

Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report 2025

Introduction

This report provides a comprehensive overview of progress in advancing equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) at York St John University (YSJU) during 2024–25. It ensures compliance with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), details achievements against equality objectives, and outlines the institutional and external context for EDI. It also reflects on staff and student diversity data and reports on key equality objectives.

1. Statutory Responsibilities

The University remains committed to its duties under the Equality Act 2010, including:

- Eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment, and victimisation;
- 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.

Key achievements

1.1 The Annual Report on EDI:

- 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 2024-25;
- outlines the external and institutional context for equality and diversity;
- reflects on student and staff diversity data;
- reports against key equality objectives.

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

1.3 Data is provided on the University's [website](#).

2. Key achievements during 2024-25

Three key achievements

2.1 The ethnicity degree awarding gap for UK-domiciled students saw a good decline to 12 pp for 2024 graduates, down from 23 pp in 2023. Despite this decrease, it remains a significant concern. Actions continue to be focussed on this. The awarding gap is reported in OfS dashboards based on HESA data. Internal data for more recent graduates indicates some improvement, with a 7-pp reduction, bringing the gap down to 5 pp in ethnicity awarding gap for 2025 graduates.

2.2 Between the 2023-24 and 2024-25 academic years, the institution saw a positive shift in workforce stability, characterised by a 4% decrease in overall turnover (falling from 12% to 8%). While the total workforce grew slightly to 1,151 staff members, the number of leavers dropped significantly from 136 to 94. Notably, the BAME workforce expanded by 22% (from 136 to 166), and while the turnover rate for this group improved from 13% to 10%, it remains

slightly higher than the 8% turnover rate for White staff:

% Turnover	AY 2023-24				AY 2024-25			
	No. of leavers	Total Workforce	%→	%↓	No. of leavers	Total Workforce	%→	%↓
BAME	17	136	13%	13%	17	166	10%	18%
White	114	950	12%	84%	74	935	8%	79%
Not known/ Prefer not to say	5	48	10%	4%	3	50	6%	3%
Total leavers	136	1134	12%	100%	94	1151	8%	100%

2.3 The University successfully transitioned from development to the formal implementation of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Framework. This Framework sets out clear strategic priorities, aligned with the principles of Freedom of Speech, to embed inclusivity across all areas of University activity. It sits under the University's Social Impact Strategy and complements the Financial Sustainability; Research and Innovation; and Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Frameworks. To ensure robust oversight and accountability, the EDI Governance and Impact Group was established to oversee delivery and progress of the EDI Framework, ensuring accountability, with its first meeting scheduled for November 2025.

Other achievements

2.4 Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) guidance was updated, and a new recording system, alongside training and resources, was introduced to support effective implementation.

2.5 EDI training continued to be delivered, including the Race Equity package as part of our commitment to the Race Equality Charter. Impact evaluation is planned for 2026. The Diversity in the Workplace e-learning package was refreshed, with further updates scheduled by the end of 2025. Reminders were activated on the LearnUpon platform to ensure safeguarding, EDI, and unconscious bias training is repeated within agreed timescales for current staff and completed by all new starters

2.6 The University continued to fund five places on the Advance HE Aurora programme and, this year, doubled support for the Diversifying Leadership programme to four places, reflecting our commitment to developing diverse leadership across the institution.

2.7 Staff Networks continued to play a key role in policy consultations and organising activities. Activities this year included:

- BAME Staff Network: Organised a Black History Month Celebrating Black Excellence event as well as creating a series of videos discussing black history.
- YSJ Women's Network: Organised a career and gender panel, as well as a micro feminism session, which focused on small and practical actions that support gender equity
- Quiet Pride was yet another success and organised by the Neurodiversity, LGBTQ+ and Disabled staff networks.

2.8 Conversations between Staff Networks and Executive Board led to an agreement to provide Staff Network Leads with allocated hours for the role from the 2025-26 academic year.

2.9 A series of targeted interventions to address differentials (gaps) in access, continuation,

completion, award, and progression (APP) commenced, ensuring that the commitments set out in the plan are actively implemented and monitored for impact

2.10 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 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.

2.11 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 2025, our mean gender gap decreased slightly to 11.1% compared to 12.1% the previous year, while our median gender pay gap decreased from 18.5% to 17.8%.
- Our Athena Swan Action Plan (2022-27) outlines the steps we are taking to address the gender pay gap. Priority areas include supporting career progression through research pathways. The People and Culture Enabling Plan also includes areas of focus relating to Professional Services CPD which forms part of our commitment to Integrity, Trust, and Inclusion; one of the five guiding principles of the Plan.
- 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.

2.12 The Inclusive Higher Education Framework (IHEF) became embedded into the University's strategic planning documents and was referenced within the EDI Framework, LTSE Framework, and YSJ Pedagogy. The number of papers referencing the IHEF submitted to Education Committee demonstrated the reach and impact of the work and the extent to which it is being embedded into institutional thinking and practice. The Framework was incorporated into our Fellowship CPD provision as a required component. Between August 2024 and July 2025, 84 colleagues successfully gained recognition, evidencing the breadth of engagement and the role of the IHEF in professional development. Work is currently underway with HROD and an external provider to embed the IHEF into additional staff development programmes, ensuring consistency across institutional training and further strengthening its integration into University practice.

2.13 The Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team completed its midpoint review and started to implement the revised Action Plan. A summary of completed activities is available on the Athena Swan webpage. New institutional leads were welcomed to oversee the next stages of delivery and ensure effective oversight of the action plan. Preparations are underway for the next submission cycle (2027).

2.14 Work continued on the Race Equality Charter Action Plan. A survey undertaken in late 2024 highlighted a significant increase in student and staff satisfaction compared to 2022. Overall student satisfaction across comparable metrics rose by 24.7 percentage points (from 65.8% to 90.5%). For staff, there was a positive cumulative benchmarking increase of 38.8 points across five key areas.

2.15 Work continued to develop action plans for both the Mental Health Charter and the Disabled Student Commitment, noting that, in 2025-26, work has subsequently paused whilst we determine how best to progress.

2.16 The University continued with its research work around the Inclusive Neurodiverse Campus (INC), in partnership with Spectrum First. A full project report was produced and released Project INC's academic paper as a pre-print ahead of journal review.

2.17 Schools continued to utilise EDI Lead roles, designed to embed strategic EDI priorities at School level and provide localised expertise on inclusive practice. Activities and initiatives completed in 2024-25 include EDI-informed funding reviews and toolkits, staff training, mentoring schemes, neurodivergent support, and efforts to reduce awarding gaps for underrepresented groups. Community engagement is emphasised through EDI events, student consultation, blogs, and wellbeing initiatives, creating a culture of inclusion and equity across teaching, research and campus life.

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 2024-25 academic year, the diversity of the Board of Governors varied across protected characteristics. While progress was made in terms of ethnicity, there was a slight decline in terms of gender and disability. There are several Governor roles that are appointed without the Board's input (e.g., the staff and student governors, and two roles appointed by the Church), and the changes to the Board's diversity in 2024-25 was due to appointments to these roles.

3.3 The Board of Governors has taken steps to promote a positive culture of equality, diversity, and inclusion. In 2024-25, the Board of Governors approved the Annual EDI Report and the Modern Slavery Statement, and received regular updates on the University's strategic Indicators of Success (which includes demonstrating students and staff from all cultures and backgrounds feel valued within York St John). People Committee discussed reports on the Mental Health Charter, the new EDI Framework, and Gender Pay Gap. Foundation Committee discussed re-framing the Chaplaincy as a multi-faith team, supporting students and staff of different faiths and beliefs, and tackling hate speech and racism, as well as continuing to monitor progress on the Athena Swan, Disabled Student Commitment, Mental Health Charter, Race Equality Charter.

4. Academic Governance

Academic Board and its committees have agreed two over-arching principles which are central to discussions and decision-making:

- 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 versus 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.

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

Co-opted members, from groups under-represented on University committees, continue to add considerable value to discussions and decision-making. In October 2024, new members from under-represented groups were appointed to Academic Board, Education Committee, and Quality and Standards Committee.

The University Research Committee established an EDI sub-group which promotes EDI in research policies and advise on implementation; advises on EDI in the Research Excellence Framework (REF); advocates for under-represented groups; and identifies and promotes good practice. The Committee has consulted with academic Schools (via School Academic Leadership Teams (SALTs)) on the under-representation of women and part-time staff in REF outputs.

School / Campus	Lead	Key EDI Updates
School of Humanities	Dr Elodie Duché	Humanities have successfully implemented an EDI-informed QR funding review and launched a School-specific EDI toolkit. Support structures have been bolstered through anonymous staff questionnaires and personalised drop-in sessions. Looking toward 2025-26, the focus will shift to inclusive teaching workshops, the launch of an EDI Learning and Teaching fund, and expanded grassroots consultations.
School of Education, Language and Psychology	EDI Group (focus on Athena Swan, LGBTQ+, mental health)	The School has prioritised high-visibility engagement through "Whole School Meetings" addressing BSL, the Inclusive Education Framework (IEF), and YSJ Pedagogy. Communication has been enhanced via a new bi-monthly EDI blog, while the research community is currently mapping EDI-related output to identify and address knowledge gaps, with a continued focus on Athena Swan and mental health.
School of Science, Technology and Health	Dr Zanib Bi-Mohammed	Activity is centred on structural equity, specifically reducing awarding gaps and embedding EDI directly into the curriculum through unconscious bias training and anonymous marking. Key initiatives include targeted mentoring for BAME, trans, and non-binary students, alongside the promotion of inclusive leadership and specialised scholarships.
School of the Arts	Single lead academic	Recent efforts have focused on physical and academic accessibility, notably through new-build facility improvements and inclusive module validations. The School reports a more diverse student body, driven by international articulation agreements, and a stabilised staff profile with recent recruitment successfully enhancing race, gender, and disability diversity.
London Campus	Cassie Price	The London Campus is leading on environmental inclusivity through the Campus Zoning Project to support neurodivergent students. Recent successes include the enhancement of the Global Learner

		Programme and the launch of the Wellbeing Champions initiative; all aimed at fostering an inclusive research culture through dedicated mentorship.
York Business School	Vacant	Despite not having a dedicated EDI Lead, York Business School has been involved in various activities, including hosting a successful Black Rainbow Cabaret and supporting York LGBT History Month.

5. Legislative and policy developments

5.1 The University prepared for the new regulatory requirement from the Office for Students (E6) to protect students from harassment and sexual misconduct. The University clarified that it did not use Non-Disclosure Agreements and so was compliant with this aspect of the condition. The rest of the condition came into force on 1 August 2025.

5.2 The University also prepared for the implementation of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, which also commenced on 1 August 2025. YSJ revised its Code to ensure compliance, including to clarify its intersection with Dignity and Respect policies.

5.3 The University started to consider its response to the Supreme Court ruling in April 2025 that clarified that “sex” in the Equality Act 2010 referred to biological sex. The University started to review its single-sex provision in advance of the expected statutory guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC).

5.4 *Abrahart v University of Bristol* (appeal judgment 2024): Reinforced universities’ duties to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled students, particularly those with mental health conditions. The EHRC issued updated guidance in July 2024, and sector initiatives; such as the Disabled Student Commitment (2025); are shaping practice. The University started to discuss the notion of Core Inclusive Practices across all provision, with the aim of seeking to gain approval for that in 2025-26.

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, we have seen a drop in turnover down to 8% from 12% last year. In 2023-24, Black Asian Mixed Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups saw a higher percentage turnover than White ethnicities. However, in 2024-25, we have seen a marked improvement made to this figure, where BAME staff turnover is now at 10% which is 2% higher than the organisational average.

Outlook for 2025-26

1. Strengthening Governance: Launch the EDI Governance and Impact Group to further refine and enhance our strategic and structural approach to EDI across the organisation.
2. Maintain a proactive approach to evolving legislative landscape, ensuring the University keeps aligning its policies with new developments in Freedom of Speech and other areas of legislation.

3. Charter review: Engage in strategic discussions regarding our approach to charters to support our mission and values of being a University of Social Impact.
4. Establish an Ethical Financial Transaction Working Group to embed and enhance institutional financial decisions which are underpinned by EDI principles.
5. Register with the Business Disability Forum, to offer further support to staff in management and aim to achieve Disability Confident Employer Leader accreditation.
6. Embed Core Inclusive Practices across the Schools.
7. Review categories of EDI data and align across students and staff working with key stakeholders.