**University of Leeds**

**Equality and Inclusion (E&I) Framework 2020-2025**

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## Our Equality and Inclusion vision

As an international, research-intensive university with a strong commitment to student education we will create an inclusive environment that attracts, develops and retains the best students and staff from all backgrounds from across the world and supports them in delivering their ambitions, contributing to our institutional strategic aims.

## Context for the framework

The foundation of our global community at the University of Leeds is equality of opportunity, respect, fairness and inclusion. These are vital enablers of the aspirations set out in our University Strategy 2020-30: ‘Making a Global Impact’.

One of our five University values is inclusiveness. We believe that every student, all our staff and other members of our community should be treated with dignity and mutual respect. We should all be part of a learning and working environment that is free from barriers, regardless of age, caring responsibilities[[1]](#footnote-1), disabilities, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity status, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation[[2]](#footnote-2).

As well as speaking to our core values, we know that enhancing equality and inclusion is advantageous on an individual and organisational level. It supports the wellbeing of our students and staff and improves the sense of belonging for everyone learning, studying or working at our University. This in turn encourages commitment, performance, creativity and innovation strengthened by a wider range of perspectives and experiences contributing to key decision making. By fully embracing and valuing equality and inclusion, our University will ensure its long-term relevance in a fast-changing world and our already considerable global reputation and impact will be further enhanced.

Our actions and commitments will need to be developed against the recognition that bias and discrimination have existed and still exist both in society and throughout higher education. Our University acknowledges our own responsibilities in this regard. We will address these issues locally and also seek to provide leadership and best practice more widely across the sector. We recognise that to achieve this there is a continuing need to build trust and engagement between our University and all our student and staff groups. We acknowledge that there are disadvantages and inequalities in accessing education, opportunities, experiences and outcomes for both students and staff. We know that we have further work to do to ensure we achieve a genuinely equal and inclusive environment and this framework commits us to this. We also know that delivering a genuine environment of this nature is the responsibility of everyone at our University.

## Our Equality and Inclusion commitments

In addition to complying with all our legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, the University will advance equality and inclusion by:

* providing an inclusive environment where everyone feels included and involved;
* ensuring that our strategies, policies and practices are inclusive to students and staff from all backgrounds;
* working in partnership with our students and staff to increase the engagement of the whole University community with equality and inclusion;
* providing a clear framework which enables any unwanted conduct, behaviour or practice to be reported and which assures our students and staff of a robust process of investigation and appropriate action;
* demonstrating senior leadership visibility and accountability for equality and inclusion.

As we develop and deliver on our Framework and the themes set out below there is a clear need to to focus further on intersectionality, recognising that people have multiple identities and providing tailored opportunities to enable every individual to be valued for their contribution at the University. We are also aware that there are newer areas of focus for the University and that the equality and inclusion landscape and associated language is continually evolving. We aim to work closely with our students and staff to ensure our work remains relevant and is communicated effectively.

## Our Equality and Inclusion themes

Building on the impact of our first Equality and Inclusion Framework 2014-2020, we can further advance our work through a comprehensive, whole institutional approach. In particular, through our new Framework we are committed to delivering on five equality and inclusion themes:

1. **Changing the culture and behaviours:** embedding equality and inclusion into all aspects of University business and strategy, thus promoting an inclusive University-wide culture in which students and staff from all backgrounds have a strong sense of belonging and can work creatively and innovatively to achieve their own and the organisation’s ambitions.
2. **Developing staff and the working environment:** attracting, supporting, developing and retaining a talented workforce with increased diversity at all levels of the organisation.
3. **Supporting students and student education:** attracting, supporting, developing and retaining students from both home and international communities, providing an inclusive research-led curriculum and enabling all our students to achieve their future study and career aspirations.
4. **Developing an inclusive research culture:** developing and implementing an inclusive research culture and environment.
5. **Providing an accessible infrastructure:** enhancing the physical and digital accessibility of our campus to increase opportunities and improve experiences for all.

## Engagement

We recognise that engagement and representation of staff from all backgrounds is important across our whole leadership and professional services communities and needs to be developed further to provide diversity of thought and experience to enable us to respond effectively to the complex local and global challenges we face.

We recognise that trust and collaborative working is at the heart of achieving these aims for our students, staff and the wider community and that work is needed to establish and strengthen these aspects with under-represented groups in particular.

The University is also a major local employer which engages in significant partnerships with institutions nationally and globally. We will seek to learn and share good practice with and from these partners and also where possible to influence the advancement of equality and inclusion in the wider societal context.

## Governance, prioritisation and responsibilities

The E&I Board (E&IB) provides overall oversight of our equality and inclusion activities on behalf of the University Council. The E&IB provides direction and guidance on the prioritisation of activities and areas of focus. The E&I Delivery Group (E&IDG) is charged with the development and delivery of action plans, providing assurance to the E&IB on progress.

The terms of reference and membership of the E&IB and E&IDG are set out in Annexes 1 and 2.

The relationship between the E&IB, E&IDG and the various other groups advancing and delivering E&I activity is represented diagrammatically in Figure 1. This shows the interactions between E&IB, E&IDG and the partnership relationships of the latter to the Staff Equality Networks, trades unions, Leeds University Union (LUU), the Faculty/Service E&I Committees and subcommittees or projects addressing E&I issues from the Boards of Senate, and the relationships to the main governance and executive structures of the University of Leeds (Council, Senate, University Executive Group).

Complex diagram visualising the relationships of E&I committees and groups

Activity relating to student education and research will also be developed through the Taught Student Education Board (TSEB), Graduate Board (GB) and the Research and Innovation Board (RIB). Close working between these groups and the E&IDG will ensure all activities remain aligned and coordinated.

Figure 2 summarises the individual responsibilities for equality and inclusion of members of various groups through to all individual staff and students.

Flowchart visualising the E& I governance responsibilies.

## Delivery: underpinning frameworks and action plans

Our activity will be taken forward through a series of specific, underpinning sub-frameworks addressing issues relating to race, gender, LGBT+ and disability.

These sub-frameworks and associated action plans will be developed and organised within the main E&I themes allowing integration of activities and enabling intersectional issues to be addressed effectively. The actions will be measurable, have clear ownership and will be prioritised with timescales and milestones for delivery.

Once the individual action plans have been developed, these will be integrated into an institutional E&I action plan and a series of high-level KPIs and targets will be identified for reporting to the E&IB.

The relationship between the overall institutional E&I Framework, the Themes and institutional reporting measures to the sub-frameworks, action plans and targets are summarised in Figure 3.

Complex flowchart visualising the E&I Framework, Themes and institutional reporting relationships

Our action plans will contribute to an improved culture that will directly support excellence in student education and research and innovation. They will also ensure our University is accessible and attractive to an increasingly diverse group of students and staff who have the talent, capability and commitment to succeed irrespective of their background and so lead to greater social cohesion.

## Associated policies and external frameworks

Alongside the work specified in this Framework, there are documents and policies such as the Code of Conduct on Professional Behaviour and Relationships, the Dignity and Mutual Respect Policy, and the Policy on Harassment and Sexual Misconduct. These documents detail our zero-tolerance approach to any unwanted behaviour or conduct and the reporting routes available to staff and students should any incidents occur. We encourage our students and staff to use these reporting routes, as we treat all complaints seriously and assure our students and staff of an impartial investigation and appropriate action and have undertaken to review these to ensure they are fully effective.

Outside the University, there are many external accreditations for advancing equality and inclusion work. Whilst we ensure our equality and inclusion commitments are the most appropriate for our University and deliver these with the confidence that these will stand external scrutiny, we aim to engage with appropriate external accreditations where we believe they support our efforts to deliver our Equality and Inclusion Framework 2020-25.

## Annex 1: E&IB Terms of Reference and membership

The terms of reference for the Equality and Inclusion (E&I) Board are to:

1. provide annual assurance to University Council that that the University is effectively discharging its E&I responsibilities and meeting the requirements of the Equality Act 2010;
2. ensure that reporting requirements and compliance with equality legislation and to professional, regulatory and statutory bodies are fulfilled;
3. approve the University’s E&I Framework 2020-25 ensuring that the strategic E&I priorities are aligned to the priorities/themes in the University Strategy;
4. set the direction for the E&I Delivery Group on UoL E&I priorities on a three-year timeframe and receive regular reports from E&IDG on the delivery of these;
5. approve the Equality Action Plans, developed by the Equality and Inclusion Delivery Group in support of the E&I Framework and priorities;
6. advise on the Student Education, Research & Innovation, and International E&I priorities, ensuring that these that are embedded within the respective strategies and periodic reports on progress on E&I priorities from each area are received;
7. ensure that E&I is embedded across all enabling UoL strategies and in all Faculty and Professional Services and to ensure that annual assurance reports on progress against the priorities outlined in the E&I Framework are received;
8. receive, consider, endorse or challenge any policy recommendations for change in practice at University level, considering the impact on University resources;
9. commission the E&I Delivery Group with required research to support acceleration of E&I progress through keeping abreast of best practice from the UK business and the HE sector and the evaluation of this within a UoL context;
10. be responsible for any E&I non-compliance issues arising at the University.

**Membership**

The Vice-Chancellor (Chair)  
Representative from University Council  
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (1 from DVC Research or Student Education or International)  
Chair of the Equality and Inclusion Delivery Group  
Head of Equality and Inclusion  
Director of Human Resources  
Director of HR Service and Organisational Change  
Director of Student Operations  
Executive Dean (1 to represent all Faculties)  
Chair of Inclusion and Engagement Strategy Group (if DVC for Student Education is not attending)  
LUU Union Affairs Officer  
Secretary to E&I Board (E&I Adviser, EPU (in attendance))

## Annex 2: E&IDG Terms of Reference and membership

The terms of reference for the Equality and Inclusion Delivery Group (E&IDG) are to:

1. ensure the delivery of the E&I priorities set by the E&I Board;
2. develop and deliver appropriate action plans to underpin the University’s E&I Framework 2020-25 and the individual race, gender, LGBT+ and disability equality frameworks;
3. provide assurance and report on progress to the E&I Board, highlighting any issues or risks;
4. ensure communication, alignment and collaboration with other services, groups and colleagues engaged in E&I activities across the University so as to advance the University’s overall E&I priorities in an effective and efficient manner;
5. propose the development, design and implementation of further E&I interventions, based on information gathered from equality data, student and staff surveys/focus groups, making suggestions to E&I Board, considering the impact on University resources, for approval and Group delivery;
6. evaluate pilot interventions and make recommendations for University- wide adoption, considering the impact on University resources;
7. contribute to University applications to external E&I accreditations co-ordinated by the Equality Policy Unit (EPU);
8. receive regular updates from faculties and professional services on their E&I priorities and activities, sharing best practice and/or challenge and, where appropriate, cascading across the University;
9. share good practice from partner and other external organisations and networks;
10. support the Equality Policy Unit in marking and celebrating agreed diversity events.

**Membership**

Chair – nominated by the Vice-Chancellor  
Director of HR Service & Organisational Change/HR Leadership Team member  
Head of Equality & Inclusion  
Chair of the Inclusion and Engagement Strategy Group  
Staff Network Chairs (1 rep per Network)  
Trade Union representatives (1 rep each for UCU, Unite and Unison)   
Faculty E&I Leads (1 per Faculty)  
Head of Student Support, Student Education Service  
Head of Leadership and Professional Practice, ODPL  
Head of Educational Engagement, Student Education Service   
Dean of the Leeds Doctoral College  
Senior representative from Research Innovation   
Service Senior representative from the Communications team  
Senior representative from Facilities Directorate  
Senior representative of IT Directorate  
Director of People, LUU  
LUU Equality and Diversity Officer  
Equality and Inclusion Advisers, (EPU)  
E&I Delivery Group Secretary (E&I Co-ordinator, EPU)  
Leeds Gender Framework and Athena SWAN Lead (co-opted)

1. University of Leeds specific characteristic [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)