

## **WSU Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Report - May 2024**

This report follows those provided in both May 2022 and 2023, and seeks to update our membership and stakeholders on what actions we have taken across the 2023/24 academic year, to fulfil the commitments made within our EDI Policy ([which can be found here](#)) and place inclusion at the heart of what we do. EDI is a key theme in the SU's Strategic Framework 2023-28 ([which can be found here](#)).

The SU has an internal EDI Working Group (EDIWG), the Terms of Reference of which can be found [here](#). The group has met regularly throughout the year to progress an action plan that was agreed at the start of the year with the new officer team, to reflect their aims and our organisational strategy. It also had oversight of the SU's calendar of cultural activities. Below is a summary of the actions and outcomes in 2023/24, arising from that action plan, as well as other projects, campaigns, and programmes of work within the SU.

### **(i) Training and development, education, and information**

It is very important that we educate our staff team and our members on an ongoing basis on the importance of EDI. To this end, this year:

- We had external Race Awareness training for our core staff team, delivered by Mission Diverse (<https://missiondiverse.org/>).
- We delivered EDI training to our Club, Society, and Network Committees.
- We liaised with other SU's and an external charity (I Am Paying Attention <https://www.iampayingattention.co.uk/>) to share the cost of Neurodiversity training for core staff, which is being delivered in the next few months.
- We communicated with our membership on where students might get support and help during the conflict in the Middle East.
- Our Vice President Student Activities, Issy, ran a consent campaign in Semester One, to encourage positive conversations around consent and respect within our community. This included information on social media and on-line workshops. The campaign was picked up by the national Higher Education publication, WonkHE (<https://wonkhe.com/>) and Issy wrote a blog for their weekly WonkHE SUs update, published in February.

Issy, also, spoke on local radio (BBC Hereford and Worcester) about the campaign and, following the blog in WonkHE SUs, was contacted by Advance HE (<https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/>) to join a user group to help them shape and design a new e-Learning product aimed at staff in higher education to understand Harassment and Sexual Misconduct.

- We supported the Race Equality Network to run a range of events for Race Equality Week 2024 in February. This included Microaggressions Training, a Culture and Race Workshop, and a Community Dialogue attended by external organisations and University management.

The SU took part in Race Equality Matters' 5 Day Challenge <https://www.raceequalitymatters.com/5-day-challenge/>, sharing information each day. As part of this, throughout the week staff and students contributed to the Big Promise, expressing their commitments to race equity. This was then made into a lovely poster that will be on permanent display in the SU.

Unfortunately, the Network's Equality Walk and evening celebration had to be cancelled during the week due to very poor weather. We continue to liaise with external stakeholders following the Community Dialogue to engage students more with activities and projects in the local community. The week was, also, the subject of a case study in WonkHE SUs and was promoted by NUS.

- Our Disabled Students' Network ran a Text2Speech Day in February, to raise awareness of non-verbal communication methods used by some of our students. SU staff took part in the campaign and had a half day of using non-verbal communication, which some found challenging!
- Our President and Chief Executive attended meetings of the University's new EDI Forum as members, being active contributors to the development of a new EDI framework for the institution.
- Our Chief Executive was a facilitator at a session organised by the University in preparation for submitting their new Access and Participation Plan (or APP - this and a description of what it is can be found here <https://www.worcester.ac.uk/about/university-information/governance/access-and-participation-plan.aspx>). She supported discussions on how the University can prioritise and support race equity. The SU also facilitated students' involvement (paid) in focus groups, contributing ideas on what they felt should be included in the APP. The SU sits on the Steering Group responsible for monitoring progress against the APP.
- Our Chief Executive co-ordinated the creation of an on-line forum (via the National Union of Students) for leaders of Students' Unions nationally to share ideas and best practice around race equity.
- Our Chief Executive linked BUCS (British Universities Colleges Sport) with Nujum Sports (<https://nujumsports.co.uk/> ), whose mission is to empower and support Muslim athletes.

## **Going forward we will:**

- This year, due to capacity issues, we were unable to offer EDI training to general members of the SU, as well as committee members. We would like to try and do this again in 2024/25, albeit when we offered it in 2022/23, it had very minimal uptake so we will review how best to engage students and raise awareness.
- We began work on creating an EDI-themed video for the SU, outlining what being a part of Teamworc means. We were unable to complete this due to capacity and resources and so will continue with this with the 2024/25 Officer team.
- Facilitate further bystander training for our core staff from Mission Diverse, budgets permitting.

## **(ii) Internal processes and commitments:**

Across the year we wanted to improve how we work, meet our responsibilities, and demonstrate our ongoing dedication to EDI. To support this:

- All new core staff undertook mandatory Diversity and Inclusion training as part of their induction, as did our Welcome Desk Assistants. (Staff are required to repeat this training after 3 years). New staff are also given organisational guidelines on how to ensure their online communications are accessible.
- We worked with the University to ensure that Chairs and Vice Chairs of our Student Networks received a bursary for their work for the first time, that was in line with Department Reps, due to the representative nature of their role. This improved uptake to the roles and outcomes of the Networks.
- Our EDI Working Group continued to meet regularly and link in with our Welfare and Inclusion Council (a Sub Council of Student Council). The EDI action plan was updated throughout the year and progress monitored.
- We had specific internal objectives around our annual Leadership Elections, consulting with our Welfare and Inclusion and Education Councils to do our utmost to remove any barriers to engagement and to increase the diversity of candidates.

Several new initiatives were implemented as a result and feedback from candidates about the process was very positive. Two of the five candidates were international students, and 40% described their ethnicity as Mixed/Multiple Ethnicity, Asian or Asian British (Indian) or Any Other Ethnic Group. Furthermore, 60% had English as their first language, 40% defined

their sexual orientation as either Bisexual or Gay / Lesbian, and 40% considered themselves to have a specific learning disability, other disability, impairment, or long-term health condition. We still have some way to go in terms of candidate diversity, however, and this remains a priority for us.

- Race equity was a standard item on monthly Senior Management Team meetings.
- We continued to run our recruitment processes for core and student staff in a transparent and inclusive way, being proactive in encouraging applications from people based on skills and competencies (and not prioritising experience) and explaining who we are as an organisation and our EDI commitments.
- We upheld our zero-tolerance approach to all forms of discrimination and harassment within #Teamworc. We addressed any reports of inappropriate behaviour within our student groups that contravened our Code of Conduct and invoked disciplinary procedures where necessary.

We spent time educating students on the impact of their conduct and supporting students to be active bystanders. We continued to promote the ethos of #Teamworc and of the need for students to look out for each other and embrace difference. We had a good year, with very few conduct incidents within our student groups and remain proud of #Teamworc.

- We reviewed our EDI Policy.
- We supported the University to engage students in various focus groups and consultations.

### **Going forward we will:**

- Strive to increase the diversity of students engaging with our annual Leadership Elections, as candidates and voters.
- Continue to advocate that students should be paid or rewarded for engaging in consultations or focus groups organised by the University.
- Work with the University to develop their commitments to EDI and inclusion across campus.
- Develop a Neurodiversity Policy for the organisation (after we have completed awareness training).

- Develop the section in our Employee Handbook related to 'Special and Other Leave', to further support our staff to balance their work life with their private life and and/or public duties.
- Deliver a Race Equality Week in 2025, in partnership with the University and community stakeholders.
- Continue to learn from best practice in the sector, as well as seek external expertise, to ensure our processes and procedures are as inclusive and effective as possible.
- Review our Bye Laws and processes to remove barriers to engagement, in line with our Strategic Framework 2023-28.
- Annually review our EDI policy and share our progress with our membership.

### **(iii) Membership Services**

We want as many of our students as possible to engage in what we do and benefit from our opportunities and services. To this end:

- We held a diverse programme of events and celebrations in The Hangar marking Diwali, Nigerian Independence, Onam Festival, Black History Month, and Chinese New Year (with a dragon dance) and hosted a Break the Fast station during Ramadan. We also facilitated an Afrobeats Night, Christmas Winter Ball, Bollywood Night, LGBTQ+ Valentines Ball, and a global quiz hosted by the International Experience Team.
- The Hangar team had monthly meetings with the University's International Team to ensure great collaboration and this will be continued next year.
- Increased the accessibility of our Help and Advice service further, including improving the look and feel of our advice room where we meet students for appointments, offering more flexible appointment times and drop-in sessions, developing our advice enquiry forms to allow for enlarged text and yellow paper print versions, and having text to speech and language translation available on our ipad.
- We translated our Teamworc Awards running order into braille for the tables and developed braille menus for use in The Hangar from September 2024. We, also, had braille stickers placed at the bottom of the stairs in the venue.
- Supported several international students with issues they had experienced on course placements and reported these to the University. These were taken very seriously and followed up with the Chief Nursing Officer and Freedom to Speak up Guardian in the NHS Acute Hospital Trust and

reported to the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). We were very heartened by the University's response in this matter and maintain communication with them on it.

Other issues related to transport to placements (with ongoing train strikes) were also raised by student Reps and resulted in a new working group related to placements being established by the University to tackle the problem, of which the SU President is a member.

- Lobbied the University to create a Hardship Fund that is accessible to our international students, presenting research conducted by the President of provision at other Universities. This was a lengthy process and, we believe, has resulted in a proposal being taken to the University's Executive Board. We await further updates and will keep pushing the issue.
- Created a working group with colleagues from the University's International Experience Team and Sport department, to increase engagement of international students in all forms of sport at Worcester. This has resulted in a small increase in the diversity of students engaged with BUCS sports teams but many more students have engaged with recreational sport, which the group has promoted. Unfortunately, we do not yet have demographic data on the students participating in recreational sport but we will be analysing this as soon as it is available.
- We continue to assess demographic data biannually of the members who are engaged with our activities as Reps, volunteers, and club, society, and network members. Our aim is to address where our engaged students do not reflect (or exceed) the University overall population data.
- Raised the need for more accessible toilets across campus with the University, and new signage is now being installed in a phased approach. The University will be adding a map to MyDay to show where the accessible toilets, baby change facilities, and gender-neutral toilets can be found on campus. Signage for gender neutral toilets in the Medical School is also being made more visible.
- Worked with the University on improving prayer facilities and spaces across the campuses, which is still being worked on - we are monitoring progress.
- Worked with the University's Disability Service on supporting students with neurodivergence as part of their induction, facilitating bespoke activities for students.
- Continued our Community Cupboard and free period products in the SU to support those struggling with the cost-of-living crisis, including bespoke bags of period products. We also established a kit recycling scheme, which was available for students in the Sport Centre from late Spring 2024.

- We did a lot of work around the costs associated with engagement with sport, liaising with senior management at BUCS (British Universities and Colleges Sport <https://www.bucs.org.uk/>) and colleagues across the sector.
- We consulted with students when organising major events such as Celebration Week on what they wanted to see and how we could make our events as accessible as possible, especially financially. We have started work on developing a bespoke loyalty card for The Hangar, engaging students in the concept. We also ran a survey (through an external party, Alterline), asking students what they wanted from our venue and bar.

### **Going forward we will:**

- Review and update our calendar of cultural events for 2024/25, working with University colleagues.
- Continue the great relationship we have with the International Experience Team.
- Continue to lobby for better financial support for our international students.
- Work to ensure we have more diversity within the memberships of our sports clubs, societies, networks, Rep cohorts and volunteers, and supporting our student groups to be informed and inclusive.
- Monitor University commitments and progress to decolonise the curriculum and support religious observance.
- Continue our accessibility work in terms of our space/building, liaising with University Estates on improvements we believe are needed, including for wheelchair users and those with physical impairments. We raised the issues with the automatic doors in the SU and they have been largely fixed.
- Look to source better furniture for The Hangar. We tried to source some more accessible second-hand furniture for the Welcome area of the SU, without success. We are still looking into this (we are unable to afford new furniture) as our current furniture is not very suitable for some neurodiverse students or those with visual impairments.
- Set diversity targets for engagement in the Leadership Elections 2024.
- Continue to work with the University to ensure adequate prayer facilities and gender-neutral facilities across the University estate for our students.

- Work to implement Equality Impact Assessments for all major events and organisational changes (we will seek more guidance on how to do this effectively).

Please note that the 'going forward' aims and commitments noted above are not exhaustive. The EDIWG will discuss a new set of EDI priorities with the SU's new Officer team for 2024/25.

End.