UNIVERSITY OF FORWARD THINKING WESTMINSTER

APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI) COMMITTEE HELD ON WEDNESDAY 19 MARCH 2025 AT 2PM IN ROOM 351, REGENT STREET

PRESENT:	Professor D Anand (Co-Chair) Dr D Husbands (Co-Chair) R Begum (up to Minute 24.36) S Bunbury (up to Minute 24.34) D de Silva (up to Minute 24.35) Professor M Dwek Dr K Juddoo M Jula (from Minute 24.32) Y Kaplan	C Lloyd[1] (up to Minute 24.43) P Mashumba (up to Minute 24.37) C Molloy (up to Minute 24.43) S Owen C Peterson S Razzaq Dr C Robertson R Shah Dr N Weingarten
IN ATTENDANCE:	T Ashman (Minute 24.36) M Chan (Secretary) M Deshpande (Minute 24.36) E Lee (Observer)	E McMillan (Minute 24.44) M Medina Smith (Minute 24.32 to 24.34) M Ramos Peimbert (up to Minute 24.43) M Seyedsalehi (Minute 24.36)
APOLOGIES:	D Airan C Benyon J Boston Professor V Gillies	Dr C Smith J Smith S Thomas

24.30. ANNOUNCEMENTS

24.30.1. **Welcome:** The Co-Chair welcomed members and attendees to the meeting, including

- Yusuf Kaplan, newly elected Co-Chair of Faith, Spirituality and Belief Colleague Network.
- Michelle Medina Smith, observer from the Q+ Network.
- Rumy Begum, School EDI Lead representing Caroline Smith, School EDI Lead representative.

24.30.2. Members noted that Seagh Kehoe has stepped down as a Co-Chair of the Q+ Network and the Network is currently in the process of electing a new Co-Chair. The Committee thanks Seagh for their service.

24.30.3. **Apologies:** Members noted apologies as recorded above.

24.30.4. **AOB and starred items:** Members did not request to add any items to the agenda or to discuss the starred items.

24.30.5. **Declarations of interest:** The Co-Chair confirmed that there were no declarations of interest.

24.31. CO-CHAIRS' REPORT

24.31.1. The Co-Chairs provided an update on key activities and discussions since the last meeting:

- The EDI annual report 2023/24 was approved by the Court of Governors on 12 March 2025, with additional contents on the Access and Participation Plan (APP) initiatives and a commitment to include research and knowledge exchange (RKE) activities in future reports.
- Various EDI programmes and events were delivered under the 'Westminster for All' heading.

[1] Attended via Teams.

- The reporting line of the EDI (Education) Steering Group and its overlapping membership with the EDI Committee.

24.32. EDI PRIORITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR COLLEAGUE NETWORKS

24.32.1. The Network Co-Chairs provided an update on the activities, priorities and challenges faced by the Networks.

(a) **Black and Minority Ethnicity (BME) Network:** Good engagement in BHY programmes, e.g., Black History Year Create. A Network committee away day in June. New committee members appointed. Provided feedback on the EDI Strategy. Challenges include drawing up a job description for administrative support, sustaining members' interest, managing leadership/committee workload and expanding programmes for other ethnic minority groups.

(b) **Women of Westminster (WoW) Network**: Successful International Women's Day event to profile some women in the University to continue the conversation. Good engagement in the Elevating Futures programme, though a slight decline in student participation. Good progress on the work of the Menopause Working Group and work with the Athena SWAN team. Challenges include member engagement, and leadership workload and succession.

(c) **Colleague Disability Network**: Good engagement with the Disability Policy and Practices Working Group and the Physical Accessibility Group. Reviewed the new disability-related module. Provided feedback on colleague disability information on SharePoint and the EDI Strategy. New events planned for May and June 2025 including contributing to the Challenging Racism Conference. Facilitated real life examples of situation discussions with the People Culture and Wellbeing (PCW). Challenges include raising disability awareness among academic colleagues and students, while continuing to strengthen engagement with Professional Services (PS) colleagues.

(d) **Q+ Network**: Leadership elections are underway and thanks to the EDI team for their support in the process and the job descriptions. Ongoing regular Q+ events with improving engagement. PRIDE march participation to be confirmed. 14 applications for the student empowerment programme. Welcoming event for new members and mentoring programme. Challenges include workload pressure, particularly as all committee members are from PS with some working in a same small team.

(e) **Faith, Spirituality and Belief Colleague Network** (Document EDI 250319A)**:** Interactive discussions within and across Networks. Planned audit of beliefs among members. ParliaMentor programme for students with diverse faiths.

24.32.2. To drive research and EDI engagement, Miriam Dwek, Chair of the RKE EDI Subcommittee invited the Network Co-Chairs for individual open meetings. A member noted that this could align with the current initiative of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (RKE) in advancing work around PS colleagues conducting research.

24.32.3. A member noted that the University has recently adjusted its timetable which should align with state school half-term schedules, particularly those in London, as part of its commitment to supporting EDI.

24.32.4. To address the engagement concerns:

(a) Members suggested raising Networks' profiles through 'Welcome to Westminster' and 'Market Place' for new colleagues, and the EDI Open Forum for all colleagues. The Co-Chair also emphasised the importance of the Network Co-Chairs serving as role models for learning.

(b) The Network Co-Chairs requested a review of the EDI and Colleague Networks slide deck for 'Welcome to Westminster' event.

(c) Networks colleagues are encouraged to promote the Networks through personal interactions with new colleagues at the ‘Market Place’, along with small souvenirs to foster engagement.

(d) Members noted that the EDI team is currently designing a SharePoint page featuring the University’s EDI commitments, information about all Networks and student activities, aiming for a September 2025 launch.

24.32.4.1. **ACTION Associate Director (Organisational Development)** to share the EDI and Colleague Networks slide deck for ‘Welcome to Westminster’ event with Network Co-Chairs for updating.

24.32.5. The Co-Chair noted that engagement and workload are common challenges of the Networks, linked to members’ commitment and leadership, and these issues are prevalent in EDI teams at other universities.

24.32.6. In response to a query on profiling women at the University, the WoW Co-Chair explained that the profiles focus on those with notable achievements while also supporting those seeking career advancement and addressing barriers. The Co-Chair suggested including those with incremental achievements to inspire others and encourage progress.

24.32.7. A Network Co-Chair reminded members that most Networks’ work, like Black History Year Create, involves broad efforts with no immediate visible outcomes.

24.32.8. The Co-Chair emphasised the importance of information sharing and learning among Networks including identifying key lessons from successful Network programmes for adoption across Networks and sharing Network leadership job descriptions to ensure consistent role expectations.

24.32.8.1. **ACTION EDI Officer** to reach out to Network Co-Chairs to gather and share key learnings.

24.32.9. The Co-Chair thanked all Network Co-Chairs for their dedication and valuable contributions to the development of the Networks.

24.33. REFRESHED EDI STRATEGY

24.33.1. The EDI Manager presented the draft refreshed EDI Strategy (Document EDI 250319B) for approval; prior extensive consultation has already taken place through roadshows.

24.33.2. The EDI Manager invited members to provide further feedback on several areas, with a particular focus on the newly developed EDI vision, which sets out the University’s strategic direction for EDI. Key areas for input include:

(a) The EDI vision.
(b) Target setting, especially for increasing diversity in senior leadership and other measurable impact options.
(c) Internal-first recruitment and its implication for workforce diversity.
(d) Coverage of APP and RKE.
(e) Expected timeframe for intersectional analysis and the specific intersections.
(f) Workload consideration for PS colleagues involved in EDI work beyond Performance Development Review (PDR).
(g) The use of the language of ‘belonging’ in the Strategy.
(h) Expanding the list of sexual orientations and gender identities to encourage colleague disclosure.

24.33.2.1. **ACTION All members** to provide additional feedback on the refreshed EDI Strategy to the EDI Manager by 26 March 2025.

24.33.2.2. **ACTION EDI Manager** to circulate the revised draft EDI Strategy to members for noting before submission to the University Executive Board (UEB).

24.33.3. Members discussed the internal-first recruitment approach, recognising the need to balance colleague development and progression with long-term diversity goals.

24.33.4. To encourage colleague disclosure an observer suggested highlighting the benefits of feedback on specific characteristic questions. The Co-Chair cautioned that failing to connect these benefits might reinforce misconceptions.

24.33.5. Members discussed the use of 'option list' in personal characteristics related questions to encourage disclosure, including focusing on prevailing characteristics while sensitively capturing less dominant ones, sharing positive experiences from using open-ended questions, clarifying the options go beyond those defined by the Equality Act, and the value of the data in identifying gaps in the Athena SWAN and Mental Health Charter analysis.

24.33.6. The Co-Chair emphasised that an EDI Strategy should drive change and signal the University's intent to do so, highlighting the need for moderating principles in the Strategy to ensure that the EDI vision is both realistic and achievable.

24.33.7. Regarding intersections, the Co-Chair noted that under the Equality Act, the University is legally required to protect the protected characteristics and must be transparent if this is not possible due to resources constraints or other factors.

24.33.8. A member suggested consulting students through the Student Opinion Panel, organised by the Senior Institutional Research Analyst, in addition to the Students' Union.

24.33.9. Members noted that the draft EDI Strategy has been widely circulated for consultation and feedback received. The Co-Chair encouraged feedback to focus on the strategic aspects, highlighting that the Strategy will align closely with practices and lived experiences.

24.34. CULTURAL COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK

24.34.1. Pela Mashumba, Associate Director of Organisational Development (OD) sought members' view on the best approach to engage colleagues in discussions on the cultural competency framework, noting that some universities use focus groups and surveys, while others engage through committees.

24.34.2. A member cautioned against survey fatigue, given the upcoming questionnaire exercises from the RKE Office and the Athena SWAN self-assessment team.

24.34.3. Members noted that the University had previously worked on the Culturally Sensitive Curriculum Scales, but no subsequent initiatives have been rolled out.

24.34.3.1. **ACTION Director, Students and Academic Services and the Colleague Disability Network Co-Chair** to share the University's previous work on Culturally Sensitive Curriculum Scales with the Associate Director (OD) and the EDI Manager.

24.34.3.2. **ACTION Associate Director (OD) and EDI Manager** to advise the Committee on the next steps for developing a cultural competency framework, building on the University's previous work.

24.34.4. A member suggested reviewing previous meeting minutes to better understand the Committee's past work. The Co-Chair noted that all meeting minutes are available online and the workshop at the end of the meeting would further enhance the Committee's effectiveness.

24.35. RESPONSES TO THE EDI QUESTIONS IN THE PDR

24.35.1. The Associate Director (OD) presented the aggregated, anonymised responses to the EDI questions in the PDR (Document EDI 250319C), which were manually extracted from a large database and grouped thematically.

24.35.2. A member suggested sharing the response summary more widely, e.g., with the Athena SWAN self-assessment team and working groups, and Heads of Colleges and Schools, to support University-wide initiatives, avoid duplication of efforts and close the loop on follow-up actions.

24.35.3. In relation to colleagues' responses on family, caring responsibilities and bereavement policies, Caragh Molloy, Director of PCW, noted that proposed enhancements to family-friendly benefits will be submitted to UEB at the end of the month.

24.35.4. Members acknowledged the need to support colleagues who expressed negative experiences in the summary report.

(a) The Co-Chair suggested sharing the refined polices, such as the enhanced family-friendly benefits, at the Executive and Operational Leadership Forum (EOLF) and with Heads of Colleges and Schools.

(b) The Director of PCW noted that the PDR is a private conversation between a colleague and their line manager, and any negative incidents reported in the PDR should have been addressed through appropriate channels.

24.35.5. A member queried whether responses could be identified by School to enable targeted support and follow up actions. The Associate Director (OD) agreed to consider this suggestion.

24.35.6. The Associate Director (OD) confirmed that all EDI and wellbeing training sessions listed on page 11 were requested by colleagues for professional development.

24.35.7. The Co-Chair suggested highlighting key policy aspects to improve colleagues' understanding of the relevant policy, and another member proposed adding audiovisual support for policy reading.

24.35.8. The Co-Chair noted reference to instances of student aggression in the summary and recommended that the University should address the issue.

24.35.9. The Co-Chair thanked the Associate Director (OD) and the team for their hard work in compiling this first in-depth thematic report, which provides valuable EDI insights.

24.36. EDI AND EMPLOYMENT

24.36.1. Monica Deshpande, Head of Employability and Graduate Success (EGS), and Tom Ashman, Business Engagement Project Manager presented on Employability and the APP (Document EDI 250319D), highlighting evidence-gathering initiatives to support APP identified student groups.

24.36.2. In response to a query about the Index of Multiple Deprivation data, the Head (EGS) noted that it is provided by the Strategy, Planning and Performance (SSP) department.

24.36.3. Regarding the identification of at-risk students, the Head (EGS) explained that this could be based on student self-identification and the data provided by SSP.

24.36.4. The Co-Chair thanked the team for their efforts to provide targeted employability programmes to the APP identified student groups.

24.37. EDI AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

24.37.1. The International Students Champions – Edgar Lee, Melissa Ramos Peimbert and Maryam Seyedsalehi presented on EDI and international students (Document EDI 250319E).

24.37.2. Members noted the following in addition to the presentation:

- An international student experience survey is underway, with results expected in July 2025.
- Engagement efforts include signposting University services and collaborating with EDI Interns and EDI Student Champions on events and training.

- Programme attendance is around 50% of those who signed up.
- Podcast interviews with the Law School to support student employability.
- The International Student Champion role fosters connections between home and international students, promoting a sense of belonging.

24.37.3. The Co-Chair commended the impressive number of events held over the past year and the strong student engagement in advancing EDI on a global scale. The Co-Chair also encouraged Colleges and Schools to collaborate with the student champions and interns to further enhance student experiences.

24.38. EDI ACCREDITATIONS

24.38.1. The Chair of the RKE EDI Subcommittee reported that the preparation for the Athena SWAN application is on track and provided the following updates:

- Regular meetings of the self-assessment team and working groups across four domains.
- Focus group discussion with colleagues scheduled for July 2025 and students in Autumn 2025.
- Secondary data analysis is underway.
- The Good Practice Working Group is reviewing four scenarios, including gender inclusivity and curriculum.
- Integrating existing leadership and mentorship training for greater effectiveness.
- Accreditation application submission expected by July 2026.

24.38.2. The Chair of the RKE EDI Subcommittee highlighted the connection between the Athena SWAN application and the efforts to enhance research culture, emphasising the importance of streamlining processes and building on existing knowledge to maximise benefits across domains.

24.39. UPDATES ON MEMBERS' EDI ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE THE COMMITTEE

24.39.1. Members, other than the Network Co-Chairs who had spoken earlier, were invited to share their on-going activities to strengthen EDI efforts in the wider University community, as the Network members had already updated on their work under EDI Priorities and Challenges for Colleague Networks (Minute 24.32).

24.39.2. Members noted the progress of various events and activities, including the Women in Higher Education Network (WHEN) programme, the Students' Union election, Africa Day, International Students Conference and annual conferences like the Challenging Racism Conference and the EDI Open Forum.

24.39.2.1. **ACTION EDI Officer** to share the links of the annual conferences with members via the Committee Secretary.

24.40. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

24.40.1. **AGREED** Members confirmed the minutes of the meeting of 5 February 2025 (Document EDI 250319F) as an accurate record.

24.40.2. Members noted progress on actions from previous meetings (Document EDI 250319G) and confirmed the completed items.

24.41. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

24.41.1. Members did not raise any other matters for discussion.

24.42. SCHEDULE OF BUSINESS 2024/25

24.42.1. Members noted the updated schedule of business 2024/25 (Document EDI 250319H).

24.43. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

23 July 2025
1 October 2025
28 January 2026
8 April 2026
15 July 2026

All meetings take place between 2pm and 5pm and are held in person.

24.44. A WORKSHOP ON GOVERNANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS AS A COMMITTEE

24.44.1. As a follow-up action to the discussion of the EDI Committee effectiveness review 2023/24 outcomes report at the meeting on 19 October 2024, members participated in a development workshop led by Elaine McMillan, Clerk to the Court of Governors and Head of University Governance, and Clare Peterson, EDI Manager. The Co-Chairs thanked Elaine for this workshop.