilot projects were undertaken within the faculty to address awarding gaps. A key example was the pilot conducted by the College of Business, Digital Transformation, and Entrepreneurship, which implemented an APP deep-dive project with Level 6 BA Business Management students.

This initiative focused on students from Black and Asian backgrounds who had been identified as requiring additional support to enhance their chances of achieving a 2:1 degree classification. The intervention targeted the year-long 40-credit major project module, with tailored academic and pastoral support.

As a result, 75% of participating students achieved an average mark of 65%. The awarding gap for the module reduced to 3.6%, leading to an overall reduction in the degree awarding gap of 14%, bringing it down to just 8%. These outcomes demonstrate the positive impact of targeted interventions at module level.

Given the success of this pilot, the strategy will be rolled out across all courses from 2025–26. This represents one of several faculty-wide initiatives designed to reduce awarding gaps, including:

- Peer Navigator support
- Sharing best practice through college meetings and Teaching and Learning Days
- The SETLEP Project
- Reviewing CIPs and module reports to address identified gaps
- Curriculum refresh initiatives

Collectively, these measures have contributed significantly to reducing awarding gaps across colleges, particularly at Level 6.

Athena Swan:

The Faculty experienced challenges in progressing Athena Swan work due to the departure of several staff with extensive EDI and Athena Swan experience under the MARS scheme. Combined with wider structural and resource changes, this has meant that Athena Swan applications were paused until the new school structure is fully embedded.

Nevertheless, the existing data remains valuable, both as a benchmark and as a resource to inform the balance of gender representation in new posts. SAT teams have been informed of the pause and will resume activity once the new structures are stable.

EDI events

A range of EDI-focused events were delivered across the faculty, including:

- International Women's Day (8 March): A staffed stand in the Curzon Building, highlighting women in business and postgraduate opportunities
- International Women's Day event: "For ALL women and girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment" delivered both on-campus and virtually
- Consideration of Ramadan when planning faculty activities to ensure inclusivity

Anti-Racism Committee

A new Anti-Racism Committee was established within Psychology to provide support for staff and students, as well as to deliver training. A dedicated Teams page was created for announcements, events, and access to an allyship toolkit. The committee has also been presenting updates at monthly college meetings.

Harassment and discrimination

Concerns were raised regarding unprovable or hidden forms of harassment, particularly behaviours by men toward women. These issues were linked to cultural and ethnic differences in the interpretation of what constitutes harassment. It has been recommended that awareness of such issues be embedded in induction programmes for new overseas staff and students to help build a more inclusive and respectful environment.

Faculty of Computing, Engineering, and Built Environment

College of Computing 2024/25 updates:

Following the success of the Henderson Family Foundation Fund in 2024/25 benefitting around 140 students across the UG pipeline based on both merit and need, the Foundation has committed to scaling their support from \$500,000 in 2024/25 to \$2,750,000 across 2025/26 to 2027/28. This significant philanthropic investment will benefit 200 home undergraduate computing/engineering/technology students each year from underrepresented and/or disadvantaged backgrounds across the Faculty.

With the Department of Computer Science, significant progress has been made in advancing diversity among staff and equitable outcomes among students. For students, innovative peer mentoring 'bootcamp' sessions have been introduced to support both Semester 1 and 2 modules, with targeted help for resit students. Role model students from underrepresented groups have been showcased through marketing initiatives, while collaborations with Microsoft EMBRACE have enabled over 25 students from diverse backgrounds to gain mentorship and reach national competition finals. Innovative pedagogical approaches employed specifically at Levels 3 and 5 have led to reduction of white-ethnic minority attainment gaps by 8-9% year on year. For staff members within the school, initiatives including enhancing panel gender representation in recruitment, have led to an increase in female representation within the department from 23% to 30% at lecturer level alignment with Athena Swan Action Plan priorities.

College of Engineering 2024/25 updates:

The College of Engineering's strategic partnership with EqualEngineers has delivered impactful outcomes across staff development, student engagement, and curriculum enhancement. The success of this collaboration has led to its expansion to include the College of Built Environment, reflecting its value and relevance across disciplines.

Staff development and culture change

Six targeted staff development workshops were delivered, focusing on:

- Building a shared EDI vocabulary
- Addressing unconscious bias
- Promoting inclusive teaching and leadership practices

These sessions contributed to a measurable shift in staff attitudes and awareness. Notably:

- 89.8% of respondents expressed a positive view of EDI initiatives in the College's culture survey
- A 6% increase was recorded in the EDI theme score (rising to 67%) in the Engagement and Well-being mini survey

Student engagement and industry mentoring

To explore student development, two workshops were organised and attended by over 80 students. These workshops explored:

- Characteristics of high-performance teams
- Best practices in team formation through EDI lenses

Additionally, 10 students from the college participated in a one-to-one mentoring programme with professionals from leading organisations including Rolls-Royce SMR, Airbus, and the UK Atomic Energy Authority. This initiative helped bridge the gap between academic learning and professional readiness, supporting the development of a more diverse and inclusive engineering workforce.

Guidance on inclusive team formation was also developed and integrated into Reimagine Engineering group-based projects, embedding EDI principles into collaborative learning.

EDI, accreditations and attainment

The College successfully transferred its Athena Swan Bronze Award, reaffirming its commitment to gender equality in higher education.

In alignment with the University-wide EDI strategy, the College took proactive steps to address disparities in degree outcomes. This included:

- Incorporating markers for students with declared disabilities and care-experienced backgrounds into the College Attainment Gap Tracker
- Enabling targeted support and monitoring of progress for these student groups

EDI principles were embedded into selected modules, ensuring that all engineering students are equipped to understand the societal impact of their work and develop inclusive solutions.

Support for underrepresented students

A total of 22 engineering students from underrepresented backgrounds received financial support and recognition within the college of Engineering. These included:

- 2 students awarded scholarships of £9,250 each
- 17 students awarded bursaries of £2,000 each
- 3 students received the Henderson Innovation Seed Fund, valued at £5,000 each

These awards reflect our commitment to fostering equity and supporting the success of students from diverse backgrounds.

College of Built Environment 2024/25 updates

The College of Built Environment is proud to have made significant strides in advancing equal access to opportunity through the following initiatives:

BCU bursaries

- Two £2,000 bursaries awarded to MA Planning Built Environments students
- Targeted at under-represented groups: women and/or ethnic minorities
- Selection based on a 400–500-word statement detailing financial need, intended use of funds, and personal motivation

Henderson Foundation funds

2024 Phase 1: \$500,000 philanthropic donation to support under-represented groups in computing, engineering, and built environment.

- 6 full scholarships (£9,250 each) based on merit and financial need
- 50 access bursaries (£2,000 each) for first year living costs
- 27 performance awards (£2,000 each) to encourage academic progression
- Opportunity Fund: Small grants for travel, equipment, placements, etc
- Innovation Seed Fund: Prizes for entrepreneurial final-year projects

2025 expansion: \$2.75 million grant to support 200 students annually over three years.

- 15 full scholarships (£30,000 each)
- 50 bursaries (£2,000 each)
- 25 academic prizes (£2,000 each)
- 100 opportunity grants (£500 each)
- 10 innovation awards (£5,000 each)

Furthermore, the college has actively advanced EDI through public engagement, research, and academic leadership. Key initiatives included hosting a university-wide event on neuroinclusive learning environments in collaboration with the Planning for Neurodiversity Network, and launching a mentoring scheme for postgraduate students focused on neurodiversity in planning. The College also co-organised the 'Women in the Built Environment' event, drawing 60 delegates for discussions on career development and inclusion, and led a NetWalk with Women in Planning to explore inclusive urban design. In research supervision, staff supported multiple STEAM-funded PhD projects addressing inclusive spatial planning, digital divides in transport, and participatory smart city strategies. The team submitted major EDI-aligned research grant applications, including projects on urban cooling and climate adaptation with a focus on inequality. Additionally, Prof Gullino was appointed as an external reviewer for the Cariplo Foundation's 'Inequalities Research 2025' call, further reinforcing the College's leadership in inclusive research.

Section prepared by Faculty of Computing, Engineering, and Built Environment
2024/25 EDI Leads:

- Sara Hassan, College of Computing
- Mark Ovinis, College of Engineering
- Silvia Gullino, College of Built Environment

Faculty of Health, Education and Life Sciences

The Faculty of Health, Education, and Life Sciences is pleased to present a summary of key Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) initiatives delivered across the academic year 2024/25. These activities reflect the Faculty's ongoing commitment to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment for both staff and students.

Members of the HELS EDI Sub-Committee include the Associate Dean, Clinical Advisor, Athena Swan rep, Students' Union Equality and Inclusion Officer, College Academic Leads for EDI, and a librarian.

Christmas Brew Event: 11 December 2024

This festive gathering provided a welcoming space for staff and students to connect informally, promoting a sense of community and belonging during the holiday season.

Eid Brew Celebration: 2 April 2025

A vibrant celebration recognising the cultural and religious diversity within our university community, fostering intercultural understanding and respect.

HELS Inclusivity Staff Development Sessions: 6 November and 4 December 2024

Two professional development sessions titled "Let's Think About Inclusivity" and "Beyond Inclusivity Training" were delivered to enhance staff engagement with inclusive practices in teaching and learning.

Black History Month: 16 October 2024

As part of our Black History Month programme, we hosted a Black Health Awareness Seminar, spotlighting health disparities and promoting dialogue around racial equity in healthcare.

College of Health and Care Professions

The college of Health and Care Professions coordinated the following seminars:

- **Awarding Gap Seminar: 6 January 2025**

This seminar convened colleagues to discuss initial findings from a scoping review on the UK awarding gap, encouraging collaborative reflection and action planning

- **Inclusivity Toolkit Seminar: 26 March 2025**

A hands-on session designed to equip staff with practical strategies for embedding inclusivity across curriculum design and delivery



BCU Students' Union

Our purpose:

To have a positive impact on the experience of all BCU students, so they can achieve their full potential.

Introduction

This update pulls together the work of the organisation relating to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). It pulls in information from the BCUSU EDI Committee, work undertaken from officers, and the work of BCUSU staff.

BCUSU EDI Committee

Below are examples of BCUSU's work in representing student issues relating to EDI and their outcomes, collaboratively worked on with the wider university.

Enhancing data quality

Thanks to the collaborative efforts of Jude, Information Governance Manager and Data Protection Officer, alongside colleagues in IT, we now receive significantly improved data from student enrolment.

Previously, limitations in the enrolment wording restricted the SU's access to key demographic information, creating gaps in our understanding of student representation. These issues have been resolved through revised questions and updated IT processes.

As a result, we now have access to more comprehensive EDI data, enabling us to better assess the inclusivity of our activities and identify areas where student engagement can be strengthened.

Liberation Councils

The Liberation Council is now fully operational, with training for representatives scheduled for 14 October. This training is designed to build confidence and capacity among Liberation Representatives, empowering them to advocate effectively for marginalised student communities.

The Council provides the BCUSU with structured and meaningful access to student voices on EDI matters, ensuring that SU priorities are shaped by lived experiences.

The BCUSU also plans to invite University EDI delegates to future Council meetings to foster collaboration and align institutional and student-led strategies.

Listed below are some of the highlights from the Academic Year 2024/25:

- LGBTQ+ Society: Delivered regular community events and partnered with the University's Staff Network at Birmingham Pride, enhancing visibility and solidarity for LGBTQ+ students
- Women's Society: Built a vibrant online community and hosted events such as film nights and local excursions, promoting wellbeing and belonging
- People of Colour Society: Organised creative workshops and campus stalls, celebrating cultural expression and engaging underrepresented students
- Neurodiverse Society: Facilitated weekly safe space meetings and established a feedback loop with BCUSU, ensuring sustained support and policy influence

Liberation Societies have also played a key role in shaping the University's Race Equality Charter work, ensuring student perspectives are embedded in institutional progress.

Listed below are some of the key events, campaigns, and initiatives planned for Semester 1 of the 2025/26 Academic Year:

- Black History Month, Cultural Week, and World Mental Health Day: Planning is underway with strong EDI collaboration to deliver impactful events that celebrate heritage, wellbeing, and equity
- Welcome Fair: Liberation Society members were actively involved across campuses, promoting inclusion and visibility
- Reclaim the Night March Campaign: Scheduled for this semester, with an open invitation for the EDI Team to participate
- Food pantries: A working group has been established in partnership with PVC Education, the Head of EDI, and EDI Business Partner Avery, to advance this initiative
- Prayer space for Islamic students: With support from PVC Education and the Head of Timetabling, a larger prayer room has been secured for the Islamic Society. This now allows male and female Muslim students to pray together, removing previous barriers. Additionally, where possible, classes will not be scheduled between 1 – 2pm on Fridays to accommodate Jummah prayer

Inclusion in motion

– Sustaining equality through our stakeholder experience and advancing outreach

At BCU, Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) exist as the anchor of our mission, vision, and strategy. While we continue to advance data-driven approaches to EDI, we recognise that inclusion also transcends metrics. It is rooted in stories, lived experiences, and the everyday realities of our students and staff. It is also embedded in how we work within and across the region to create progress and improve outcomes for our diverse university community.

This section reflects our ongoing efforts to embed EDI into the fabric of our daily operations, improve quality of life for our university community, and expanding our impact through meaningful outreach and partnerships.

While this report is unable to capture every progress, we are proud to highlight key examples of how we are living our values, championing equity through action, and driving positive change both on campus and across the region:

- Recognising that access to nutritious meals supports both students and staff in achieving their full potential, Birmingham City University has introduced and continues to offer a 40% and 25% discount on food and beverages across all campus buildings. This initiative ensures the BCU community can access affordable meals while on campus, helping to tackle food poverty and promote social mobility and inclusion during ongoing cost-of-living challenges
- Birmingham City University proud to be a sponsor of [The Evenfields Black Talent Awards](#), a platform existing to recognise the outstanding performance and achievements of Black professionals across the UK, including both employees and employers
- Birmingham City University is delighted to serve as a new Patron Sponsor for the [5% Club](#). The 5% Club is a dynamic movement of employers committed to earn and learn as part of building and developing the workforce they need as part of a socially mobile, prosperous and cohesive nation. The Club exists to help its members and all employers increase further the number, quality and range of earn and learn opportunities across the UK
- To address poverty on campus, the [University's Period Dignity scheme](#) has been offering free tampons and pads at selected ground floor toilets across our campuses
- Birmingham City University has completed the refurbishment of the Benjamin Zephaniah Building, creating a conducive and inspiring environment for students pursuing Education and Teacher Training. This refurbishment also honours and preserves the enduring legacy of Benjamin Zephaniah
- Birmingham City University has remained a crucial sponsor of Birmingham Pride and are committed to develop strong partnerships through UNIfied at Pride, as well as outreach with GBT+ organisations in the region to advance inclusivity for the community

- Birmingham City University is proud to sponsor [the Association of Jamaican Nationals \(Birmingham\)](#) UK in celebrating the outstanding achievements and recognition of the community
- Birmingham City University was an active participant and contributor to the Minoritised Life Scientists Future Forum, with students, staff members, and senior leaders partaking in this initiative. The Forum was aimed at empowering underrepresented voices and marginalised communities in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)
- Birmingham City University supported the BCUSU in hosting two Iftar events during the month of Ramadan, feeding over 500 students and staff members across City South and City campuses





Conclusion

Birmingham City University is proud to publish this annual report, reaffirming our commitment to fostering an inclusive environment where equality is upheld, transparently monitored, and embodied by our staff and students. Over the past year, we have made significant progress toward our five-year objectives.

Our analysis of staff and student diversity profiles (across ethnicity, gender, and disability) shows that our community is more diverse than ever, reflecting our dedication to creating a space where the BCU community can thrive. We are encouraged by the continued year-on-year reductions in our gender and ethnicity pay gaps, as well as the significant reduction in awarding gaps for UK and B.A.M.E. student degree outcomes as well as awarding gaps between our most and least disadvantaged students. We are also delighted to celebrate the launch of our Office for Students approved Access and Participation Plan, along with the progress of our Project Zero initiative. Furthermore, we are proud to have made a submission for the institutional Athena Swan Silver Award and for finalising our re-submission for the Race Equality Charter Bronze Award. We are also excited to continue our community outreach and partnerships with regional and national organisations, to ensure that the work we do reflects our values to contribute to the wider community and our goals for Strategy 2030. While we have recorded increases to our online reporting system to capture reports of discrimination and harassment, we are assured that this is demonstrative evidence that staff and students alike feel comfortable, safe, and well-equipped with reporting unacceptable behaviours to us. Overall, BCU is delighted to be a dynamic force in driving forward change in EDI.

While we celebrate these achievements, we also recognise the need to be more ambitious. We remain committed to building an environment where every member of the BCU community can access an equal opportunity to education and success equitably, authentically, and without barriers. Going forward, in the next academic year, BCU's EDI priorities include improving our provisions for accessibility and disability inclusion, including advancing to attain the Disability Confident Level 2 accreditation status. We are also excited to begin scoping work for an LGBT+ inclusion action plan, while exploring our opportunities and options to seek external accreditation to measure our progress and accountability towards LGBT+ inclusion. With other accreditations, we are committed to delivering our objectives to progress BCU to be recognised as a University for Sanctuary, marking a public commitment for us to display a welcoming, safe, and inclusive culture for students and staff seeking asylum, refuge, or humanitarian protection.

We acknowledge that progress in closing and awarding gaps has not advanced at the pace we aspire to. Addressing this remains a priority, and we are committed to implementing targeted measures that align with the university's strategic direction. This includes ensuring our action plans are robust, data-informed, and fully integrated with institutional goals. We will continue to monitor progress closely through our recently launched Access and Participation Plan, while strengthening the impact and reach of our Project Zero initiative.

Amid ongoing restructures within our academic and professional services, we are taking deliberate steps to embed EDI deeply into our systems, policies, and everyday practices. Our aim is for EDI to become second nature in how we deliver services and make decisions. One of these approaches is to ensure that operations across BCU are supported by the consistent and meaningful use of Equality Impact Assessments, and that different departments across the university are strongly aligned to our commitment to delivering an equitable and welcoming study environment for all our students.

We are also intensifying efforts to reduce pay gaps related to gender, ethnicity, and disability. Building trust within our community is central to this work, and we are encouraging staff and students to confidently declare their demographic information, enabling us to better understand and support our increasingly diverse university population.

Concluding this annual report, we reaffirm that Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion is not the responsibility of a single team or initiative, but it is a shared commitment across our entire BCU community. Every student, colleague, and partner plays a vital role in shaping a culture where EDI is not just a principle, but a lived culture and set of values. We extend our gratitude to all who have contributed to this report and to the progress it reflects. As we look ahead, we remain passionate in our ambition to drive EDI to greater heights, embedding it into every policy, process, and delivery of service. Together, we will continue to challenge inequality, celebrate diversity, and build a university where everyone belongs, and succeeds in their endeavours.



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