

# **Annual Equality and Diversity Report 2016**

## **York St John University**

*23 March 2017*

### **Executive Summary**

The second Annual Report on Equality and Diversity provides an overview of the work done by York St John in the delivery of the University's equality objectives, drawing attention to key achievements and challenges. It provides assurance to Governing Body on equality and diversity in the institution.

The new organisational structure has provided opportunities to strengthen senior accountability for equality, diversity and inclusion; for example, the Executive Dean Quality has a specific remit on equality and inclusion in addition to line management responsibility through the University Secretary.

Some key achievements in 2016 have been:

- Securing our place in the Stonewall Top 100 Workplace Equality Index for the third year running.
- Implementing the inclusive Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework which demonstrates our commitment to inclusivity and should enhance the learning experience for all our students, and for disabled students in particular.
- Improving the provision of our equality data to increase understanding of the diversity of our student body and their progress through University.
- Achieving a commendation in the award of the Social Enterprise Gold Mark.

Along with other institutions, York St John University faces challenges as we are held to greater accountability for our efforts to reduce inequalities. This affects our ranking in the Teaching Excellence Framework and the funding we receive for our widening participation work, for instance. The importance of fostering good relations, promoting respect, tackling prejudice, and supporting victims has been highlighted by the UUK report on sexual violence, harassment and hate crime, and by the national (and international) insurgence of intolerance towards groups in our society.

In the second half of 2016, the University agreed three key equality and diversity themes which offer a focus for collaboration across the University and create a stronger impetus for making advances with the equality, diversity and inclusion agenda. Through our strategic focus and ongoing integration of equality and diversity into the organisational structure, we are building a strong foundation to face these challenges; and we will continue to build a diverse and culturally rich community where everyone thrives.

## **Introduction**

York St John University is dedicated to providing an inclusive, accessible and welcoming environment which supports a diverse and culturally rich community. As the University celebrated the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding and its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a University, it has continued to develop and push forward its equality, diversity and human rights agenda.

The Committee of University Chairs' Higher Education Code of Governance<sup>1</sup> (the 'Code') requires governing bodies to "promote equality and diversity throughout the institutions, including in relation to its own operation." During 2016, the Human Resources Committee received relevant reports on our progress. This second Annual Report on Equality and Diversity provides a broader overview of progress on equality and diversity and specifically on the achievement of our equality objectives.

This report sets out the external and institutional context for equality and diversity and reports against the four domains of the University Strategy. It puts indicators and activities in the spotlight. It illustrates the work we are undertaking to deliver the equality objectives. At the end, it provides an outlook on 2017. Details of students and staff equality information are available on the website:

[www.yorks.ac.uk/equality](http://www.yorks.ac.uk/equality).

## **Key Equality and Diversity Themes**

Through a combination of strategic objectives and measures of progress and risk<sup>2</sup>, the University sets out to advance equality of opportunity for all students and staff. In previous years, the University chose to set, annually, a wide range of priority objectives. In 2016, the Strategic Leadership Team decided to focus on a limited number of areas where a joined-up, targeted approach across the University is required to make progressive change.

The key themes for the academic year 2016-17 are:

1. Promoting ethnic diversity at York St John University
2. Implementing the Inclusive Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework with a particular emphasis on:
  - ensuring teaching and learning delivery is accessible and inclusive for disabled students
  - fostering inclusive language and behaviour by staff and students in the classroom
3. Determining effective ways to operationalise equality and diversity in the new University structure.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.universitychairs.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Code-Final.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> These are listed here: <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/equality/strategy-policies-and-guidance/>

## **Collaborative approach**

In 2016, York St John went through a significant change programme to support its vision of a distinctive and resilient university. The Equality and Diversity Steering Group was disbanded and the Executive Board has taken on strategic oversight of equality and diversity across the University. The Equality and Diversity Adviser (0.8fte) is now part of the University Secretary's Office, providing expert advice and promoting an inclusive culture through leading and co-ordinating a range of activities. Additionally, the Executive Dean Quality has a specific remit to promote equality and diversity. From September, aligning its approach with the new University structure, the Students' Union introduced an Equality and Diversity Zone. The zone provides a focussed opportunity at three points during the year for students to engage with their executive (and the University) on relevant issues; it is open to all students.

The Equality Champions continue to make a valuable contribution to the institutional culture of equality and inclusion, through sharing, challenging and celebrating. Their role will be reviewed in 2017 in order to improve the voice and visibility of the network in the new structure.

The staff networks contribute to the increased visibility of the diverse York St John community and continue to inspire and challenge the University's approach to inclusiveness. The LGBT Staff Network won Stonewall Yorkshire & Humber Network Group of the Year 2016 award and was Highly Commended in the WEI Staff Network category.

The Students' Union Vice President Equality and Diversity champions equality and diversity within the student body and provides a strong link between University and Union activities. To raise awareness of inequalities and encourage all Sports and Societies to foster an environment of inclusivity and tolerance, the Students' Union launched the #NotOnMyCampus (#NOOC) campaign in September. They have recruited representatives from Sports and Societies to support this agenda.

## **Legislative and policy context**

As a higher education institution, employer, service provider and a public authority, York St John University is committed to complying with equalities and human rights law, and, in particular, meeting the requirements of the public sector Equality Duty. The Duty requires us to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding

We also have a duty to publish equality objectives once every 4 years and to report annually on progress in relation to meeting the public sector Equality Duty. We publish this information through the equality portal on our website:

<https://www.yorks.ac.uk/equality/>.

There is an increasing emphasis in national policy on accountability for equality and diversity. For example, in 2016, the White Paper ‘Success as a Knowledge Economy’ set out the expectation that higher education institutions address disadvantage in access, participation, achievement and employability. The Teaching Excellence Framework requires us to show how we have worked systematically to identify and address any lower outcomes achieved by BME students and disabled students.<sup>3</sup> Guidance from the Office for Fair Access strongly emphasised the need for equality impact assessment and evidence-based interventions with evaluation.

Alongside this framework, Universities UK published recommendations with significant relevance to the equality, diversity and inclusion agenda, one on promoting social mobility and another on dealing with violence against women, harassment and hate crime. With regards to the latter, York St John has set up a Change the Culture Project Group to take forward the recommendations and has already made changes to its disciplinary procedures to reflect new sector expectations in handling cases relating to sexual assault.

The outcome of the EU referendum in June 2016 has been felt in terms of uncertainty amongst staff and students from other EU member states and reports of heightened sensitivities and an increase in hate incidents. The University has taken a strong stance on this, led by the Vice Chancellor, to reinforce the University’s commitment to fostering and maintaining good relations between members of our diverse community. This commitment is reflected in expected standards of behaviour for both students and staff members. We took the lead in organising a city-wide collaboration to send out a strong message of welcome to diverse residents and visitors, ‘York Celebrates Diversity’ on 15 October 2016, partly supported by lottery funding, and which was very well-received.

In September 2016, the Government introduced anticipated cuts to the Disabled Students’ Allowances. The University’s Inclusive Learning, Teaching and Assessment framework (see elsewhere in the report) responds to these changes.

### **Governing body’s responsibilities for equality and diversity**

The Higher Education Code of Governance sets out an expectation that governing bodies demonstrate their commitment to equality and diversity in all they do.

Governing Body engages in briefings on equality and diversity on a periodic basis. In April 2016, Governing Body received a briefing on the Prevent Duty in the context of the Equality Act duties. Following up on action identified through the Governance and Nominations Committee’s original analysis against the requirements of the Code, Governing Body engaged in unconscious bias training in November 2016.

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[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/556355/TEF\\_Year\\_2\\_specification.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/556355/TEF_Year_2_specification.pdf)

Governing Body may wish to consider what further knowledge in the area of equality and diversity members would like to develop.

The CUC Code places emphasis on the approach to recruiting diverse Governing Body members. From 2017, HEFCE requires information about diversity of governing boards.

HEFCE has set a target to achieve gender-balanced boards of between 40% and 60% to be either male or female for all English universities by 2020.<sup>4</sup> Currently 29% of Governing Body members at York St John University are female. The University is in a very small minority of institutions with women in its most senior positions of Chairman and Vice Chancellor.

The University's approach to appointment of governors and co-opted members is reviewed annually by the Governance and Nominations Committee and was last reviewed in September 2016. A range of media are used to advertise vacancies on the Board and its committees, usually including the Metro which has a wide reach. Diversity of applicants and Board members are monitored through an equality monitoring form completed on appointment.

## Quality

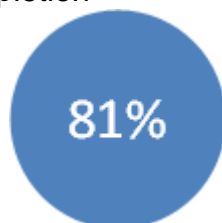
Key theme: Implement the Inclusive Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework

Disabled students  
Population



Disabled students made up 15.8% of our UK student population

Completion



81% of disabled students completed the 2015-16 year; the YSJ average was 84%

Attainment



59% of disabled students achieved a 1st/2:1; the YSJ average was 64%




Commentary: York St John is working to improve the learning and teaching environment and reduce reliance on expensive one-to-one support. As part of this, the University introduced an Inclusive Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework which consists of standards and resources to support academics. In autumn, all Subject Directors/Heads of Programme completed a self-assessment as part of the Annual Monitoring Reporting process. The benchmarking exercise revealed a need to raise the profile and understanding of the framework, and the Director of Academic Development will take this forward in 2017.

<sup>4</sup> <http://blog.hefce.ac.uk/2016/04/12/women-hold-just-one-fifth-of-senior-leadership-roles-in-higher-education/>

- The new Annual Monitoring Reporting template has equality and diversity firmly embedded into it so that it encourages Schools to consider equality and diversity and identify actions to address significant equality issues.
- Procedures for extensions (through Learning Support Plans or Mitigating Circumstances) have been firmed up in order to ensure equity and fairness.
- In April 2016, the University and the Students' Union ran a focus group with black and minority ethnic (BME) students. This led to positive changes. For example, students came together to form an African Caribbean Society which gives them a distinctive voice in students' engagement, and helps the University's work on promoting ethnic diversity.

## Community

Key theme: Promoting ethnic diversity at York St John University

BME Students 2015-16	BME Staff 2015-16	BME Staff at 1 November 2016
		
4.7% of our UK-based students (FPE) in 2015-16 identified themselves as an ethnic minority. This is up from 4.4% in 2014-15 but we are still amongst the least ethnically diverse universities.	4.2% of our staff (FPE) in 2015-16 identified themselves as Black and Minority Ethnic. Following the voluntary redundancy, this proportion increased slightly to 4.9% (at 1 November 2016). The national average is 8.5%.	

Commentary: We have seen very little change in ethnic diversity of our student and staff population, even though nationally the representation of ethnic minorities at universities has been increasing steadily, among UK students as well as staff. The University has recognised that targeted efforts are required to address this status quo. To develop momentum and support action to increase the proportion of BME students and staff at the University, the Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) facilitated a day of discussion with key groups in November 2016. This will develop into further work during 2017.




- Women fill 46% of academic leadership roles. While our target is 50%, our performance remains good. Although women are underrepresented amongst Professors (at 33%), our Associate Professor route is proving to be very successful in encouraging female colleagues to apply for promotion to Professor and Associate Professor.

- York St John University secured its place in the Stonewall Top 100 Workplace Equality Index for the third year running, as the only small university. We are now a Stonewall Global Champion.
- The University has introduced a Student Bullying and Harassment Policy and trained volunteer harassment advisers. We have good relationships with the University of York and North Yorkshire Police.
- The International Student Support team set up a Global Campus project, a student-led project to inspire internationalisation and engagement between UK and non-UK students. In 2016, they ran 9 sessions. This was made possible with a grant from the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA).
- The University supported the York City Wide Equality Network by providing facilities and running a disability equality and deaf awareness workshop. The Equality and Diversity Adviser also delivered a disability equality workshop in partnership with the York Branch of Federation of Small and Medium sized businesses for their members.

We have continued, throughout 2016, to take active steps to promote an inclusive culture at the University. Our 'Equality Elephant in the Room' series is a successful conversational approach to raising awareness of particular issues and providing a safe space for staff to ask questions. The success of our approach has been recognised by HEFCE who will be using it as a case study in a forthcoming publication on equality and diversity.

## Growth

Key theme: Promoting ethnic diversity at York St John University

BME Students Applications		
2014-15	2015-16	2016-17
		
The proportion of acceptances from an ethnic minority has increased (4.1% in 2014; 4.7% in 2015; 5.3% in 2016)		

Commentary: Despite the growth in the proportion of BME students accepted to the University, this has had little impact on the ethnic diversity of the student population. This may be because of lower completion rates, thus limiting the impact of the growth in intake. As part of the ECU's day of discussion, staff from the Student Recruitment and Marketing Directorate met to discuss a plan of action which will feed into the wider student recruitment strategy. Admissions staff have also attended an unconscious bias workshop run by the ECU which should help reduce adverse impact.

- To increase visibility of our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion beyond York St John, the University is building our external presence. For example, in September 2016, the Executive Dean Quality and the Head of Human Resources presented our work on advancing LGBT equality at the inaugural international conference ‘ LGBTQ Inclusivity in Higher Education’ in Birmingham, while the Equality and Diversity Adviser was invited to speak at the Stonewall Scotland Workplace conference in November about best practice in higher education. The University also hosted the launch of Pride on campus in 2016 and has an active annual role in LGBT History month.

## **Resilience**

Key theme: Determine effective ways to operationalise equality and diversity in the new University structure

In order to support scrutiny of equality impact information in relation to planning and decision-making, the University has an equality analysis process. In 2016, this was used to support the restructure of the organisation, and the development of a procurement framework. Both exercises identified equality impact and informed steps to ensure compliance with the Equality Act. For example, the job descriptions of senior academic roles were updated so that they are now explicitly accountable for equality, diversity and inclusion. There is nevertheless considerable work to do in 2017 to streamline and fully embed equality analysis.

- The University has introduced online unconscious bias training for all staff and made training mandatory for staff engaged with recruitment and selection in order to ensure a fair and equitable process. This should help the University attract and appoint people from different backgrounds who help make the organisation stronger.
- Working with the Equality and Diversity Adviser, the Director of Strategy and Planning has developed a student equality data dashboard which provides instant access to information related to protected characteristics (age, disability, gender, ethnicity, domicile) as well as socio-economic background. This will strengthen our capacity for intelligent impact assessment and decision-making and ongoing monitoring.

## **Outlook on 2017**

The new organisational structure and the strategic focus on key equality themes have put us in a better position to make a long-lasting and visible impact in 2017. The oversight role previously provided through the Human Resources Committee will be further enhanced through the People Committee’s remit to both champion and challenge the University’s record on inclusion.

- a. Our work to promote ethnic and cultural diversity will continue, through increasing our understanding of the opportunities and barriers to addressing under-



representation of Black and Minority Ethnic students and staff, and through taking steps to create an inclusive culture.

- b. Our new Internationalisation Strategy recognises the importance of developing an awareness, appreciation and understanding of different behaviours, cultures, values and belief systems. This will complement continuing work with staff and students to raise the profile and understanding of inclusive learning, teaching and assessment.
- c. We are working towards being a trans-inclusive institution, and through a project group will deliver revised policies and procedures that will underpin increasing support for trans staff and students and trans-visibility to the services we offer.
- d. We are reviewing our approach to ensuring that equality and diversity impact is considered throughout the University functions with the rigour the law requires.
- e. We will integrate equality and diversity messages into the Communications strategy, giving greater prominence to our ethos and values of inclusion and social justice.
- f. We will consolidate the 'York Celebrates Difference' campaign into a recognised brand.
- g. Our equality and inclusion commitment will inform the review of our institutional values to ensure they reflect what we stand for as a University now and how we want to be guided in our future decision making.