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# Equality, diversity and inclusion showcase



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LONDON  
HIGHER



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## ABOUT LONDON HIGHER

London Higher is the representative body for nearly 50 universities and higher education colleges across the capital. We are committed to raising the voice of London's higher education and research sector and ensuring our members are making the London higher education experience the best it can be for students and staff from around the world.

# INTRODUCTION

The hyper-diversity of London's higher education institutions (HEIs) is both a point of pride and a challenge. Research from AccessHE projects that students of non-white ethnic backgrounds will make up 74% of those entering higher education (HE) in 2030. The richness of the sector lies in its diverse body of students and staff, but it is both the responsibility and privilege of the capital's HEIs to accommodate, harness and champion these communities to best serve this body and be leaders in creating a fairer and more equitable society in higher education and beyond.

Identities and the challenges arising in relation to them are complex and require solutions that address their intersectional nature. While this showcase primarily breaks down case studies and initiatives into more specific foci – addressing protected characteristics like gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, disability or religion, or types of interventions such as decolonisation projects – this intersectional element remains of paramount importance. The greater the attention and care given to the complexity of identities, the better HEIs can equip themselves to address the real strengths and unique needs of their students and staff. Although Dr Richard Vytņiorgu's recent HEPI Policy Note on 'Student belonging and the wider context' has raised valid concerns about the dangers of overemphasising difference to the detriment of a sense of belonging within HEIs, the value of effective EDI work in fostering a sense of belonging, as well as improving equitable attainment and outcomes, should not be underestimated. Difference should not be marked as more important than commonality, but neither should it be suppressed or ignored.

As well as celebrating and sharing the existing, imminent, and ongoing work of London HEIs, this showcase aims to mark where the sector stands in its journey towards more equal, diverse, and inclusive practices: recognising strengths and addressing shortcomings.

# LONDON HIGHER'S EDI SHOWCASE

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Showcase was initially conceived as a response to ministerial scepticism of equality initiatives, such as Advance HE's Race Equality Charter and the Athena Swan Charter, in the summer of 2022. While the HE landscape has witnessed further turbulence (and three HE ministers) in the five months since, the 'war on woke' has persisted as a dominant conversation in higher education and beyond. The EDI Showcase seeks to positively champion EDI work within the context of challenging discussions around free speech, belonging and the 'culture wars'.

The following EDI case studies demonstrate the potential of London's institutions as leaders in striving for better equality, diversity, and inclusion within and beyond the sector. After showcasing these projects, initiatives, and commitments, this report makes a number of recommendations for HE providers to ensure that their institution is maximising the potential of the hyper-diversity in the capital as well as responding to the challenges it poses.

Many policies, working groups, access and participation initiatives, task forces, strategies and larger charters or initiatives have not been included in this showcase or are mentioned only as compiled statistics. This work is extremely valuable and important but does not fall within the central remit of the showcase, which aims to present work that is innovative, under-represented or a particularly good example of its type of initiative.

# DECOLONISING WORK

Decolonising work in HE varies in terms of approach, strategy, and aim. However, it is widely understood to involve a conscious move away from Eurocentrism and colonial logics of domination by reforming the epistemic, political, and pedagogical elements of education. This may involve more diverse reading lists and course content, reformed teaching methods and approaches, and new or renewed criticism of the power structures behind how we make and reinforce knowledge systems. Several of London Higher's members have decolonisation initiatives, some of which are detailed below.

## BRUNEL UNIVERSITY LONDON

### Liberated library

In collaboration with the Union of Brunel Students, Brunel University funded and undertook a project to diversify the library. New books were offered by authors from the global south, people of colour, female, LGBTQ+, and disabled authors.

## LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

### Decolonising academic practices

London Metropolitan University's decolonising work falls within its Race Equity Strategic Plan and focuses on 'challenging the institutional hierarchy and monopoly on knowledge', rather than centring diversification. It aims to decolonise the university through a reformation of learning and teaching, recruitment and promotion practices and a larger cultural change. One year on, it has announced new Black Studies Modules, 95% of academic staff have completed the Education for Social Justice Framework training, and work is also underway to address and contextualise the awarding gap. This initiative is particularly notable for including progress updates, allowing for an enhanced level of accountability and the opportunity to see the impacts of such work.

# LONDON SCHOOL OF HYGIENE AND TROPICAL MEDICINE

## Decolonising Global Health (DGH-LSHTM)

DGH-LSHTM is an independent community of students, staff and alumni working to decolonise global health and to address racial inequalities both within and outside LSHTM. Their activities are organised into six workstreams, ranging from engagement with senior leadership and advancement of research equity to internal/external advocacy and events – updates and DGH-related resources are regularly shared via social media and monthly newsletters. Volunteers also represent DGH-LSHTM on university-wide EDI initiatives and, in 2021, they held an informal open discussion of the Independent review to address discrimination and advance anti-racism and equality at LSHTM.

Recent and future events organised by the group include:

- **Walking with Giants** – an open discussion series to enable staff, students and others to explore the works of key thinkers in decolonial theory, from Paulo Freire and Audre Lorde to Aimé Césaire.
- **Decolonising Global Public Health Journal Club** – a fortnightly discussion series aiming to introduce key papers on colonialism, racism, partnerships/research collaborations and educational practices.
- **Series of relaxed film screenings** and discussion of films exploring decolonial theory and global health practice.

# LONDON SOUTH BANK UNIVERSITY

## Decolonising the curriculum

London South Bank University is aiming to become an 'actively antiracist' institution through work such as the implementation of their 'Decolonising Vision'. This includes a critical assessment, review and revision of academic practices, processes, and resources across the provider. The initiative draws upon the University of Bristol's three pillars of decolonising the university (designed by Professor Leon Tikly): decolonising the curriculum, democratising the university, and decolonising research.



## SOAS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

### **Decolonising SOAS**

Decolonising SOAS is a hub for research, collaboration, and information on the decolonisation of HEIs. The working group holds regular meetings and events, and has developed a Learning and Teaching Toolkit for Programme and Module Convenors, as well as other resources on decolonising learning and teaching.

## UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS LONDON

### **UAL Decolonising Arts Institute**

The UAL Decolonising Institute is a 'decentred, disruptive, evolving and porous space' that challenges coloniality through critically engaging with ways of creating knowledge and studying global and local decolonising movements.

### **Decolonising the curriculum**

As part of its Anti-Racism Action Plan, UAL has committed to auditing online resources, encouraging student-led decolonising action, and decolonising the curriculum through re-evaluating pedagogical approaches, setting decolonising key performance indicators (KPIs) and increasing investment in a greater diversity of curriculum resources and materials.

# DISABILITY

Disability has seen extremely varied engagement across HEIs both within and beyond the London Higher membership. Almost three-quarters (72%) of London Higher's membership body are part of the Disability Confident employer scheme, with 80.6% of committed employers holding 'Employer' or 'Leader' status. Positively, in terms of student support, most member institutions have a disability service of some kind, provide links to the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA) and have provisions for altering examination conditions for disabled students. However, engagement with disability support varies widely outside of this, and it is apparent that this is an area which will require greater attention going forward, especially regarding support for disabled staff.

## BRUNEL UNIVERSITY LONDON

### **Assistive Technology Centre**

The Assistive Technology Centre (ATC) provides disabled students with a quiet working area equipped with assistive technology that does not need to be pre-booked but prioritises access for disabled students. The assistive technology can also be borrowed by students.

### **Sensory room**

This controlled multisensory environment is primarily accessible to disabled students and is intended to help those who are neurodiverse, have mental health difficulties or sensory processing issues. Through sensory stimulation or reduction, these students may benefit both in terms of wellbeing and their ability to learn.

## GOLDSMITHS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

### **Assistive Technology Centre**

The Assistive Technology Centre (ATC) at Goldsmiths, University of London is an open-access computer room specifically intended for disabled students. All computers in the ATC are equipped with assistive software, such as text-to-speech and dictation software.

### **Disability careers mentoring scheme**

This careers mentoring scheme is specifically intended for undergraduate students with disabilities. It aims to help students with preparing for careers, transitioning to the workplace and for other postgraduate experiences. Mentors on this scheme share industry knowledge, provide advice for applications or interviews, and help mentees to develop contacts, identify useful resources, and build their confidence.

## **IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON**

### **Calibre**

Calibre is a staff development programme for staff who identify as neurodiverse, disabled or have a long term mental or physical health condition. This programme centres the social model of disability and aims to increase the representation of disabled staff in leadership roles.

## **ROYAL CENTRAL SCHOOL OF SPEECH AND DRAMA**

### **Performance making diploma for learning disabled and autistic adults**

This diploma provides the opportunity for learning-disabled and autistic artists to engage in a two-year performance-making course with bespoke training suited to the diverse needs of students. The course is run in partnership with the disabled theatre company, Access All Areas, and has financial support available for course fees.

# UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH

## STAART initiative

Previously known as the AccessAbility Project, [this initiative](#) supports students with a disability, long-term health condition, specific learning difficulty (SpLD) and/or mental health condition in transitioning to and then studying at university. STAART provides information, guidance, and support to students from the local area (from Year 11 upwards) and within the University of Greenwich.

## Principles of disability

The [STAART Principles of Disability](#) (SPOD) aim to create an environment that is more disability-friendly for students, staff and visitors. Created by students, graduates and staff who have identified as disabled, the principles define the meaning of disability as well as providing greater insight into lived experience for a more holistic understanding of disability.

# UNIVERSITY OF WEST LONDON

## BSL and deaf awareness work

An individual at the University of West London has run a programme to teach British Sign Language (BSL) to staff and students in the institution's community and raise awareness around deafness. This has been carried out using [social media platforms](#) such as Instagram.

# RACE AND ETHNICITY

Race equality has been a particularly active area of work in recent years, especially following the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020. Following these protests, many HEIs expressed a renewed commitment to race equality work, with 60.5% of London Higher members receiving [Race Equality Charter accreditation](#), including Bronze awards.

Whilst there is undoubtedly still further work to do, especially with regard to long-term initiatives and embedding EDI work across institutions, the London Higher membership have made a positive commitment to race equality with projects and initiatives such as the following.

## BIRKBECK UNIVERSITY LONDON

### Diversity100 PhD studentships

These [studentships](#) seek to address the under-representation of Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups in research. A number of these are awarded annually, covering all tuition fees and providing a stipend. These are available across a diverse variety of departments and disciplines.

## CITY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

### Student attainment project

This [project](#) aims to address degree-awarding gaps between different groups of students, such as between white students and students from Black, Asian, and minority ethnic backgrounds. It aims to address this gap through working with students and staff collaboratively. As of December 2022, the outputs of this project have included: the development of an [Inclusive Curriculum Development Framework](#), a [Student Data Sharepoint](#) and [decolonising work](#).

## GOLDSMITHS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

### **BAME\* mentoring scheme**

This mentoring scheme pairs students and alumni to support undergraduate students from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background. The central aim of the scheme is to prepare undergraduates for post-university employment and help them to pursue their desired career path.

## IMPERIAL COLLEGE LONDON

### **IMPACT**

IMPACT (Imperial Positive About Cultural Talent) is a talent development programme designed for staff who identify as being from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background. IMPACT aims to increase confidence, career prospects, and leadership skills as well as providing the opportunity for staff to widen their professional networks and receive one-to-one mentoring.

## KINGSTON UNIVERSITY LONDON

### **ELEVATE**

ELEVATE is a careers programme supporting students of Black African or Black Caribbean descent. The accelerator programme aims to empower and upskill students, working with partner employers and organisations to work towards racial equity. Participants will have access to industry-related panel events, employer insight days as well as the opportunity to take part in interviews with social media influencers and industry experts.



# LONDON METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

As well as its Decolonising Academic Practices scheme, London Metropolitan University has a range of initiatives and programmes as part of its larger [Race Equity Strategic Plan](#) including the following:

## **Culture change: Inclusive behaviours programme**

- *Inclusive behaviours programme:* This is a staff development programme including privilege and anti-racism training and complemented by the new [Professional Behaviours Framework](#) which outlines the behaviours expected of staff regarding inclusivity. Senior managers undertake on-going professional development and immersion activities in race awareness.

## **Fixing the pipeline: A generation missing in action and fair recruitment, selection and progression**

- *A generation missing in action:* This campaign aims to diversify the academic pipeline in response to the institution's findings about its own underrepresentation of young Black academics. The campaign focuses on early career academics including post-doc fellowships. It also includes the development of an apprentice lectureship scheme.
- *Fair recruitment, selection and progression:* This measure seeks to implement the recommendations of the [MacGregor-Smith Race Review](#) (2017) to ensure diverse interview panels and reject non-diverse shortlists. The approach is based on positive action for a representative workforce, developing interview questions and scenarios that assess candidates' capability to work in a multicultural organisation as well as providing career development opportunities for Black and minoritised staff.

## Equity in Education: Education for social justice framework and racial justice programmes

- *Education for Social Justice Framework:* This framework incorporates critical race theory and 'emancipatory pedagogic approaches' to facilitate the co-design and enhancement of curricula with students. This will allow students to develop a capacity for inclusive leadership. This framework also works to ensure that student services provide culturally-appropriate provision staffed by inclusion experts.
- *Racial justice programmes:* These programmes involve the development of Black and racial studies modules for all students to learn about the history of race in London and Britain as well as global migration.

## ST MARY'S UNIVERSITY TWICKENHAM

### Be SMART

This careers programme is aimed at students from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. It is comprised of three key activities: a leadership and professionalism programme; one-on-one mentoring from industry professionals; and a paid, flexible micro-internship of 30-hours work. St Mary's University, Twickenham founded this programme based on the lower rates of industry-specific work experience for graduates from these backgrounds as well as other career-related inequalities.

## THE INSTITUTE OF CANCER RESEARCH

### Race equality and cultural heritage forum

This forum provides a space to discuss issues and push for initiatives that can help promote diversity and drive greater equality in the workplace. Jointly run by the ICR and the Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust, the forum hosts talks, lunches, and meetings as well as a seminar series with speakers who share their career insights and experiences.

## THE PLACE

### Partnership with Akademi

As part of its [Equality and Diversity Action Plan](#), The Place has engaged in a number of partnerships for improving diversity in dance. One of these partnerships is with [Akademi](#), an organisation promoting South Asian dance, to support artists who work with South Asian dance to present their work and contribute to improving diversity in the discipline.

## SOAS, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

### Black Student and Staff Forum (BSSF)

This [forum](#) provides a space to acknowledge and draw on the collective experience of working and studying at SOAS. The University also uses the forum as a consulting body for learning about the experiences of Black staff and students at SOAS.

### Ebony initiative

This [programme](#) seeks to increase the pipeline of Black scholars progressing to PGT and PGR degrees, as well as academic positions in UK HE. Approaches in this initiative including academic skills building sessions, community building spaces, career mentoring, and funding support and guidance.

## UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON

### Social Transformation and Advocacy through Research (STAR)

This [UKRI-funded project](#) aims to help global majority students from backgrounds of socioeconomic disadvantage or deprivation by developing pathways to engagement in research career routes. This includes the creation of an '[innovative research training programme](#)' based on antiracist principles.

## MULTIPLE INSTITUTIONS

### **B-MEntor academic mentoring scheme**

This cross-institutional mentoring schemes is for academics and researchers from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds to receive career advice and strengthen and expand their networks. The scheme also aims to improve representation and reduce isolation.

### **B-MEntor professional mentoring scheme**

This scheme is broadly similar to the academic mentoring scheme, but highlights career advice and is intended for staff in professional services roles.

Participating institutions for both of these schemes include:

- London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
- Queen Mary, University of London
- St George's, University of London
- UCL
- University of the Arts London

## LONDON HIGHER'S GLOBAL MAJORITY MENTORING PROGRAMME

The Global Majority Mentoring Programme is London Higher's flagship initiative that seeks to improve career progression for global majority academic and professional services staff by facilitating a one-to-one mentoring relationship between colleagues from different institutions. This broadens pan-London collaboration and gives mentees a space to seek tailored support from a global majority mentor outside their institutional hierarchy. Programme events also provide an excellent opportunity to build a network of global majority professionals from institutions across the capital.

London Higher and its members are committed to working towards building inclusive institutions that represent the global and wonderfully diverse city in which they are situated. This programme places equality, opportunities for minoritised groups and a commitment to addressing imbalances front and centre. Through this programme, London Higher aims to diversify the talent pipeline at all levels within higher education and beyond. In 2022, 56 participants from eight institutions took part – in 2023, over 100 colleagues from 15 London Higher members are participating.

# GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Almost 70% of London Higher's membership are Athena Swan Charter accredited, with 86% of accredited providers receiving Bronze or Silver awards. Awareness of gender and non-binary gender identities have been a recurrent conversation in the last few years, but this has not translated to widespread provision for a greater breadth of gender identities. In terms of sexuality, most support at institutions appeared to come from LGBTQ+ student and/or staff networks and through a vocal support of Pride and other LGBTQ+ events occurring outside of the universities themselves. This may be an area that requires further attention, especially in terms of gender identity, which remains a relatively new area of conversation in terms of student and staff welfare at HEIs.

## BIRKBECK, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

### **Birkbeck Gender and Sexuality (BiGS)**

BiGS provides a forum for facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration and exchange in gender and sexuality studies. BiGS prizes celebrate engagement with gender and sexuality in any discipline at the university, while the Artists in Association programme invites artists to respond to annual themes provided by the institution.

## ROYAL HOLLOWAY, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

### **Trans awareness guidance**

The University's provision for addressing Trans Awareness is a useful and important collection of resources. The 'suite of actions' provides guidance for transgender equality and transitioning at work as well as a good practice guide for being an ally.

## UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH

### LGBTQ+ reverse mentoring scheme

This [mentoring scheme](#) allows members of the LGBTQ+ Staff Community to meet with senior colleagues and regularly discuss diversity issues and future goals for the institution. The aims of this programme are to enable action and raise awareness around diversity issues at the University of Greenwich.

## UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON

### Trans non-binary and intersex equality: policy and guidance

This guidance is notable for addressing gender identities that fall outside of the gender binary. This [policy and guidance](#) document is intended to guide best practice to support trans, non-binary and intersex people and improve gender equality in this area.

## MULTIPLE INSTITUTIONS

Several of London Higher's members have been part of [Advance HE's Aurora leadership development initiative for women](#). Institutions involved in the scheme are known as Aurora Champions. Addressing the under-representation of women in leadership positions, a team of leadership experts lead development days covering four central topics: Identity, Impact and Voice; Core Leadership; Politics & Influence; and Adaptive Leadership Skills.

London Higher members who are Aurora Champions include:

- Anglia Ruskin University London
- Birkbeck, University of London



- City, University of London
- Coventry University London
- GCU London
- Goldsmiths, University of London
- Loughborough University London
- Kingston University
- London Metropolitan University
- London School of Economics and Political Science
- London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
- London South Bank University
- Middlesex University London
- Northumbria University London
- Queen Mary, University of London
- Royal College of Art
- Royal College of Music
- Royal Holloway, University of London
- Royal Veterinary College
- SOAS, University of London
- Staffordshire University London
- St George's, University of London
- St Mary's University, Twickenham
- The Institute for Cancer Research
- The Royal Central School of Speech and Drama
- Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance
- UCL
- University of Greenwich
- University of London
- University of Roehampton
- University of the West of Scotland, London Campus
- University of Westminster
- York St John University, London Campus

# INTERSECTIONAL

While many projects, programmes, and initiatives are unable to assume a more intersectional approach due to organisational, monetary and implementation constraints, intersectional approaches to EDI are vital for addressing the multifaceted complexity of identities, individuals, and marginalised groups of people. The following are projects that take intersectional approaches to EDI work.

## KINGSTON UNIVERSITY LONDON

### **Beyond Barriers mentoring scheme**

This mentoring programme pairs industry professionals with students. Each year, approximately 300 students from traditionally under represented groups receive mentoring on this scheme. The mentoring is based around personal and professional development and aims to improve the confidence of students, as well as attainment outcomes and career prospects

## MIDDLESEX UNIVERSITY LONDON

### **Reverse mentoring framework**

The Reverse mentoring framework provides the opportunity for colleagues to mentor more senior colleagues to share differing life experiences and perspectives with those who have greater institutional power or privilege. Reverse mentoring provides a safe space for mentors and mentees to discuss experiences and ask questions, allowing 'the mentee to try to see organisational life through the eyes of others and to take action as a result'.

## ST GEORGE'S UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

### Equal representation in academia

This initiative provides shadow research placements or studentships for students from underrepresented backgrounds. This aims to encourage these students to pursue academic research careers and raise awareness of available career paths. The initiative also includes funded research studentships for final year students who want to pursue a career in academia to gain hands-on laboratory experience as well as engage with the local community.

## UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

### Scholars programme

Aiming to close attainment gaps, this new scholars programme strives to support 30 students a year by providing a range of financial and pastoral support worth two million pounds annually. The central purpose of this programme is to help estranged students, those from minority ethnic backgrounds, and care-experienced students.

## UNIVERSITY OF WEST LONDON

### People like us

This OfS-funded project aims to provide mental health and wellbeing support to students from Black, Asian and minority ethnic communities. Specific support groups have been set up for these students, providing information on wellbeing and managing the particular difficulties that can arise from experiencing racism or experiences linked to race and ethnicity.

# UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

## Green dot bystander initiative

This initiative involves an active bystander training programme for colleagues and students, equipping them 'with the knowledge, skills, and confidence to identify, intervene and report sexual assault'.

# STAFF AND/OR STUDENT NETWORKS

Over half (26) of London Higher's members have staff and/or student networks grouped by specific identities or experiences, including:

- Birkbeck, University of London
- Brunel University London
- City, University of London
- Goldsmiths, University of London
- Imperial College London
- Kingston University London
- London Metropolitan University
- London School of Economics and Political Science
- London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
- London South Bank University
- Middlesex University London
- Queen Mary University of London
- Royal Holloway, University of London
- SOAS, University of London
- St George's, University of London
- St Mary's University, Twickenham
- The Institute of Cancer Research
- UCL

- University of East London
- University of Greenwich
- University of Roehampton
- University of Sunderland in London
- University of the Arts London
- University of Westminster
- York St John University, London Campus

These networks are extremely diverse and multifunctional providing: support; a collective voice for advising or speaking to institutional governing bodies; a sense of community; and raised awareness of certain forms of discrimination or groups that may require greater consideration in institutional policymaking and governance.

Recurrent or notable network types amongst London Higher's member institutions were:

- Women and non-binary peoples
- Women in STEM
- Gender and transgender
- Disability
- LGBTQ+
- Parents
- Carers
- Race and ethnicity
- Menopause
- Religion, faith and belief/interfaith
- Intersectional EDI

There is further potential to grow this range of networks for staff and students and to expand the network concept to a cross-institutional level.

# OTHER PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

The following are projects, initiatives or unique commitments that do not fall within larger categorisations.

## BLOOMSBURY INSTITUTE

### Ban the box

The Bloomsbury Institute was one of the first institutes to sign [Unlock's](#) fair chance pledge – this pledge involves a commitment to offering a fair chance to staff and students with a criminal record. This type of initiative allows people to have another chance to achieve their potential, recognising the barriers and stigma faced by people with criminal records and working to fight this to allow them to '[move on positively in their lives](#)'.

## LONDON HIGHER WITH THE ANTISEMITISM POLICY TRUST

London Higher has worked with the Antisemitism Policy Trust to run pan-London Antisemitism Training in 2022. This session was attended by EDI leads and staff from across the London Higher membership and demonstrated a significant interest in this area of work.

## TRINITY LABAN CONSERVATOIRE OF MUSIC AND DANCE

### Microaggression portal

This is an [online portal](#) for current students, alumni, and members of staff to log micro-aggressions anonymously. This is intended to improve understanding of student and staff experience as well as identifying unconscious or implicit bias within the community.



# UCL

## **Dignity Advisors**

Dignity Advisors are members of staff in roles across campus who volunteer to work to provide advice in addition to their day jobs. Advisors are trained in UCL policy on bullying, harassment, and sexual misconduct.

# CHALLENGES

## **1. A lack of easily available information on the EDI activity undertaken by each institution.**

Gathering data for this project included case studies shared directly by member institutions and desk-based research. While many of our members have good provision in a variety of EDI areas, it is imperative that this information is well-signposted on institutional websites. Lack of accessible information risks placing further onus onto individuals and groups who already sacrifice additional time and labour because of discrimination, marginalisation, and other obstacles they may face, and raises concerns about the user-friendliness of online EDI resources and information.

The ability to understand how institutions are tackling EDI issues and whether this work is demonstrating impact is hindered by these issues of visibility. Where projects are not accessible and information is not available, it is difficult to understand how institutions are approaching their EDI commitments as individual initiatives, or as a whole institution approach.

## **2. There is a lack of consistency in the ways and extent to which different groups are supported.**

Across London HE, there is a huge amount of EDI activity. This showcase is neither exhaustive, not fully representative of this work. However, there are differences between what is offered by members, with different groups supported in different ways and to different extents in each institution.

## **3. Some initiatives are small scale and sometimes limited in their impact.**

Many of the initiatives highlighted in this report are small in scale or in their infancy. As we gather further data and embed EDI work, it would be expected that this work would expand, with high impact activity growing to meet the needs of staff and students across the institution wherever possible and necessary.

## **4. Defining people in particular EDI groups as complex and contested.**

Definitions of who does and doesn't fit into particular categories of EDI are complex and often contested. Ensuring that EDI work is as inclusive as possible, as well as reaching the right individuals within an institution is important in ensuring that activity is meeting its intended aims.

## **5. EDI work is run by a small number of individuals.**

Historically EDI work has been delivered by a small number of individuals rather than embedded such across the institution. This can place a significant workload, as well as a heavy emotional burden upon a small number of people and may leave the institution vulnerable to organisational memory and best practice being lost, should those individuals leave.

## **6. It is hard to identify where best practice lies.**

Due to the diversity of institutions and myriad of initiatives, it is difficult to identify and share best practice where it exists. By sharing the work of a diverse array of HEIs, the most effective and institution-appropriate interventions may be replicated, collaboration may be facilitated between providers, and the sector may develop a more complete picture of the capital, the challenges that are being addressed and those that require further attention.

# RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## **1. EDI interventions need to be proactive and sustainable to meaningfully address the challenges within any given institution.**

While the attention drawn by news and media can be integral in provoking difficult conversations and motivating change, it is also important to be proactive in approaching EDI work. Institutions should communicate with students and staff to consider areas of weakness as well as strength. Solutions should operate on long, medium, and short-scale timelines, and should not be considered a failure if their short-term impact is not reflected by metrics or any unit of measurement.

## **2. Qualitative and quantitative data should be used to understand the success of EDI activity.**

Although some aspects of EDI will not be quantifiable and defining the success of an activity may be complex and long-term, wherever possible, institutions should commit to gathering qualitative as well as quantitative data and basing interventions on these findings. Culture change may not be entirely quantifiable, but evidence, information and experience should be central to EDI work to ensure that the complex and intersectional needs of students and staff can be understood and tackled holistically.

## **3. Institutions need to collaborate to address common problems, focus resources, and share best practice.**

A commitment to EDI goes beyond individual institutions: it is about widespread change. Smaller or specialist providers may not be equipped to take on larger-scale interventions or engage in the necessary data-gathering for identifying and tackling EDI issues within their institutions. Collaboration across comparable or local-area institutions is integral in these instances. Whether this is sharing findings from data-gathering across comparable institutions, engaging in cross-institutional initiatives or larger HEIs working with smaller providers, collaborative work is integral for the whole sector to engage in EDI work effectively. Examples of this include London Higher's [Global Majority Mentoring Programme](#), the [B-MEntoring Initiative](#) and [London Higher's EDI Network](#), which convenes EDI practitioners and leaders from across the membership to build a shared community, share best practice and create high impact outputs for London HE.

#### **4. Increased transparency will help drive faster change.**

As well as transparency regarding institutional EDI challenges, transparency regarding the outcomes of interventions is integral. London Metropolitan University's 'Our Progress One Year On' considers successes, contextualises and evaluates persistent issues, and re-establishes a commitment to tackling these problems. It is crucial that London's HEIs share their failures as well as their successes. EDI work goes beyond institutional reputation or targets; improved equality, diversity and inclusion across the sector is the priority. This will not be possible without sufficient transparency about what works, what does not, and what needs more time or resources.

#### **5. Every institution can commit to EDI work.**

London Higher's members are extremely diverse, ranging from large multi-faculty to small specialist providers. As such, many institutions in the membership will not have the resources or capacity to operate large-scale projects or initiatives. Although collaboration will be a key part of taking on more impactful work, institutions should also not be dissuaded from individually engaging in EDI work. This work is integral for making their institutions more welcoming, accessible, and inclusive spaces and for being part of a larger cultural shift.

EDI work can be as small scale as setting up a staff or student network, committing to the Disability Confident Scheme, or setting up a multifaith prayer room. Equally, institutions with the means and capacity to pioneer larger-scale EDI work should capitalise on the opportunity to work with smaller institutions, identify more endemic problems within the sector through data-gathering and undertake ambitious programmes either on an individual or cross-institutional level.

## **CONCLUSION**

This showcase has demonstrated that EDI work in London is varied, innovative and widespread. It is heartening to see a strong impetus for change both in measurable outcomes, such as attainment or continuation rates, as well as longer-term cultural and social change. The recommendations drawn from this showcase aim to make EDI work current, collaborative and effective. As we look forwards, London HEIs remain committed to EDI work and to continuing on the journey towards more equal, diverse, and inclusive practices across higher education.

\*London Higher strives to use language that is inclusive and representative of the diverse city we serve – initiatives such as the Global Majority Mentoring Programme reflect ongoing discussion in this space. Institutions across the London Higher membership may use terms such as (but not limited to): Black, Asian and minority ethnic; BAME; people of colour; global majority; and minoritised people. The use of terms such as BAME or BME has been the subject of active debate in recent years, but that is beyond the scope of this project. Conversation surrounding inclusive language is constantly evolving and there is no universally accepted term, therefore we have used the terms provided by institutions to describe their own work throughout this showcase.



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