



Equality and Diversity Annual Report 2017

1. Introduction

York St John University is dedicated to providing an inclusive, accessible and welcoming environment which supports a diverse and culturally rich community.

We are proud of our growing reputation – in January 2018, York St John was ranked in the Top 25 of the Stonewall LGBT inclusive employers¹, while in April 2017 HEFCE highlighted our Equality Elephant in the Room programme as an example of sector-leading and innovative practice in equality and diversity². The contribution that our staff make to equality and diversity is being recognised too – Dr Nick Rowe, Associate Professor in Theatre and Director of Converge at York St John University received an MBE for services to mental health service users in Yorkshire and the North East.

The Higher Education Code of Governance³ requires governing bodies to “promote equality and diversity throughout the institution, including in relation to its own operation.” During 2017, Governing Body and its committees have received relevant reports (more about this below). This third Annual Report on Equality and Diversity provides a broad overview of progress on equality and diversity and specifically on the achievement of our equality objectives. Widening Participation has a strong equality aspect, both in terms of under-representation of groups with protected characteristics (BME, mature, disability) and in terms of intersectionality with socio-economic status. However this work is not detailed in this report.

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 2018. Details of student and staff equality data are available on the website: www.yorks.ac.uk/equality.

2. Key equality and diversity themes

Through a combination of strategic objectives and measures of progress and risk⁴, the University sets out to advance equality of opportunity for all students and staff. Within this context, three key themes shaped our work in 2017.

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

¹ <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/news/2018/stonewall-ranking-310118/york-st-john-ranks-high-amongst-uks-most-inclusive-employers.html>

² <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/news/2017/elephant-in-the-room-sessions-are-sector-leading/elephant-in-the-room-sessions-are-sector-leading.html>

³ <http://www.universitychairs.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Code-Final.pdf>

⁴ These are listed here: <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/equality/strategy-policies-and-guidance/>

3. Determining effective ways to operationalise equality and diversity in the University structure.

3. Collaborative structure

The **Executive Board** oversees the delivery of equality objectives. During 2017, this has included:

- Approval of a Trans Equality Policy
- Approval of Disability leave policy
- Scrutiny of student and staff data
- Supporting a range of events and networks, for instance the launch of York LGBT History Month in February and Disability Pride Weekend in December.
- Reviewing and developing the University values, with a strong focus on inclusion
- Communicating a message to all staff and, via Heads of School, to students about our expectations of inclusive language and behaviours.

Additionally, the **Deputy Vice Chancellor for Learning and Teaching** has a specific remit to promote equality and diversity, and this has raised the profile of equality and diversity within Schools.

The **Equality and Diversity Adviser** (0.8fte) is part of the University Secretary's Office, providing expert advice and promoting an inclusive culture through leading and co-ordinating a range of activities.

The **Students' Union** continues to enhance the York St John's inclusive environment – The **Students' Union President Wellbeing and Diversity** and the other two Presidents champion equality and diversity within the student body and provide a strong link between University and Union activities. For example, they've made a significant contribution to the Trans Inclusive Framework and the Building Healthy Relationships project (see below). The SU ran an inclusivity and diversity workshop to inform the SU Strategy, this was followed by the election of liberation officers (see below).

The **Equality Champions** continue to make a valuable contribution to the institutional culture of equality and inclusion, through sharing, challenging and celebrating. The intention was to review their role during 2017, in order to increase effectiveness, however due to competing priorities this review will now happen in 2018.

Additionally, **many staff members and students** are contributing their experiences and expertise in different areas. As part of this, the **staff networks** play an important role in increasing visibility of the diverse York St John community and inspiring and challenging the University's approach to inclusiveness.

4. 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/>.

The Higher Education and Research Act 2017 established a specific objective for the Office for Students in access, success and progression for all students, from all backgrounds. The detail will be published in February 2018, and will include a requirement for an access and participation plan and steps to protect freedom of speech and academic freedom.

The University was rated Bronze in the Teaching Excellence Framework. The way in which the TEF is designed and assessed has drawn the University's attention to differences in outcomes between disabled students and non-disabled students; and between male and female students. The Learning and Teaching Committee is investigating these issues, and exploring differences between schools and programmes to develop an evidence-based response. This work will support a future application and an improved outcome.

A new set of regulations which impose mandatory gender pay gap reporting obligations on employers have been introduced as part of the Equality Act 2010 (section 147). It is now a legal requirement for all relevant employers to publish their gender pay gap annually within one year of a proscribed snapshot date of the 31 March.

Sexual violence against women, harassment and hate crime remains high on the public agenda and, with HEFCE funding, York St John is collaborating with York College, IDAS and Survive to increase prevention and improve our response through the Healthy Relationships Project (see below). People Committee has received reports on the project.

From 21 March 2018, the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, Equality Challenge Unit and Higher Education Academy merge into new sector agency Advance HE.⁵ Reassurances have been offered that the provision of advice, guidance and training will continue as well as a firm commitment to the Equality Charters (Race, Athena SWAN).

The UK will leave the European Union on 29 March 2019, the impact on our students, staff and research is largely unknown. To help alleviate some of the uncertainty, Langleys delivered a briefing for staff from other EU countries and the University has facilitated legal advice for those wishing to seek citizenship ahead of Brexit.

5. Governing body's responsibilities for equality and diversity

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

In Spring, People Committee discussed a detailed progress report on equality and specifically considered how the University can use portfolio development to attract ethnically diverse applicants. The Finance and Capital Development Committee and the Foundation Committee expressed their support for refurbishment of the Chapel which will gain a multi-

⁵ <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/about-us/advance-he>

faith character. The latter committee reviewed the students' religion and belief profile, and students' engagement with the Chaplaincy.

The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education launched an Equality and Diversity toolkit⁶ to support Governors. 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 members. York St John uses a range of media to advertise vacancies on the Board and its committees, usually including the Metro which has a wide reach. In approving the appointments and re-appointments to Governing Body and committees, the Governance and Nominations Committee was mindful of the gender balance of Governing Body and chairs of committees. At the September meeting, they also agreed the use of LinkedIn and Diversity Jobs in order to increase reach. Diversity of applicants and Board members are monitored through an equality monitoring form completed on appointment. As in 2016, 29% of Governors are women. The University is in a very small minority of institutions with women in its most senior positions of Chairman and Vice Chancellor. A recent Board appointment brings professional expertise on engaging ethnic minority communities.

6. Quality

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

Disabled students		
Population	Completion	Attainment
In 2016-17, one in six students declared a disability (16.4%). This is an increase from 14.8% in 2015-16, and we have seen greater numbers coming forward in 2017-18.	93.3% of disabled students completed the 2016-17 year; the YSJ average for students with no known disability was the same.	64.4% of disabled students achieved a 1st/2:1; the YSJ average was 64.7% (UK only: 63.9% and 70.0% respectively)

Commentary: York St John has redesigned the holistic approach to enriching the experience of disabled students. The emphasis is on providing an inclusive learning and teaching environment for all, while offering support to individuals who need it. Alongside continued work to raise the profile and understanding of the Inclusive Learning, Teaching and Assessment Framework, a YSJ Learning Pathway has been developed in order to enable students to access support and study development faster, while reducing the need for expensive assessments and one-to-one support. This creates more opportunities for students to access Learning Support Plans and study development sessions. A hardship fund is available to students from low-income families who require a professional assessment in order to be eligible for DSA funded support.

⁶ <https://www.lfhe.ac.uk/en/programmes-events/governance/governor-eandd-toolkit-overview.cfm>.

- On 11 May, York St John hosted a fully booked national conference to discuss and learn about hands-on approaches to inclusive learning, teaching and assessment practices.
- The Equality Elephant in the Room programme continues to focus on offering the best educational experience to disabled and non-disabled students. In 2016-17 sessions focused on specific impairments and health conditions; in 2017-18 on holistic approaches.
- The Academic Development Directorate continues to foster inclusive learning and teaching practice through Professional Development, for instance embedded in the delivery of the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice for new academic staff and broader opportunities for all staff e.g. a workshop 'Learning and Unlearning Whiteness' delivered by colleagues at Liverpool John Moore University and University of Manchester.
- Academics from the Humanities, Religion and Philosophy School used Black History Month to showcase the educational enrichment of a diverse curriculum. They also wrote a blog about the benefits of decolonising the curriculum.⁷
- An Exceptional Circumstances policy has been introduced to ensure consistency in the application of extensions. It provides a clear distinction between exceptional circumstances and reasonable adjustments, seeking to safeguard equity and fairness.

7. Community

Strategy Pillar: Supporting a diverse and culturally rich community

Like many other universities, we have growing numbers of trans students coming forward, either before they start study or while they are with us. Anyone should be able to study, work and live in the gender identity they identify with, regardless of whether it matches the gender assigned at birth. However, we found that staff struggled to do the right thing and trans students (including those who identify as non-binary) were not getting the support they needed. Rigid procedures and a lack of staff awareness were identified as significant barriers to be addressed. A dedicated task and finish group was set up with a small group of people who could make the biggest impact, with outreach to staff with specific expertise, and consultation with staff, students and the local community. Students played a pivotal role in identifying the challenges and shaping the solutions. The result is a Trans Inclusive Framework, setting out policies and procedures and providing a guide to all our staff and students. The project has delivered positive change for students and staff, and has been recognised nationally, not least by the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index, but also through invitations to share our experience, for example at the national Equality Challenge Unit conference. In 2018, the focus is to fortify the foundations for a Trans Inclusive University.

Building Healthy Relationships

York St John submitted a successful bid to HEFCE for Catalyst funding for the Building Healthy Relationships project. The project aims to highlight the importance of healthy relationships, consent and respect through open dialogue within our student communities. It is run in partnership with York College, IDAS and Survive, with significant input by students as co-creators, campaigners and participants. We have created primary prevention resources, training and more accessible reporting mechanisms; in 2018 these should

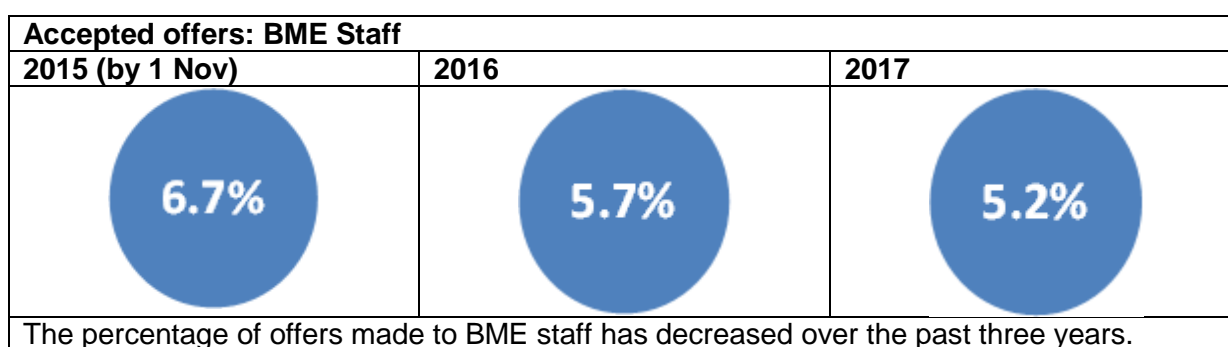
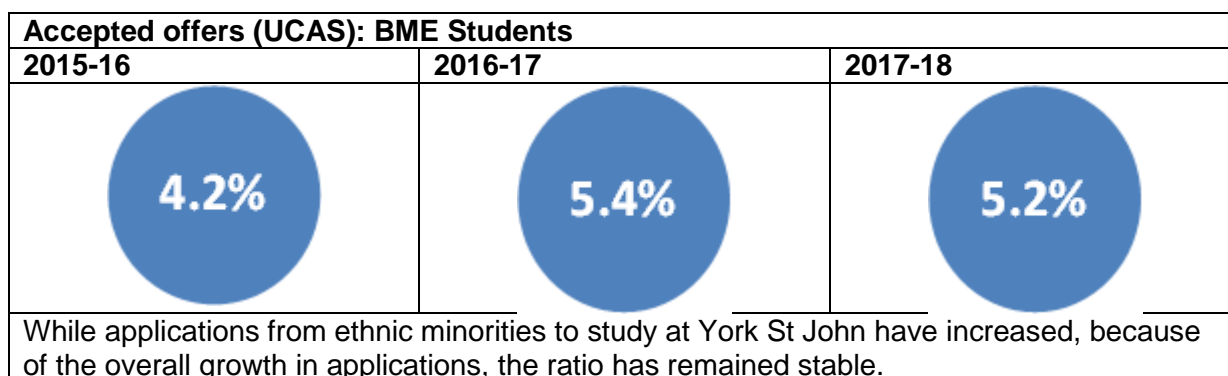
⁷ <https://blog.yorks.ac.uk/englishlit/whats-going-on-demystifying-decolonising-the-curriculum/>

manifest through strengthening prevention of sexual violence and harassment, encouraging reporting and effective provision of support. An annual survey will inform us of the impact of Building Healthy Relationships project.

- We are continuing to work on promoting gender balance and supporting women’s careers, by providing leadership, management and research development opportunities.
- We continue to engage with the local community, for example we hosted the launch of York LGBT History Month and Disability Pride weekend, while we offer space for faith celebrations, including Diwali. In October, we invited local organisations, York Racial Equality Network and York LGBT Forum alongside North Yorkshire Police to raise awareness of hate crime, how to report it and where to get support.
- The Students’ Union elected liberation officers as Senators: giving voice, visibility and peer support to under-represented groups (BAME; Disability; International; LGBTQ+; Postgraduate/Mature) and increased opportunities to socialise.

8. Growth

Key theme: Promoting ethnic diversity at York St John University



Commentary: The proportion of BME students and staff at York St John has seen little change over the years. It is disappointing to see the decline in offers to BME job applicants, despite the introduction of unconscious bias training in 2016.

During 2017, York St John focused on building of the capacity of staff to attract more ethnically diverse applicants, both in the student body and the workforce. The Equality Challenge Unit ran workshops for Human Resources and for student recruitment. The latter

was attended by Governor Mohammed Ali OBE. The Executive Director of Student and Staff Services, Head of Human Resources and Equality and Diversity Adviser attended training and conferences on advancing race equality in the workplace and in Higher Education.

- The Access Agreement and Marketing Strategy reaffirm our commitment to attracting more students from under-represented groups. This approach has seen us work more closely with internal and external colleagues to take a segmented approach to marketing, and a holistic review of all activities within our Access Agreement, including a university wide survey of Widening Participation activities.
- York St John has taken steps to increase diversity in marketing and student recruitment, for instance by targeting under-represented groups (LGBT, disability, BME) to apply for job opportunities (e.g. Student Ambassadors) and to participate in photoshoots. We also have greater visibility of our commitment to equality and diversity at Open Days and Applicant Days, through welcome talks and promotion materials. Visitors are encouraged to ask questions about equality, diversity and inclusion.

9. Resilience

Key theme: Determine effective ways to operationalise equality and diversity in the 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 which reflects national guidance. In 2017, the Equality and Diversity Adviser reviewed the process in order to increase its efficiency. As a result, a new approach will be introduced in 2018, which should better facilitate informed decision-making and monitoring in line with equality and human rights duties.

- We provide online courses on unconscious bias and for Equality and Diversity. Since December 2016, over 90% have completed Equality and Diversity, while over half of our staff have completed unconscious bias. Alongside this, unconscious bias workshops have been run for recruiters, 46 people have attended this, and a further session was run for the senior Leadership Teams.

10. Outlook on 2018

- Promoting ethnic diversity remains a priority area; the Executive Board has visited Governor's Mohammed Ali OBE organisation in Bradford; In 2018, recruitment will be audited by Human Resources, with the Pro Vice Chancellor Academic and a Senior Lecturer Human Resources Management in the York Business School; and we will be working with staff and students to better understand experiences and decide our direction.
- We will refocus our approach to inclusive Learning, Teaching and Assessment practice by considering the introduction of the principles of a universal design for learning.
- We are working to become a 'Positive on Mental Health' University.

- Gender Pay Gap data have been considered by the Executive Board and will be published before the end of March. There is Executive Board agreement to significantly reduce the gap by 2026.
- We will introduce a new approach to ensure that equality and diversity impact is considered throughout the University decision-making with the rigour the law requires.
- We will review the role of Equality Champions in relation to the University's strategic priorities.
- The Chapel will become a Chaplaincy Centre with provision for those of all faiths and none to meet, worship, reflect and socialise.
- The Students' Union will increase peer support and representation, through strengthening the role of liberation officers, supporting academic representatives and continuing to offer students a safe space to speak out about their University experience.

Our strategic commitment to equality and diversity will be underpinned by the development of an Equality, Diversity and Human Rights strategy. The strategy will reinforce our beliefs in fairness, inclusivity and social responsibility, and what they mean for everyone's role on a day-to-day basis.