Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report 2024

1. Introduction

1.1 This report provides a comprehensive overview of progress in advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) across York St John University (YSJU) during 2023-2024.

1.2 The Annual Report on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:

- helps to ensure the University's compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED);
- provides a broad overview of progress in advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion across the institution;
- details the achievement of our equality objectives during the calendar year 2024;
- outlines the external and institutional context for equality and diversity;
- reflects on student and staff diversity data and;
- reports against key equality objectives.

1.3 The University is committed to fulfilling its statutory responsibilities and duties under the Equality Act (2010). In accordance with the PSED, the University is committed to:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

1.4 The report accompanies the Gender Pay Gap Report, the Access and Participation Plan, its Annual Monitoring Report, and the People and Culture Plan Progress Report.

1.5 Data is provided on the University's website.

2. Key achievements during 2023/24

2.1 The University revised its Equality, Diversity, and Human Rights Statement, formalising it as policy and incorporating a glossary of key terms.

2.2 A new EDI Framework and governance structure is under development to strategically enhance equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives, with full implementation expected 2024/25.

2.3 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) Guidance was updated, with a new recording system, training, and resources to be implemented by 24/25.

2.4 Training activities were conducted to enhance Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion, including introducing race equity and bystander e-training.

2.5 Ongoing support continued for participation in the Aurora and Diversifying Leadership programmes offered by Advance HE.

2.6 Staff networks play a key role in policy consultations and organising activities, such as:

- YSJ Women's Network: facilitated consultations on academic policies, gender inequality workshops, and professional development opportunities.
- Quiet Pride, organised by the Neurodiversity, LGBTQ+ and Disabled staff networks,

was a notable success.
- The LGBTQ+ Staff Network led in participation in York Pride, with YSJ as a major sponsor.

2.7 A series of interventions to address differentials (gaps) in access, continuation, completion, award and progression has been confirmed in the new Access and Participation Plan (APP). This was approved by Academic Board in June and reported to Board of Governors in July 2024 before submission to the Office for Students (OfS).

2.8 On the equality objective to remove gaps in access, continuation, completion, attainment and progression outcomes in line with the Access and Participation Plan 2020-2025

- The ethnicity degree awarding gap for UK-domiciled students saw a slight decline to 22.6pp for 2023 graduates, down from 23.3pp in 2022. Despite this decrease, it remains a significant concern. Action is being undertaken through our Race Equality Charter action plan (confirmed in 2022) and the Access and Participation Plan (APP). The awarding gap is reported in OfS dashboards based on HESA data. Internal data for more recent graduates indicates some improvement, with a 10.6pp reduction (12pp) in ethnicity awarding gap for 2024 graduates. Recent data indicates a continuing trend of improvement. The new APP was submitted in July 2024.
- The University continues to meet key targets outlined in the Learning, Teaching, and Student Excellence (LTSE) Strategy Action Plan. Specifically, relevant actions from the Race Equality Charter have been addressed and integrated into our initiatives.

2.9 On the equality objective to eliminate the gender pay gap (GPG) and Black, Asian and minority ethnic pay gap (2026 staging targets: 5% mean and median GPG, retain zero gap for ethnicity)

- As of 31 March 2024, our mean gender gap increased slightly to 12.1% compared to 11.4% the previous year, while our median gender pay gap increased from 15.1% to 18.5%.
- Our Athena SWAN Action Plan outlines the steps we are taking to address the gender pay gap. Priority areas include developing women-friendly policies and supporting career progression through research pathways.
- The next full equal pay review will be completed following the 31 March 2025 pay date in line with the bi-annual activity of reviewing pay gaps against all monitored characteristics.

2.10 The Inclusive Education Framework (IEF) has completed phase one and is making progress in phase two (support and embedding) is demonstrating a positive impact. The IEF is now integrated into curriculum design, academic induction, and Fellowship CPD (2024-28). Accessible online/hybrid Teaching & Learning CPD is expanding, and ITE-specific CPD, based on a successful pilot, is being implemented. The IEF is also included in the research concordat's action plan for researcher professional development.

2.11 The Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team is actively implementing its Action Plan and preparing for a midpoint review in February 2025. A summary of completed activities is available on the Athena Swan webpage, and a student-led rebranding of Athena Swan has taken place.

2.12 Since receiving the Race Equality Charter Bronze Award in November 2022, the University has made continued progress on its five-year action plan.

2.13 The University has also signed up to the Mental Health Charter and the Disabled Student Commitment, with plans to be drafted during the 24/25 academic year

2.14 The University has also contributed to a research project, Inclusive Neurodiverse Campus (INC), in partnership with Spectrum First. This research initiative used participatory methods with autistic children and young people, focusing on reframing neurodivergent traits and the transition to higher education. The outcomes of the research suggest a shift towards a neurodiversity paradigm that values acceptance and highlights the importance of input from neurodivergent individuals in creating inclusive university environments. The University is considering the recommendations from this report as part of the University's Mental Health Charter Plan.

3. Board of Governors' responsibilities for equality, diversity and inclusion

3.1 The Committee of University Chairs (CUC) Higher Education Code of Governance sets out the expectations of governing bodies "to promote and develop a positive culture which supports ethical behaviour and equal, diverse and inclusive practices across the institution, including in the Board of Governors' own operation and composition."

3.2 In the 2023-24 academic year, the diversity of the Board of Governors experienced a slight improvement across various protected characteristics. Initial outcomes suggest that new measures introduced to attract a more diverse pool of candidates for governor roles has been successful; however, this will continue to be closely monitored by the Board.

3.3 The Board of Governors has taken steps to promote a positive culture of equality, diversity, and inclusion. In 2023-24, the Board of Governors approved the Annual EDI Report, endorsed the new Access & Participation Plan, and integrated EDI considerations into decision making processes. The People Committee discussed reports on the Gender Pay Gap and Equal Pay Review, while the Foundation Committee re-framed the Chaplaincy as a multi-faith team and monitored progress on the Athena Swan, Race Equality Charter, and Mental Health Charter.

4. Academic governance

4.1 Academic Board and its committees have all approved the adoption of two over-arching principles which will be central to discussions and decision-making during meetings, these are:

- Principle 1: Ensure decision-making is based on understanding the needs of under-represented groups.
- Principle 2: Proactively anticipate and provide reasonable adjustments for all students in accordance with the Equality and Human Rights Commission Advice Note for the higher education sector from the legal case of University of Bristol vs Abrahart, to ensure that all students, regardless of disability or other protected characteristics, have equal access to education and can fully participate in university life.

4.2 Academic Board and its committees have also adopted specific Board/Committee EDI objectives that are relevant to their own Terms of Reference. In drafting these objectives, due consideration has been given to the University's Access and Participation Plan, the Race Equality Charter and Athena Swan.

4.3 Co-opted members from groups under-represented on University committees continue to add considerable value to discussions and decision-making.

- As continuous EDI monitoring will be pivotal for the next Research Excellence Framework, the University Research Committee has created an EDI sub-group to

advice the committee on research-related EDI matters. In particular, the sub-group will focus on QR funding and output submissions.

4.4 EDI Leads for Schools. Professor Helen Julia Minors (Head of School of Arts) and Dr Ruth Windscheffel (Head of Teaching & Learning Enhancement) developed the EDI Lead role. EDI Leads advise on EDI issues at the School level and are part of the School Academic Leadership Team (SALT).

School	Lead	Update
School of Humanities	Dr Elodie Duché.	Initiatives: EDI Leads Forum, Teams page for resources, projects on international student support, PhD supervisory opportunities, neurodivergent learning communities, unconscious bias, and anonymous feedback mechanisms.
School of Education, Language and Psychology	EDI group with members focusing on specific EDI areas (e.g., Athena Swan, LGBTQ+, mental health).	Initiatives: School-focused action plan and EDI framework to support staff.
School of Science, Technology and Health	Dr Zanib Bi-Mohammed.	Initiatives: REC Institutional Lead and Co-Chair, advising on the University Mental Health Charter.
School of Arts	Single Lead Academic	Initiatives: Embedding EDI work into research activities, addressing accessibility issues, and participating in REC and Athena Swan mid-term reviews.
London Campus	Cassie Price	Initiatives: Campus Zoning project for neurodivergent support, reimagined Welcome Week, Enhanced Programme for diverse learners, Wellbeing Champions initiative, inclusive research culture, and evolving institutional processes for international students.

5. Legislative and policy developments

5.1 The Office for Students has introduced a new requirement for universities to protect students from harassment and sexual misconduct, effective 1 August 2025, except for the ban on Non-Disclosure Agreements, which is already in place and fully complied with.

5.2 A working group co-chaired by the Head of Governance and Compliance and the Head of Wellbeing, Disability, and Inclusion is implementing key actions, including:

- A new policy on close and intimate relationships.
- Updated University policies on harassment and sexual misconduct.
- Mandatory training for students and relevant staff.
- Ensuring partners (UK and overseas institutions, study abroad programmes, NHS placements, etc.) have appropriate policies in place.

The group meets monthly to track progress on an extensive action plan.

5.3 The Abrahart v. University of Bristol case highlights the importance of providing proactive support and reasonable adjustments for disabled students, especially those with mental health conditions. The EHRC has issued guidance, and work is ongoing to implement these recommendations

5.4 The University has revised its Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom to clarify its intersection with Dignity and Respect policies.

6. Diversity monitoring

6.1 In line with the specific equality duties, details of student and staff diversity profiles are published on the website.

6.2 Overall the University has seen a drop in turnover down to 12% from 17% last year. In 22-23, Black Asian Mixed Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups had a higher percentage turnover than White ethnicities. However, in 23-24 we have seen a marked improvement made to this figure, where now BAME staff turnover is at 13% which is 1% higher than the organisational average, this has returned back to normal levels. See Appendix A for more detail.

7. Outlook on 2025

- A new comprehensive EDI framework will be completed to advance equality, diversity, and inclusion across the university.
- A new Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process will be implemented to ensure consistent and transparent evaluation of policies' impact on diverse groups.
- By the end of 2024/25, we will develop an action plan to strengthen support for disabled students, including embedding inclusive practices, expanding staff training, and creating a database for disabilities and adjustments. This plan will also improve lecture capture, refine reasonable adjustments (including placements), and enhance mental health and EDI reporting. Additionally, we will ensure disabled voices are considered in Estates projects and review accessibility information for applicants, setting the stage for further progress in 2025/26 and beyond.
- Academic Board committees will assess and update their equality objectives at the start of the new academic year to align with the EDI framework.

- Materials will be developed and rolled out to promote compassionate communication internally and externally, supporting inclusivity and respect.
- A comprehensive review of all EDI policies will ensure alignment with the university's values and best practices. Ongoing updates and refinement of EDI policies and procedures to ensure they foster an inclusive environment for all.
- Streamlining and centralising all EDI training across the university for consistent access and engagement.
- A review of the Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom ahead of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 coming into force (timeframe yet to be confirmed).

Appendix A: Turnover Data

% Turnover	AY 2022-2023				AY 2023-2024			
	No. of leavers	Total Workforce	%→	%↓	No. of leavers	Total Workforce	%→	%↓
BAME	24	99	24%	13%	17	136	13%	13%
White	149	936	16%	81%	114	950	12%	84%
Not known/ Prefer not to say	11	51	22%	6%	5	48	10%	4%
Total leavers	**184**	**1086**	**17%**	**100%**	136	**1134**	**12%**	**100%**

% Turnover by Ethnicity