Who we are

Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) works to further and support equality and diversity for staff and students in higher education institutions across the UK and also in colleges in Scotland.

ECU is a registered charity, funded through the UK higher education funding bodies and representative organisations. We provide a central resource of advice and guidance for the sector.

Our approach is evidence-based, using research to identify and change practices that unfairly exclude, marginalise or disadvantage people. This evidence supports institutions to remove barriers to progression and success for all staff and students.

Advancing equality and diversity improves the staff and student experience for everyone working and learning in institutions.
Our work

We are working to **improve diversity in senior roles**, particularly improving the representation of women and minority ethnic staff.

Only 2.8% of minority ethnic female academics are employed at professor level.

We are working to **close the pay gap** that exists between men and women.

The median gender pay gap in the UK is currently 16.2%.

We are working to **communicate the case for equality** to develop the commitment and support in all institutions.

“Managers have engaged more with equality and diversity issues, particularly where the work contributes to, and is reported in ECU research.”

Equality and diversity lead

We are working with vice-chancellors and senior management to **raise the profile of equality and diversity** and embed inclusive practice across their institution.

“The meeting between the ECU CEO and our chancellor of governance and inclusivity has directly influenced our approaches.”

Vice-chancellor

How we can support you

We share our research, which helps illuminate and investigate the challenges facing your institution.

We provide **information and expertise** through events, training and publications to help drive the equality agenda.

“ECU guidance and events have helped in developing good practice on disability issues, gender and LGBT issues. It has also saved me a lot of time that I would have spent researching good practice.”

Equality and diversity lead

We are supporting institutions to **improve graduate outcomes** for all students.

17.7% – the difference between the proportion of white and minority ethnic qualifiers receiving a first or 2:1.

We responded to over 130 queries from higher education institutions to our advice line last year.

Our work is **relevant to the needs and priorities** of the sector through regional networks, sector-surveys and our discussions with sector bodies and leaders.

“ECU has a positive impact on equality throughout the HE sector and provides a valuable service as a ‘one stop shop’ of equality information, guidance, advice and best practice.”

Vice-chancellor, England

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