The rationale for equality and diversity:
How vice-chancellors and principals are leading change
Acknowledgements

Researched and written for ECU by Rachael Ross, Robin Schneider and Alexis Walmsley of Schneider~Ross.

Schneider~Ross would like to thank everyone involved in the research:

= The vice-chancellors and principals who took the time to talk with the researchers so openly.

= The equality and diversity professionals who took the time to provide full responses.

= The full Schneider~Ross team, led by Rachael Ross and including Robin Schneider, Alexis Walmsley and Karen Lindley.

= HEFCE summit partners, especially Siobhan O’Malley of HEFCE and the ECU team.

Further information

Clare Pavitt
info@ecu.ac.uk
While progress has been made in increasing the diversity of staff and students in higher education in the UK, significant challenges that are common across the sector remain. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has convened a number of summits, bringing together key organisations which represent or support leadership across the higher education (HE) sector, to develop a shared response to the lack of diversity at senior management, leadership and governance in HE. A theme of the resulting dialogue was the role of leadership in promoting equality and diversity and the impact of proactive championship on the institution and on the wider sector.

The reasons why some higher education institutions are more successful in promoting equality and diversity than others have been a topic for discussion across the sector for a number of years. Additionally it has long been recognised that active leadership is a critical component of effective change management: ECU’s research into mainstreaming equality and diversity, for example, found that support from the highest level within the institution was necessary in order to create the impetus for change and to drive its implementation. Summit partners were keen to explore what drives some leaders in HE to become proactive and public champions of equality and diversity and the degree to which their views are underpinned by evidence of organisational benefit. This research, commissioned by ECU and carried out by Schneider-Ross Ltd, is a response to that question.

The research findings give a real insight into the motivations and drivers that prompt senior leaders in HE to become visible and active champions of equality and diversity and into the benefit that this has for both the institutions that they lead and the wider HE sector. The case studies of the 12 vice-chancellors and principals who participated in the research tell powerful stories of values enacted, challenges encountered and lessons learned which will be of use to other senior leaders who wish to evaluate their own approach to promoting equality and diversity, to institutions seeking to improve the progress they are making, and to agencies across the sector.

ECU welcomes the research findings and will be working with other summit partners to progress the recommendations contained in this report.
‘We recognise that embedding equality and promoting the benefits of diversity in everything we do is not only fundamental to meeting our legal, moral and ethical responsibilities, but is also crucial to fostering the kind of excellence and success which a world-class university aims to achieve.’

Professor Terry Threadgold, foreword to Cardiff University strategic plan

‘You are not going to be able to push the frontiers of knowledge and educate the range of students that we have, unless the university is diversity aware and diversity friendly.’

Professor Mary Stuart, University of Lincoln

‘We value diversity because we are committed to excellence.’

Professor Chris Brink, Newcastle University

‘Imagine the talent and potential that is not being realised – to make the most of your staff and student body you have to make progress on diversity.’

Professor April McMahon, Aberystwyth University

‘The saddest thought is that there are bright talented people who fail to reach their potential. It is also a social disaster.’

Professor Julius Weinberg, Kingston University London

‘Universities were, after all, set up to challenge and break moulds. They were not looking to follow the status quo.’

Professor Julie Lydon, University of South Wales

‘Diversity has an inherent educational value – and sociodiversity is valuable to the intellectual environment in the same way as biodiversity is valuable to the natural environment.’

Professor Chris Brink, Newcastle University
# The rationale for equality and diversity: How vice-chancellors and principals are leading change

**Contents**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foreword</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Summary  
A strong rationale  
Evidence of benefits  
Personal drivers  
Recommendations | 1  
2  
3  
4 |
| About the research  
Research aims  
Research methodology | 5  
5  
6 |
| A strong rationale: institutional drivers for equality and diversity | 8 |
| Leading change | 12 |
| Personal drivers for vice-chancellors and principals | 15 |
| Evidence of benefits and impact  
Overall performance  
Globalisation  
Modernising learning  
Minority ethnic staff and students  
Widening participation  
Women in senior academic roles | 17  
18  
19  
19  
20  
20  
21 |
| Recommendations  
Recommendations for summit partners  
Recommendations and ideas for vice-chancellors and principals | 22  
22  
23 |
| Case studies: The rationale for equality and diversity | 26-84 |

(See overleaf for details)
Case studies: The rationale for equality and diversity
Abertay University: An ethical approach 26
Aberystwyth University: A new approach to promotion 30
Cardiff University: Taking a strategic approach 35
Kingston University London: Valuing diversity of thinking 40
University of Lincoln: equality and diversity drives rise up the league tables 45
Newcastle University: Quality needs diversity 50
Oxford Brookes University: An evidence-based approach 55
Queen Mary University of London: Promoting equality 59
Royal Holloway, University of London: Recognising the importance of talent management 64
University of Salford: Focusing on economic inclusion 69
University of South Wales: An inclusive approach to change 74
University of Wolverhampton: The university of opportunity 79
Summary

This research looks at the broadest interpretation of the business case for equality and diversity in higher education institutions and suggests how vice-chancellors and principals can lead change.

Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) and seven other partners brought together in a summit commissioned this research to better understand the motivation and drivers of senior leaders in HE that led them to champion equality and diversity, the evidence for these and the outcomes that are being achieved.

This report describes what is working best for leaders and sets out examples of good practice. It is supported by 12 case studies drawing out why each participating vice-chancellor or principal believes it is important to tackle equality and diversity, what they have done to lead change, what the institution describes as their key drivers, and what impact this is having both on their general performance and/or on some specific equality and diversity outcomes.

A strong rationale

All of the vice-chancellors and principals interviewed see clear benefits to their institution in focusing on equality and diversity and are able to easily articulate these organisational benefits. They understand that expressing the full rationale behind equality and diversity for their own institution is important.

They regard equality and diversity as an integral part of the institutions they want to lead. Professor Chris Brink, at Newcastle University, could be speaking on behalf of all of them when he simply states: ‘We value diversity because we are committed to excellence.’

The connection between excellence and equality and diversity seems clear for them. There is no debate: a university that didn’t value staff or student diversity simply couldn’t be excellent. They see this as fundamental to the core purpose of higher education and the contribution it ought to be making to society and its various stakeholders.
Articulating the rationale for equality and diversity

Where vice-chancellors and principals are taking a positive stance on equality and diversity, they are stimulating change.

Professor Nigel Heaton (Abertay University), Professor Geoff Layer (University of Wolverhampton) and Professor Julius Weinberg (Kingston University London) – none of whom have been in position for more than three years – had each raised the profile of equality and diversity significantly in their institutions, and had started to see evidence of improvement of outcomes.

Where leaders have been in position longer, there is evidence to show tangible improvements in outcomes.

It is at higher education institutions (HEIs) which have seen equality and diversity as an institutional priority for the longest (six years or more) and where the vice-chancellors with a passion for equality
and diversity have been in position for longer (Newcastle University and Oxford Brookes University for seven years, University of Salford for five years, University of Lincoln for four and a half years), that they have been able to report most fully on changes in outcomes.

The evidence of change is not framed in the way of a traditional return on investment business case. By setting out clear key performance indicators (KPIs), these institutions are showing the benefits of a focused approach to their overall performance as a university, as well as to staff and student-related diversity outcomes.

Some of the key outcomes of their work on equality that the HEIs were able to identify include:

- a link between progress on equality and diversity and an improvement in overall performance
- an increase in the numbers of senior women academics
- an increasing success in attracting students and staff from outside of the UK
- reviewing aspects of teaching and learning and modernising the curriculum, which were bringing wider benefits to all students
- an improvement in widening participation goals

**Personal drivers**

For all the vice-chancellors their own underlying motivations and personal drivers, relating to a deeply held belief system, play an important part in them becoming visible and active champions of equality and diversity.

Their beliefs and values act as a catalyst to subsequent leadership on equality and diversity. Their own life experiences mean that being fair and inclusive matters deeply to them and is integral to their sense of who they are.

This set of beliefs and values acts as a foundation stone and is an important aspect of their leadership. This points towards the importance of a values-led leadership approach as a key aspect when considering the development and appointment of future leaders in higher education institutions.
Recommendations

Drawing on conclusions from the research, there are recommendations for summit partners, for vice-chancellors and principals, and for governing bodies and their chairs.

These recommendations will help the sector make a profound shift in its performance on equality and diversity, by:

- helping more people see that taking equality and diversity seriously is an integral part of being an excellent HEI
- increasing the number of vice-chancellors and principals who demonstrate their commitment and are able to talk publicly about equality and diversity
- continuing to build the evidence base for the benefits of equality and diversity

The recommendations cover areas such as:

- continuing the conversation around leadership and equality and diversity among senior leaders
- reviewing key advice and documents to take account of this wider rationale for equality and diversity
- suggesting a shift to a more outcome-driven measurement of change, focusing on fewer KPIs
- integrating aspects of the research into HEI leadership development programmes
- ideas and advice drawn from the research for all vice-chancellors in what they can do personally to demonstrate leadership
- advice to chairs of governing bodies on their own leadership of equality and diversity, including appointment of new leaders
About the research

Research aims

Often, the business case for equality and diversity within the higher education sector and beyond has been conceived in mainly quantitative terms – in effect, something of a cost/benefit analysis of the return on investing in equality and diversity. This research was commissioned to look at the broadest interpretation of the business case, to encompass a wider rationale for equality and diversity, and how vice-chancellors and principals are leading change.

One of the purposes of the research was to understand why some leaders chose to proactively and publicly support equality and diversity and to what extent it was actually an evidence-based position or whether it was something driven by their belief system.

The agreed research aims were to explore and set out:

- the reasons why senior leaders in HE believe that equality and diversity are of value to their institutions and to HE generally
- the motivations and drivers that prompt senior leaders in HE to become visible and active champions of equality and diversity
- the evidence that supports these beliefs
- the outcomes within a particular institution and beyond of senior leadership that champions equality and diversity

The research was commissioned by Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) on behalf of a partnership of seven key bodies involved in higher education (HE). The other partners involved were: the Committee of University Chairs (CUC), GuildHE, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE), Universities and Colleges Employers’ Association (UCEA), and Universities UK (UUK).
About the research

### Research methodology

The research methodology consisted of:

- one to one discussions with vice-chancellors/principals
- questionnaires sent to equality and diversity professionals
- analysis of interviews and questionnaire responses
- preparing case studies for each institution

Twelve institutions were identified using the following criteria:

- a vice-chancellor/principal who is personally committed to the equality and diversity agenda and prepared to spend time in discussing his or her views
- the institutions were geographically dispersed
- the institutions were diverse in terms of mission group
- the institutions were participating actively in work on equality and diversity in the sector

The universities in the final sample were:

- Abertay University
- Aberystwyth University
- Cardiff University
- Kingston University London
- University of Lincoln
- Newcastle University
- Oxford Brookes University
- Queen Mary University of London
- Royal Holloway, University of London
- University of Salford
- University of South Wales
- University of Wolverhampton

This is not to suggest that these 12 universities are the only examples of HEIs that are placing a priority on equality and diversity nor that they have necessarily made the most progress (some were indeed at an early stage of this work).
Other aspects of the sample that are worth noting, of the participating institutions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Geography</td>
<td>8 in England, 3 in Wales, 1 in Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HEI grouping</td>
<td>5 in University Alliance, 3 Russell Group, 4 in Million + or no group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality and diversity as a priority</td>
<td>3 for 2 years or less, 2 for 3-5 years, 2 6-10 years, 5 for over 10 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-chancellor/principal in position</td>
<td>4 for less than 3 years, 5 for 3-5 years, 2 for over 5 years*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*This list excludes Professor Julie Lydon who was the vice-chancellor at the University of Glamorgan Group before the merger with the University of Wales, Newport, and has only been in her new position at the University of South Wales since April 2013.
A strong rationale: institutional drivers for equality and diversity

Various drivers for equality and diversity were highlighted in the surveys returned by HEIs.

In their commentary in their survey returns many HEIs commented on the declining importance of compliance as a driver.

While the legislation, and the public sector equality duty in particular, were seen to have played an important role in stimulating institutions to mainstream equality and diversity, and remained more significant in Scotland and Wales, the drivers increasingly came from the mission that the institution had set itself and the areas where it felt it was not making sufficient progress.

Some non-legislative drivers were seen in particular as accelerating this integration of equality and diversity into everything an HEI does.

The four funding councils’ requirements for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) were recognised by many institutions as having raised the profile of equality and diversity. It had led to greater interaction and collaboration between equality and diversity professionals and academic staff and helped position the issue more broadly.

Professor Janet Beer, vice-chancellor at Oxford Brookes University and Chair of Equality Challenge Unit, also notes that attaching research money to Athena SWAN ‘has sharpened attention hugely.’

The vice-chancellors and principals articulated 11 different aspects of the wider rationale. As a summary, the model below could be useful for institutions to draw on when they are reviewing or developing their own unique rationale (or business case) for equality and diversity. Each institution will tailor and select those aspects which are most relevant to them.
Articulating the rationale for equality and diversity

In the questionnaire returns from the sample universities, each of the various student and staff-related drivers were considered very important or important by the vast majority.

In other words, equality and diversity has ceased to be something for just human resources departments and equality and diversity teams to think about. It has become integral to what most would regard as being a good university.
At Newcastle University, the vision 2021 strategy document sets out the university’s core values including a commitment to excellence, valuing diversity and responding to societal challenges. As Professor Chris Brink states in his foreword: ‘We value diversity because we are committed to excellence, and we recognise the existence of inequality as a concomitant social challenge, to which we undertake to respond.’

Professor Mary Stuart, vice-chancellor at University of Lincoln, argues simply: ‘You are not going to be able to push the frontiers of knowledge and educate the range of students that we have, unless the university is diversity aware and diversity friendly.’

A similar point about the integral nature of equality and diversity is made in Professor Terry Threadgold’s foreword to Cardiff University’s strategic equality plan: ‘We recognise that embedding equality and promoting the benefits of diversity in everything we do is not only fundamental to meeting our legal, moral and ethical responsibilities, but is also crucial to fostering the kind of excellence and success which a world-class university aims to achieve.’

### Institutional drivers survey responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Response</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Quite important</th>
<th>Not very important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating a more inclusive environment – students</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a more inclusive environment – staff</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widening access</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring appointments genuinely the best</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition for best staff</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting our reputation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creating a more inclusive experience for overseas students</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External recognition</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The use of ‘world-class’ perhaps points out the impact of globalisation on the sector. All the participating institutions referred to the need to compete for both staff and students globally. A number had overseas campuses. Moreover, they recognise that UK-domiciled students will be finishing their studies and, more than ever, needing to work effectively in a global context. In this regard, having an inclusive culture becomes critical – in attracting overseas staff and students and enabling them to succeed – as well as providing the best preparation for the working world ahead.

While for some, there was a strong concentration on particular dimensions of diversity (usually gender and ethnicity), many saw benefits of having a wider mix of different sorts of people around the table because of the potential this brought of increased challenge and potential for innovation. Professor Chris Brink at Newcastle University comments: ‘Sociodiversity is valuable to the intellectual environment in the same way as biodiversity is valuable to the natural environment.’

A number of vice-chancellors spoke specifically about the benefits of increasing diversity in their own top teams and how that had enhanced decision-making. They also felt the benefits of having different styles of thinking were also playing out in greater collaboration across disciplines and in a less dialectical approach. Professor Colin Riordan at Cardiff University talked about the benefits in increased diversity: ‘There is more challenge and different perspectives emerge. This ultimately leads to improved decision-making, avoiding “group think”.’

Professor April McMahon, at Aberystwyth University, was delighted in the 50/50 gender mix in her executive team: ‘Decisions must be made in a thorough, good humoured, fair and proper manner.’

Others, including Professor Julius Weinberg at Kingston University London, spoke of how a diverse research team collaborating together had a positive impact on the quality of the end result, and that seeking out diverse points of view similarly led to better and more rounded decision-making. ‘I resist comfort and encourage the outlier/left field input.’
Leading change

All the vice-chancellors and principals involved in this research made plain their commitment to equality and diversity and demonstrated their authenticity by ‘walking the talk.’

- all expressed their commitment publicly and ensured equality and diversity was on the top team agenda
- they were skilful at signalling change through small symbolic actions, which motivate others to change their behaviours
- they were comfortable with the narrative style of leadership, but recognised the dangers of the ‘heroic vice-chancellor’ approach
- they sought to make diverse appointments at senior levels and ensured there was clarity around responsibilities and accountabilities for other senior leaders

There was a strong correlation between the length of time that a vice-chancellor or principal had been in place and the time that the institution itself reported that it had taken equality and diversity ‘seriously as an institutional priority.’

Of those institutions who felt that equality and diversity had become a priority in only the last two years (Abertay University, Kingston University London and University of Wolverhampton) each of the vice-chancellors had been in place for three years or less.

A number of the leaders chaired their equality and diversity committees and all of them ensured equality and diversity were on their own agenda. Many also encouraged their governing bodies to get actively involved – for instance, setting up joint committees with the senior executives.

These senior leaders were actively involved in cross-sector work on equality and diversity – for instance, with Equality Challenge Unit. Professor Janet Beer is the current Chair, and Professors Chris Brink and Colin Riordan as well as Professors Mary Stuart and Geoff Layer have been board members for varying lengths of time.

There were several examples of individual symbolic actions which sent a strong leadership message. Professor Janet Beer from Oxford Brookes University changed the criteria for the decision about which two members of staff should go to the Buckingham Palace Garden Party. She made it both transparent, and more inclusive, by agreeing that it should go to the longest serving members of staff. Typically, in the past, attendees would have been
senior academics. Since the change, a library assistant, a gardener and a cleaner have each gone to the party. This is a simple change that has significant symbolic weight, signalling to staff the value she places on everyone who works for the university.

A number of the vice-chancellors and principals in this research were adept at relating to people at all levels and saw the value of it. They prioritised direct communication with staff and students.

Several had a naturally inclusive style, and a number were very clear about wanting to be addressed by their first names. As Professor Julie Lydon at University of South Wales put it: ‘We need to guard against HE pretensions getting in the way of engagement.’

Professor Martin Hall of University of Salford encourages direct email contact. He related the story of a female Asian student in Rochdale who contacted him and who wanted to do a masters in biological sciences, but wasn’t able to pay the fees in the way required.

He talked to her and found she was the first in her family to go to university, in the face of opposition from her father and brothers. She was working two days a week in a call centre to fund her education. This exchange prompted changes in policy. The university decided to offer more internships itself and put in place a longer instalment plan on the fees.

Some leaders described the different styles of leadership around diversity. Professor Colin Riordan of Cardiff University, has a preferred approach to leadership on diversity that includes modelling, coaching and encouraging reflection. He adopts a ‘tell’ mode if, for example, he feels a particularly bland, undiverse shortlist has been put forward. At Cardiff University, performance on diverse recruitment for senior leaders is linked to their pay.

Several felt a narrative style of leadership was the best way of helping others to see the importance of equality and diversity. As Professor Julius Weinberg from Kingston University remarked: ‘Telling stories is much more compelling than the data.’
At the same time, several were aware of the risk associated with personalising the agenda too much (for example falling prey to the ‘heroic vice-chancellor’ model). Professor Geoff Layer from the University of Wolverhampton was particularly keen to stress that this was the university’s agenda, not his. To that end, for example, he had set KPIs with clear responsibilities, with senior leaders held to account for progress.
Personal drivers for vice-chancellors and principals

As personal experiences shaped their commitment to equality and diversity, vice-chancellors and principals shared insights about their personal journeys. Three of the 12 featured leaders were either born in South Africa or had extensive experience there. Two had insights from America, and one had seen ethnic cleansing in Zimbabwe and Bosnia.

Others had powerful experiences closer to home – one had worked in the Greater London Council (GLC) in the 1980s when it was at the cutting edge of work in the UK on equality. A number were proud of their working-class roots and were from the first generation in their families to go to university. They had themselves experienced the life-changing impact of higher education. As Professor April McMahon at Aberystwyth University comments: ‘I am not so much an advocate for widening participation, but an advert for it.’

Not surprisingly, this understanding of the powerful transformative impact of higher education went hand in hand with a desire to enable everyone to fulfil their potential. Professor Martin Hall from University of Salford argues: ‘The purpose of a university, and of its curriculum, is to enable people to recognise and realise their potential, to define and enable their aspirations and to visualise their future selves.’

This translated into a concern to increase attainment levels and reduce any gaps between different types of students (for instance, those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, or from minority ethnic backgrounds).

Others saw exactly the same point applied to staff diversity and were passionate about creating an environment where everyone was valued, (cleaners and gardeners as well as academics) enabled to realise their potential and treated fairly. They were comfortable using valued-laden language:

‘It is wholly unfair that 50% of the population (ie women) do not get the same life opportunities and that this still exists at universities.’

Professor Colin Riordan, Cardiff University
‘We must be transparently fair. It is important to treat people fairly, helping colleagues to achieve their career aspirations and valuing the different career patterns they have had.’

Professor Nigel Seaton, Abertay University

‘We can’t really defend it. We have really brilliant female and male academics, why are we not able to let all of them reach the heights they are able to?’

Professor Geoff Layer, University of Wolverhampton

They also link this to the world beyond their institution:

‘The saddest thought is that there are bright, talented people who fail to reach their potential. It is also a social disaster.’

Professor Julius Weinberg, Kingston University London

‘The aim of the equality agenda is to decouple circumstance from destiny.’

Professor Chris Brink, Newcastle University

It is clear from this research that these senior leaders, who have chosen to take a positive, public stance on equality and diversity, are driven by a deeply held personal belief system.

That is not to say that they do not see the very powerful institutional benefits that come from focusing on equality and diversity, or that they don’t utilise a more conventional, logical approach to bring others along.

As the University of Salford’s vice-chancellor, Martin Hall, puts it: ‘There’s always a personal element, but there’s no reason why there has to be – you can argue it on principle and strategic grounds.’
Evidence of benefits and impact

In their survey returns, universities indicated many areas where they felt they were seeing evidence of the positive impact of their work on equality and diversity.

There are encouraging examples of positive impact and each case study (see case studies section) tries to give some insight into the priorities that institutions have identified and the progress they are seeing. It is important to remember that the HEIs have different histories, locations and missions and the positive changes they report are best judged within their own context.
Evidence of benefits and impact

**Overall performance**

If equality and diversity is perceived as integral to being an excellent university, there should be some indicators of the positive impact of taking equality and diversity seriously on the overall university performance.

At the University of Lincoln equality and diversity is perceived by the university to have been vital in its rise up the university league tables: ‘The most dramatic transformation of a university in recent times’ (John O’Leary (2014) *The Times good university guide 2014*. Collins, Glasgow).

Both the University of Lincoln and Newcastle University have received recognition for employee engagement.

At one level, however, the more integral equality and diversity is seen to be to the success of a university, the less easy it is to separate out its impact. It becomes part of the institutional DNA and an important (but not the sole) contributor to success.

In time, the best way to assess the impact of overall institutional success may be to compare overall performance league table data between HEIs who are seen as leaders in the equality and diversity field with those who may not yet have placed the same emphasis on the agenda.

While it is too early to show the impact of Professor Julie Lydon’s commitment to equality and diversity at the University of South Wales, it is quite possible that her inclusive leadership style has played an important part in bringing together the merged institutions. Given the level of change in the sector there may be leadership implications here for other vice-chancellors and principals who are seeking to make challenging transitions while at the same time, keeping up staff engagement levels.
Globalisation

One area of positive impact that stands out is on the attraction of both staff and students from overseas. For instance, Royal Holloway, University of London has been ranked first in the UK and fifth in the world by the *Times Higher Education* world rankings for international outlook (which takes into account both staff and student aspects). Cardiff University is the highest ranked Russell Group institution in the international student barometer and in 2013, in a European-wide survey, was ranked the best university in the UK for international student satisfaction.

Modernising learning

A number of universities cited the introduction of student fees and the resultant increasing expectations that students have of the quality of their learning and university experience, as having an important diversity aspect.

Many of the participating universities had undertaken reviews of teaching and learning methodology. At Kingston University London an inclusive curriculum review has been undertaken, and at Cardiff University all of the schools reviewed their practices in learning, teaching and assessment to check against inclusivity and accessibility. In the school of health care sciences, they worked with Stonewall to embed issues relating to the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people to ensure these are included in the curriculum and translated into teaching.

In terms of delivery, Professor Julie Lydon, at the University of South Wales, explained: ‘Having diverse students has sped up the paradigm shift for teaching and learning.’ For instance, the university has moved away from an event that is ‘downloaded’ once at a lecture hall, to one where a lecture is permanently available online.

Overall feedback was that this review of teaching and learning, while stimulated by a desire to meet the diverse needs of all students, had led to an increase for all in the quality of the student learning experience.
Evidence of benefits and impact

Minority ethnic staff and students
This is an aspect of equality and diversity strategy where most institutions felt they needed to give much more attention. A number had set tangible goals to stimulate progress – both around talent management and development and stimulating breakthroughs around student attainment and staff recruitment and retention.

The context is particularly important here. For instance, the increase in minority ethnic students up from 7.7% to 9.4% at Cardiff University or from 7% to 8.7% at Newcastle University may appear to be a great deal lower compared with Kingston University London, where white students constitute less than 50% of the population. However, they do both represent a significant increase – 22% and 24% respectively.

At Kingston University London, on the other hand, the priority for monitoring the progress of minority ethnic students is not so much around attraction, but attainment and retention levels, both of which are showing positive improvement. For example, minority ethnic student attainment is up from 43.7% to 47.4% (first class and upper second class degrees).

Widening participation
The sample includes, in both University of Wolverhampton and University of Salford, institutions which can show significant impact in their work to attract students from disadvantaged backgrounds (and both significantly outperform against their benchmarks).

At the University of Wolverhampton 53.2% of full time undergraduate students were from national statistics socioeconomic classifications (NS-SEC) groups 4-7 and at University of Salford 45.2%. At University of Salford 20% of total full time undergraduates were drawn from low participation neighbourhoods, and at the University of Wolverhampton 19.2%. Salford University has the highest proportion of students in the country who have been in care and has gained exemplary standard from Buttle UK.
Evidence of benefits and impact

Women in senior academic roles

A number of the sample (University of Lincoln, Newcastle University, Oxford Brookes University and Royal Holloway, University of London) can show increases in the representation of women in senior academic roles.

At University of Lincoln the proportion of female academic promotions has gone up from 25% to 45%. At Newcastle University, the number of female professors has increased from 76 to 90 in two years. At Oxford Brookes University 35% of professors are women (compared to the sector average of 20.8%). At Royal Holloway, University of London, women now represent 24% of professors and there has been a sharp rise in the percentage of female senior lecturers from 26.8% to 38.1%.

Many of the participating universities (Abertay University, Aberystwyth University, Kingston University London, Queen Mary University of London, Royal Holloway, University of London and the University of South Wales) have undertaken reviews of their promotion processes, and believe that this has had the effect of opening up promotion opportunities to women by taking account of experiences (for instance, regarding teaching, learning and student support) which have not been properly incorporated and recognised in the past. Each felt their more balanced approach was leading to better appointments reflecting the broader requirements of the modern academic leader.
Recommendations

The following recommendations are designed to reinforce the idea that taking equality and diversity seriously is an integral part of being an excellent HEI.

They aim to increase the number of vice-chancellors and principals who are able to, and happy to, talk publicly about equality and diversity. They are also intended to support institutions as they continue to build the evidence base for the benefits of equality and diversity.

Recommendations for summit partners

- Encourage each HEI to publicise its own unique rationale (or business case) for diversity, related to its mission and the values of the vice-chancellor or principal. (All partners)

- Build on these 12 case studies to encourage a wider group of vice-chancellors and principals to articulate their own rationale. (All partners)

- Bring together a wider group of vice-chancellors and principals to explore leadership in HEIs, and as part of this what it means to be a leader on equality and diversity. (All partners)

- Invite some of the participating vice-chancellors to speak about their personal commitment to equality and diversity at HE conferences/events. (All partners)

- Encourage chairs of governing bodies to make explicit the values of the institution and the requirement for values-driven leadership when recruiting and selecting. (CUC and LFHE)

- Integrate a more outcome focused (and less compliance-driven) approach to equality and diversity in the new governing body code. (CUC)

- Integrate this revised approach into new guidance for governing bodies. (ECU)

- Review core development programmes and integrate the findings from this research, including senior strategic leadership, preparing for senior strategic leadership, head of department, and preparing for head of department. (LFHE)

- Review programme Essentials of leading change to link to the focus on creating an inclusive culture and integrate the findings from this research to support Cultural intelligence programme. (LFHE)

- Build unconscious bias training into appointment and selection training. (HEIs, LFHE and ECU)
Recommendations

Recommendations and ideas for vice-chancellors and principals

- Prioritise equality and diversity objectives, focussing on a few KPIs and associated data, rather than addressing all issues at once. (*HEIs and ECU*)

- Provide guidance to enable HEIs to assess progress against core equality and diversity outcomes, including the use of common frameworks, for example ECU’s equality charter marks, and other benchmarking tools. (*ECU*)

- Encourage all HEIs to include student as well as staff diversity in strategy, outcomes and measures. (*HEIs and ECU*).

- Develop guidance for HEIs on measuring the impact of equality and diversity activity. (*ECU*)

The following recommendations have been drawn from the actions to communicate and drive change that have been undertaken by the leaders in the case studies. They aim to illustrate good leadership around equality and diversity, and suggest ideas for vice-chancellors and principals to consider and adapt to their institutional context.

Personal leadership

- Build your own personal approach to equality and diversity. Increase your comfort with talking about its value by drawing on your own experience to convey why equality and diversity matters to you.

- Regularly meet with a diverse range of people and use their stories to illustrate challenges and positive outcomes.

- Reflect on and grow your own ongoing leadership development, by continuing to expand your portfolio of leadership styles to include a deliberately more inclusive approach. Encourage other senior colleagues to do the same.

- Practise moving between a coaching style (encouraging) approach with equality and diversity to a more ‘tell/challenge’ style when required (for example challenging the status quo around diverse shortlists).
Recommendations

**Encourage active involvement from governing bodies**

- Set up a joint committee to steer the equality and diversity strategy.
- Work with chairs to ensure new governing body appointments strengthen diversity of thinking.
- Work with chairs to model inclusive leadership in the governing body.

**Hold leaders to account for progress**

- Require each direct report to have at least one performance objective relating to equality and diversity.
- Ensure your direct reports help staff to prepare for promotion rounds.
- Ensure meaningful review of equality and diversity objectives and, where appropriate, link to pay.
- Set a goal to increase the diversity of your direct reports.
- Spot diverse talent that may be blocked and find ways for them to stretch and broaden their skills (for example the principal’s commission at Royal Holloway, University of London).
- Challenge the monitoring data (and equality and diversity colleagues) to steer away from overly bureaucratic process driven measures towards fewer output focused goals and clear KPIs.
- Require up-to-date equality and diversity data at annual or six-monthly reviews and on websites.
- Ensure clear recruitment criteria for senior leadership roles which include both academic ability and the interpersonal qualities which make for great leadership.
- Insist that executive search firms follow your diverse recruitment criteria and develop diverse shortlists. Be prepared to widen your pool of search firms to those who understand your strategic equality and diversity recruitment aim.
Walk the talk

- Build equality and diversity stories into your own blogs and newsletter updates.
- Engage with diverse staff and students and ask them what the institution can do to improve their experience.
- Think creatively about recognition and ways to value support staff as well as academics.
- Host a reception for overseas students and attend open days for diverse groups of students (for example open days for deaf students are held at the University of Wolverhampton).

Recommendations for chairs and governing bodies

- Set up a joint committee (with the executive) to steer the equality and diversity strategy.
- Work with vice-chancellors and search organisations to ensure new governing body appointments strengthen diversity of thinking.
- Ensure clear recruitment criteria for the vice-chancellor role which includes both academic ability and the interpersonal qualities which make for great leadership, and maximise outreach to potential diverse candidates.
- Invest in some development time as a group to model an inclusive leadership approach in the way that the governing body operates.
- Consider commissioning a board evaluation which will look at what the governing body can do to champion equality and diversity and act as a role model for a truly inclusive organisation.
The rationale for equality and diversity

Abertay University: An ethical approach

Professor Nigel Seaton, Principal and Vice-chancellor

The institution

Abertay University is one of the smaller universities in the UK with around 4,700 on-campus students, the majority of whom are from Scotland (77%), the remainder are from abroad (15%) or from other parts of the UK (8%). The student community represents over 60 nationalities and male students slightly outnumber female students (53% to 47%). About a third of the student population are mature students (HESA definition of 21+ on entry). There are 215 academic staff of whom 185 are full time (HESA all staff by HEI, academic employment marker and mode of employment 2012/13).

A member of the Million+ mission group, the university offers leading edge facilities consistent with its status as a world leading provider of courses in computer arts and games technology.

The university has diversity as one of its five values: ‘promoting equality of opportunity among all who can benefit from, or contribute to, the Abertay experience.’

The principal and vice-chancellor

Professor Seaton became principal and vice-chancellor at Abertay University in 2012. He has held a number of senior university leadership roles. During his career, he spent six years in the USA where he experienced ‘a very different diversity culture.’ He has also worked in the oil industry, which has for a long period seen the importance of diversity and inclusion for global success.

Leading a university that is extending its global reach through partnerships, Professor Seaton is committed to ensuring that Abertay University offers equality of treatment within a liberal democratic context. Given the institution’s links with commerce and government, he is clear that values need to be carefully considered in any potential joint ventures. Indeed, he sees liberal values as being fundamental to a university community, and reports being ‘shocked’ that some universities in the UK have allowed segregation by gender at some events on campus. He sees this as a real ‘test of our liberal values.’
The principal is a values driven leader – with strong beliefs in fairness, honesty, humility and putting the organisation first. For him, adopting an ethical approach is the key driver for change on diversity: ‘This is more important than the business drivers for change around diversity.’ He expects his staff to aspire to the same values and behave accordingly. He holds his leaders responsible for creating a sense of community that is effective and supportive and one that values ‘curiosity, creativity, innovation and interdisciplinarity’ and is less about individual allegiance to a particular subject.

While the principal may not believe that a conventional business case should be the main driver for progress of equality and diversity, he stresses the contribution that equality and diversity can make to the institution’s overall effectiveness. For instance, he is interested in how paying attention to diversity can drive better practices in general, for example, with regard to career development.

He also appreciates the importance of the value of ‘diversity of thinking’ because it means more effective challenge, a wider range of ideas, and these together lead to better policy decisions and strategy. At a pragmatic level, he is also well aware that not to have a diverse academic staff jars with the nature of the student body.

‘We need to be careful that we don’t have a mono-culture at the leadership level of people with, for example, mostly STEM and middle class backgrounds.’

The university’s equality and diversity framework was approved by the university court in October of the year that Professor Seaton arrived at Abertay University. Subsequently, he has championed the agenda by leading the sign-up for the Athena SWAN charter and ECU race equality charter mark trial. He has attended events during the Women in science festival 2014 and refers to topical equality issues in his executive blog.

Institutional drivers

While legal compliance is perhaps less significant than previously, the Scottish statutory duties (as part of the specific duties within the public sector equality duty) and the requirement to deliver on the new institutional outcome agreements with the Scottish Funding Council, mean that compliance remains an important driver.
The university has an equality and diversity action plan (from which the equality and diversity components of Abertay University’s outcome agreement have been drawn). Heads of schools and services are considered accountable for their progress to their relevant objectives and they are required to include equality and diversity in their operational reviews and plans each year.

As well as achieving Athena SWAN bronze status by April 2015, the action plan includes the goal of doubling the number of women professors by 2015.

For Professor Seaton, fairness is firmly at the heart of the case for diversity, ‘we must be transparently fair. It is important to treat people fairly, helping colleagues to achieve their career aspirations and valuing the different career patterns they may have had.’

This has translated into a willingness to review and challenge the way recruitment and promotion decisions have been made.

The principal believes that by looking at this process through the lens of diversity it has led to better decisions. This is not, in his view, addressed by focusing on the composition of the panel: ‘Including a woman in a panel doesn’t necessarily make it more effective. You have to make sure a panel is trained to be on the look-out for bias and the criteria are clear and consistently applied.’

With universities traditionally looking at a long record of career achievement in considering promotion cases, the focus is on job history rather than the current job being done. Career breaks disrupt the history as Professor Seaton explains: ‘A different approach, which does not depend on using a long career history as a proxy for current contribution, is needed if we are to properly reflect the contribution of individuals in promotion decisions.’

Abertay University is putting a greater emphasis on current performance and also on the wider contribution that individuals make to the university (which, it so happens, women tend to do more of).

For students there is a desire to increase applications from female and male students in areas of historic low participation. This is not just about women on male dominated courses (for example,
increasing women on computer games courses from 5% to 15%) but also about attracting more male students to studies such as nursing where the target is an increase of 10% from 12-22% over the planning period.

A particular area of concern on the student side is that black and minority ethnic students are significantly less satisfied than their white peers (68% versus 85%).

**Impact and conclusion**

It is obviously too early to gauge the impact of the work to-date on equality and diversity. Indeed, some key information is simply not available – many of the objectives in the action plan rely on data, much of which are not centrally recorded. This explains why the immediate work of the equality team is currently focused on monitoring and review.

Similarly, the work on the self-assessment stage of Athena SWAN and the same process for the race equality charter mark will provide a basis for assessing evidence of impact in the future.

One positive indicator is that in the first staff survey (carried out in July 2013) the university scored best on staff ‘being treated with respect, regardless of their personal characteristics (ethnic background, gender, etc).’

Professor Seaton is optimistic about Abertay University’s ability to make progress and he sees the diverse mix of the university court as very helpful, making them (in his view) less prone than other institutions to go with conservative appointments.
Aberystwyth University: A new approach to promotion

The institution

Aberystwyth University in Wales was founded in the second half of the 19th century. It takes pride in having made a significant contribution to the education of women, being one of the first institutions to admit female students. The university employs 2,267 staff and has over 9,600 students with 52% male and 48% female students. The majority (82%) of students are from the UK (30% of these from Wales). A further 9% are European and 9% international (Aberystwyth University (2014) Annual equality report). The law and business school attract a high percentage of overseas students, notably from a strong recruiting base in Malaysia. Information studies offers a distance learning course that also attracts significant overseas students.

- 79% of students are white (including other white background)
- 6.6% are from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups
- 14.2% have no known ethnicity or have refused to declare
- 9% of students are fluent Welsh speakers with a further 6% with some Welsh
- 10.7% of students have a disability (1,072) and of these 58% declared a specific learning disability (for example, dyslexia)
- 93.7% of young full-time first degree entrants come from state schools or colleges
- 24.7% of UK domiciled students are from UK low participation areas

The vice-chancellor

Professor April McMahon was appointed vice-chancellor in 2011 and has spent her life in academia, moving from the University of Edinburgh after her PhD to work at the University of Cambridge and later to the University of Sheffield before taking up her role at Aberystwyth University. Having been brought up by a mother who was bright and ambitious but who left school with no qualifications, she is, she says, ‘not so much an advocate for widening participation but an advertisement.’

Part of the vice-chancellor’s rationale for diversity avoids the potential waste of talent. As she explains: ‘Imagine the talent and potential that is not being realised – to make the most of your staff and student body you have to make progress on diversity.’
She believes that without a full diversity of people in the staff and student body, the university is cheating its students.

Professor McMahon also emphasises the importance of role modelling as a catalyst for change. ‘If you see someone who seems like you in a more senior role then it is much easier to feel you can make it – you don’t have to feel you are breaking new ground.’

She also sees equality as an ethical matter which is reflected in the creation of a new role of university director of ethics and equality.

The vice-chancellor is delighted that she has a good gender mix in her executive team (which is 50/50 men and women) and in her view this element of balance is vital in the decision making process for a senior leadership team. ‘Decisions must be made in a thorough, good humoured, fair and proper manner and good people need to be given the right roles.’ But, this should be on merit: ‘A brilliant planning head is not brilliant because she is female, but because she is an outstanding head of planning.’

When it comes to leadership, there is, Professor McMahon feels, something of a myth about male and female styles and it is something about which she has often been asked in interviews. For example: ‘Are you going to be tough enough?’ Her sense is though that when women are tough there is a danger that they are labelled as unreasonable and unapproachable. The important thing she feels, is to develop your own authentic style and not be concerned about stereotypes.

**Institutional drivers**

Promoting equality at Aberystwyth University is seen as an integral part of the way it conducts and delivers its activities. Building on the previous equality scheme, a four year strategic equality plan was launched in 2012. This was developed by drawing on an anonymous equality engagement survey, staff and student engagement workshops and a review of strategies and policies. The process also included collaboration with Bangor University on widening access and learning and teaching strategies.

The strategic equality plan consists of five overarching objectives with themes that include embedding and enhancing equality and diversity through training, leadership and communication,
ensuring inclusion and transparency in the institution’s strategy and policy development as well as enhancing the accessibility of the physical and virtual environment.

The university’s external profile is also important and in her foreword to the strategic equality plan, Professor McMahon sets the scene for the importance of the equality and diversity agenda in the context of economic uncertainty, the aspiration to widen access and the internationalisation strategy.

Improving the representation of women across the university, particularly at senior academic level, is seen as important. To support this goal the university has encouraged and supported women through leadership training, such as the LFHE Aurora programme. In late 2014 springboard leadership training will be delivered on site.

A very different approach to promotion has taken place, to ensure there is real change and progress. Given that the student experience is more and more important and that the university has ‘some stunning expertise in teaching and learning’ Professor McMahon was keen to develop a balanced ‘points basis’ approach to promotion, where not only research but also teaching, learning and leadership would be recognised.

To redesign the promotion process, a working group of staff and union representatives (with an independent chair from another university) worked solidly over two days to reach a conclusion. The result was a points based system which mixes research, business engagement, public engagement, leadership, teaching and learning.

Impact

The university is now into its third round of the redesigned promotion scheme and while it has taken a while to get off the ground, there are signs that the number of women applying are increasing. ‘At first people didn’t believe us but after a while people began to see that new and different promotions were being made’, says Professor McMahon.

It is a two stage process, and staff can indicate they are considering promotion and are then supported over a six month period with mentoring. This has worked well: some people (and more
disproportionately women) have been put off by a cold application when asked to commit, but were prepared to tentatively apply with a six months preparation process.

Recently the university decided that one applicant had the ability and the performance to date which merited a promotion to readership rather than the senior lectureship for which they had initially applied. This sent out a powerful message and there are signs that it is a message that is being heard. Most importantly, it is playing a part in a shift in behaviour of women.

The academic promotions process for 2014 has seen a noticeable increase in the number of female applicants expressing an interest in applying for promotion. Sue Chambers, Director of Human Resources, notes that ‘once we would have said we were cautiously optimistic that this will translate into more applications from women but this is not something we intend to remain cautious about. We expect women to apply in 2014 in greater numbers than in previous years because we know we have the talent out there. And that can only benefit future generations of students – both male and female.’

The impact of teaching innovators has also been demonstrated through the highly successful student-led teaching awards held in May for the third year running where a wide range of teaching staff were nominated.

Restructuring has also created some more aspirational roles – having developed six bigger institutes from 17 academic departments, diversity has been improved by the appointment of new institute leaders.

**Conclusion**

Professor McMahon accepts that it is early days: ‘The university is not an exemplar in that we’ve finished the journey but we are an exemplar of effort.’ For example, the university improved ten places in the 100 workplace index in January 2014 and while the submission for an institutional bronze Athena SWAN award was unsuccessful in 2012, it has positively resulted in increased gender equality activities and work towards institutional and departmental awards as well as participating in ECU gender equality charter mark. It was the first university and student union in Wales to sign the Time to change Cymru pledge in 2013. The university also
substantially improved its position on the Stonewall workplace equality index in 2014 from 199 out of 376 in 2013 to 186 out of 369 in 2014.

Looking ahead, monitoring and targets are under consideration – ‘We are thinking about setting targets now we are a few years along the way, but these targets are purely a measure of progress rather than an end in themselves. They are not the primary driver.’

There are also expectations that recruitment and selection monitoring will be carried out more robustly once the new e-recruitment system is in place. This will enable the closer interrogation of data about our applicants and the impact of different recruitment methods on the selection of staff. The Pobl Aber People (human resources/payroll system) with its self-service modules will facilitate improved collection of source equality data, especially for newer protected characteristics.

In terms of students, based on their location in West Wales, the university is reaching out to another under-represented group – the population of young white men from low education and achievement backgrounds. Understanding the challenges of engaging with higher education by groups who are under-represented and providing focused support is a key aim for the university.

As only the second female fellow of her Cambridge college in the 1980s, and the first staff member ever in her department at University of Cambridge to have become pregnant back in the 1990s, Professor McMahon is clear that there has been a great deal of progress on diversity: ‘I have seen an enormous transformation since the 1980s and we don’t always give credit for that journey. It is important to celebrate improvements even though progress does not seem to move fast enough.’
Cardiff University: Taking a strategic approach

The institution

Cardiff University is a Russell Group university with about 6,000 staff, 54% of whom are women. As far as the 25,644 students are concerned:

- female students outnumber male students (58.5% versus 41.5%)
- 10.7% of all UK domiciled students are from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds
- 7.5% of all students have disclosed a disability, over half of whom cite a specific learning disability (for example, dyslexia)
- 20.6% (5,885) are international students

Following extensive consultation – with staff, students and external communities – in 2012 the university drew up its four year strategic equality plan.

The vision for this plan is articulated as: ‘We will be a world leading university that promotes a diverse and inclusive environment to allow our community to achieve its full potential for individual and organisational development benefiting both local and global communities.’

The president and vice-chancellor

Professor Colin Riordan was appointed president and vice-chancellor of Cardiff University in September 2012, having held the same position at the University of Essex. He is vice-president of Universities UK and chair of Higher Education Wales.

Professor Riordan has contributed to the discussion on diversity over many years in public forums across the UK and he is a member of the Board of Equality Challenge Unit. He believes that there are three distinct cases to be made for diversity – the moral case, the business case and the intellectual case.

The moral case can be encapsulated in one comment: ‘It is wholly unfair that 50% of the population (ie women) do not get the same life opportunities and that this still exists at universities. It is a real failure of democracy and a real failure of opportunity.’ As he explains, this lack of life opportunities plays out in not having the same pay, not having the same success in careers, not being represented at the highest level and not being able to access senior professors’ roles that are hugely biased towards men.
He sees the core of the **business case**, as the waste of talent to the organisation. ‘We have a very narrow pool of talent to recruit from, especially at leadership level – we have to exploit all opportunities to widen it.’

From an **intellectual perspective** Professor Riordan is convinced that better quality decision making takes place in a more diverse team. Therefore, an ambition he has personally is to have a very diverse (if not the most diverse) senior team in the sector.

He acknowledges that a diverse team is not always comfortable. It is important, he adds, that the team don’t latch on to what they think he wants to hear. ‘There is more challenge and different perspectives emerge. This ultimately leads to improved decision making, avoiding “group think”.’

Professor Riordan describes his leadership approach as ‘role modelling behaviour – practising rather than preaching.’ His sense is that in the end, what is compelling about diversity is not so much a vision or policy document but what gets done.

Since his appointment at Cardiff University, he has been actively involved in the development of the university’s approach to equality and diversity and takes steps to signal his commitment.

For instance, he is actively involved with Cardiff futures, a management development and leadership programme for staff in the early stages of their career that encourages real collaboration across the university. He is always keen to ensure that the delegates are as diverse as possible with this significant opportunity open to women as well as men in equal numbers.

Overall, his leadership style around diversity is one of modelling, coaching and encouraging reflection rather than being overly directive – but occasionally moving into a ‘tell mode’ if, for example a particularly bland, non-diverse shortlist of people were put forward.

In addition to the work with his own senior leadership team, Professor Riordan has spent a lot of time talking to his own council chair on diversity. He is encouraged by what he sees as an increasing commitment to diverse appointments. ‘The last three or four [appointments] have been quite interesting and they have made quite a difference.’
Encouraged by the Welsh specific public sector duties of the Equality Act 2010, the university is taking a holistic approach to equality and diversity, recognising how the protected characteristics intersect. It has also sought to set outcome-focused targets, rather than aspirational action plans.

This approach fits well with two other key shifts in the external environment. Firstly, the introduction of student fees and the associated increased expectations that students have of their specific requirements being met by the university. Secondly, the internationalisation agenda – not only in the increasing number of overseas students and ensuring that they have a good experience but also in providing a more global experience for home students and fostering good relations between very diverse groups of students.

The foreword to the strategic equality plan states: ‘We recognise that embedding equality and promoting the benefits of diversity in everything we do is not only fundamental to meeting our legal, moral and ethical responsibilities, but is also crucial to fostering the kind of excellence and success which a world-class university aims to achieve.’

In other words, the university sees equality and diversity as an integral part of the institution it wants to be and rates all the different staff, student and external drivers as very important. Given the desire to embed equality and diversity, it is perhaps not surprising that the university places a strong emphasis on culture.

Its strategic equality plan has three over-riding themes:

1. **organisational culture** ‘A culture based on dignity, courtesy and respect’ with two specific objectives.
2. **students and staff** ‘An inspiring and enriching educational and working experience for students and staff’ with three specific objectives.
3. **communities** ‘Encouraging and supporting community cohesion’ with one specific objective.

The six specific objectives are underpinned by 83 equality actions against which there are measured outcomes, an identified lead and timescales.
One of the objectives is specifically concerned with developing inclusive curricula. Cardiff University ran an inclusive curriculum project from 2008 to 2013 and all schools reviewed their practices in learning, teaching and assessment to check against inclusivity and accessibility. Work to provide an inclusive curriculum is ongoing, for instance, the school of health care sciences is working with Stonewall to embed issues relating to the needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people to ensure these are included in the curriculum and translated into teaching.

The vice-chancellor sets clear expectations regarding diversity for his senior team members, and these include some targets and key performance indicators. One requirement is that leaders will promote diversity within their own teams by recruiting diverse people into various roles – and performance on targets is linked to pay.

Progress with the strategic equality plan is overseen by the equality and diversity committee and is reported to governance committee and council on an annual basis.

**Impact**

There have been several areas of improvement in student-related data:

- the proportion of students from BME backgrounds has risen year on year from 7.7% of undergraduates in 2010/11 to 8.1% in 2011/12 and 9.4% in 2012/13

- there has also been an increase in the number of students disclosing a disability rising from 6.6% in 2010/11 to 7.5% in 2012/13

While the university feels it is too early to see a significant change, some improvements have also been identified in attainment levels for some protected characteristic groups. From the initial data it appears that over the last three years:

- there has been an increase in the proportion of women receiving first class degrees

- the proportion of females receiving a first class degree, which rose from 16.5% in 2010/11 to 20.1% in 2012/13

- for 2.1 degrees the proportion has risen from 56.5% (2010/11 and 2011/12) to 59.3% in 2012/13
there has also been a small increase in the numbers of disabled students receiving a 2:1 (with 54.1% of students receiving a 2:1 in 2010/11 rising to 58.9% in 2012/13)

The university can also show some clear impact on the internationalisation agenda. For overseas students, applications have seen an increase of 39.2% between 2010/11 and 2013/14 with the number applying going from 17,979 to 25,035 in 2013/14. The proportion of students recruited and recorded with an overseas fee code has increased from 12.4% in 2005/06 to 17.6% in 2012/13.

Satisfaction levels for overseas students are also critical and in 2012, Cardiff University was rated higher than other Russell Group institutions in the international student barometer. In 2013, Cardiff University received the StudyPortals gold award and was ranked the best UK university for international student satisfaction in their Europe-wide survey.

The work Cardiff University has done around sexual orientation has also been recognised externally. Stonewall in their Gay by degree guide identify Cardiff University as one of only two universities to receive full marks for 2013/14 and Cardiff University has been ranked fifty-second nationally in the Stonewall top 100 employers’ index in 2014 (one of only five higher education institutions to feature).

Cardiff University has eight Athena SWAN awards (six bronze and two silver awards). With specific training on career pathways for female academics, the university has observed there is an increase in applications and success rates over the last four years for women in academic roles with data for academic promotions indicating that numbers of women applying for promotions rose from 37 in 2009/10 (21 were successful) to 45 in 2010/11 (33 were successful), 41 in 2011/12 (32 were successful) and 52 in 2012/13 (42 were successful).

**Conclusion**

As someone who has championed equality and diversity for a long time, Professor Riordan is at times frustrated about the slow progress, but as he explains, ‘this whole area of diversity is a bit like the environment. We have to boost our efforts occasionally and remind ourselves of our success.’
Kingston University London: Valuing diversity of thinking

The institution

Kingston University London is a University Alliance institution. With four campuses, it employs over 2,000 members of staff and has around 21,600 students of whom the majority (almost 16,000) are undergraduates. There are nearly 4,000 overseas students. The student population as a whole is richly diverse:

= the number of female students stands at 55% (45% male students), and this varies depending on the faculty
= the student ethnicity breakdown is 26% Asian, 16% black, 9% other, 48% white, (and 1% refused)
= 1,824 students (8.4%) have a declared disability (just over half of these have a learning difficulty or dyslexia)

The vice-chancellor

Professor Julius Weinberg has been vice-chancellor at Kingston University London for three years and his appointment has coincided with a greater focus on equality and diversity. It has been an institutional priority for the last two years.

Professor Weinberg’s background is in medicine and he has worked extensively overseas including in Zimbabwe and in Bosnia where he saw the effects of ethnic cleansing. As a child of a German Jewish survivor, he describes diversity as ‘naturally embedded’ within his inner belief system and as fundamental to his leadership style.

He sees the benefit of challenge and the richness of dialogue and ideas that diversity of thinking generates, and has witnessed this personally in his own research work.

As a leader he is comfortable challenging others around diversity: ‘I resist comfort and encourage the outlier/left field input.’

With a recent senior appointment for example, the panel was faced with a choice between a candidate who would possibly fit in better with the team and another who would challenge the team more. He advocated the more challenging candidate – and the appointment has been a great success.
Professor Weinberg likes to engage directly and personalise diversity issues. ‘Telling stories is much more compelling than the data.’ So he might refer to his daughter who ‘gives him a hard time’ about the UK’s low number of women studying engineering.

He is obviously also aware that his visibility sends an important symbolic message: he was an active participant in the consultation for the development of the Kingston strategy for equality, diversity and inclusion, and led the discussion in the senior management team on the adoption of the new black and minority ethnic (BME) attainment gap key performance indicator.

Another significant example of a symbolic leadership gesture was appointing Bonnie Greer (the black American-British playwright and novelist) as chancellor, which personifies the message of ‘your origins do not determine your outcome.’

In an ideal world, any university would simply represent the broader environment in which it operates. He sees part of his role as challenging inequality and ensuring an inclusive environment for the university.

The moral and social case for equality and diversity are seen as compelling – as the vice-chancellor himself observes, ‘the saddest thought is that there are bright talented people who fail to reach their potential. It is also a social disaster.’ This neatly encapsulates the moral case, the social case – and links directly to a core purpose for the university.

A key institutional driver is the desire for increasing the ‘diversity of thinking and view’ at the university, which plays out in at both the level of team, and organisational effectiveness. From a team perspective, the sense is that if there is the same set of implicit assumptions or misconceptions around the table, it limits the way the team can respond to things. An example given was a useful challenge made by a new colleague with some very different experience, regarding how some important organisation changes could be made.

At an organisational level, energy has been put into developing good relationships with US universities, particularly UNC Charlotte.
and Grand Valley, and encouraging exchanges of staff and students to expand different perspectives.

Diversity of thinking and view is also a relevant driver for effective research, where diversity of thought is key to success. As the vice-chancellor says, ‘some of the most successful research I have been involved in was with people who were very different from me – I found them irritating at times!’

Other institutional drivers include the desire to reflect the broader environment in which the university operates and to meet student needs and learning preferences more fully. To this end, the teaching framework and materials were redesigned to ensure that they are accessible to all. As the vice-chancellor says, ‘we need to challenge ourselves re the way we teach – there are culturally different ways of learning – we are challenging ourselves re the theory of “problem based pedagogy”.’

The equality and diversity strategy reflects these drivers. It was developed through a three year period of in-depth data analysis and consultation both internally and externally, and sets out the equality objectives for both staff and students. Clear and measurable outcomes have been developed – four student-related and five regarding staff diversity.

With BME students accounting for more than half of the undergraduate population, their higher attrition rate and attainment gap is a significant challenge that the 2012-2016 strategy seeks to address. An objective has been set to increase the proportion of BME undergraduate students achieving a first or 2:1 degree to 54.9%. Other measures include an increase in retention and progression rates for BME students.

Energy is also being put into improving employability by setting up an employability advisory panel and developing strong relationships with, for example, Enterprise Rent a Car and Clifford Chance.

A further driver is ensuring fair access to promotion opportunities. The university has set itself a target to increase the number of staff who can be selected for submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF). This led to changes in the university’s code of practice on the selection of staff for submission.
Decisions about individual circumstances were managed centrally and the aim has been to minimise the possibility of bias creeping into decision-making. The impact of the changes will be able to be assessed when the REF results are available in December 2014.

As a further piece of positive action, specialist training on avoiding unconscious or implicit bias in decision making is being embedded into existing recruitment and selection training as well as into leadership programmes.

**Impact**

Kingston University London is now half way through its four year strategy and a very significant increase has been identified in the awareness of the university’s equality strategy and initiatives – up 31% between 2010/11 and 2012/13.

There have been increases in student satisfaction (up 3% to 78% in 2011/12), and some in retention (87% in 2011/12, compared to 86.1% in 2009/10).

BME student attainment levels (2:1) have improved from 43.7% to 47.4%. Retention of BME students also increased to 85.4% from 84.4%.

There have also been significant increases in the proportion of BME postgraduate students from 33.3% to 36.3%.

Earlier this year Kingston University London received the *Human resources diversity* initiative award at the *Guardian* University Awards – presented for its innovative project that embeds equality, diversity and inclusion into its new academic progression and promotion process.

With promotion to professorial grade historically involving a research-heavy career path, Kingston University London has developed additional routes for staff to progress including teaching and learning or professional practice. As a result there has been an increase in proportion of eligible women, BME and disabled staff submitting applications for promotions.
Conclusions

The vice-chancellor made clear that there is still much work to be done.

Attainment levels for BME students remain a major priority. Actions to address these challenges will concentrate on activities such as developing a final year/first year student mentoring programme and developing practical tools to support personal tutors.

On the staff side, there is much work to be done to build the pipeline of senior BME staff, from which to recruit senior leaders. A greater focus on progressing the breakthrough of women to senior levels is also required.

The progress on the promotion project will be driven by the new human resources system, which will collect and analyse changes in promotion profiles compared to the composition of feeder grades. It will also gather data on appointments to senior roles and working flexibly.

This data will facilitate holding senior leaders to account, and equality objectives will be included in performance reviews.

Through the application of this energy and focus, Kingston University London seeks to live up to the aspirations in its’ vision: ‘We challenge inequality; understanding that patterns of inequality in society and higher education are also reflected at the university and that difference in outcomes for our students and staff should be challenged by all of us and addressed through a multiple of strategies, including lawful positive action.’
University of Lincoln: equality and diversity drives rise up the league tables

The institution

A University Alliance institution, the University of Lincoln is spread over three sites including a new award winning campus at Brayford Pool based around a marina in the city centre. It employs 1,363 members of staff.

There are 12,720 students on campus – 11,580 from the UK and a further 1,140 overseas students from more than 100 different nationalities. The university has partnerships with major universities and colleges across China and India, and the international study centre is working to extend its global reach.

The student population is very diverse. In 2013/14:

= 52.8% of undergraduates are female (47.2 % male) and this rises to 54.8% at postgraduate level

= 14.8% of undergraduates are from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds and this rises to 30.9% at postgraduate level

= 12.2% of undergraduates have declared a disability, though that reduces to 8.3% of students declaring a disability at postgraduate level

The university has taken great care to set out its positive position on equality and diversity. The focus is strongly on cultural change and the part that everyone has in creating that environment. Its formal statement positions fair treatment as a basic principle and sets out seven commitments in plain English – actions that the university will take to foster this culture. Alongside this statement is a respect charter which sets out five core values – including ‘recognise that we will not always share the same points of view’ and ‘own and try to learn positively from our mistakes’ which culminate in ‘be mutually supportive, and improve through our ability to work and learn together.’

The vice-chancellor

Professor Mary Stuart has been at the University of Lincoln for four and a half years. Born in South Africa, she grew up during apartheid. She attended a multi-racial drama school and through ‘this baptism of fire’ she became very clear where she stood on the issue of race. Professor Stuart came to the UK when she was 21. Now a social scientist and life historian, her specialism is social
The rationale for equality and diversity

proficiency – a discipline which obviously has strong links with equality and diversity.

Professor Stuart is unequivocal about the importance of equality and diversity at the University of Lincoln. ‘You are not going to be able to push the frontiers of knowledge and educate the range of students that we have unless the university is diversity aware and diversity friendly.’ Diversity brings the different perspectives, different life experiences and the ‘richness of thought’ that she feels is so essential to university life.

The vice-chancellor recognises the positive role the university can play as a catalyst for change in the region. (This is not an area that has as significant cultural diversity as other parts of the UK) and believes that it has an important role in the wider community in transforming employment prospects and boosting the local economy.

The vice-chancellor has been a staunch advocate, role model and supporter of diversity work across the university, for example she has chaired the Athena SWAN committee. The university has set a key performance indicator (KPI) to increase the number of female academic applicants to STEM areas by 1% year-on-year and has put aside an investment of £0.5 million to realise this ambition.

Directly involved in shaping the agenda since her appointment, she effects change through a coaching style of questioning: ‘What’s the monitoring we have done on that?’ or ‘where’s the student voice?’

For instance, to more fully understand the issue of the BME experience and look at the outcomes required for students, the university has been working closely with the president of the students’ union, a BME student originally from London. This example of collaboration is fundamental to the vice-chancellor’s aspiration that the student voice is evident in everything that is done and she is very proud of the joint working partnership that has been developed between the students’ union and the equality and diversity committee.

On her appointment Professor Stuart was the only women on the board of governors. After nearly five years, the board is already
more diverse and she was delighted when recently the chair of the board emphasised the importance and benefit of a diverse board. ‘I felt that was a real breakthrough.’

Professor Stuart is not afraid to talk personally, drawing on her years in South Africa and she likes to share her experience of how she dealt with her own racism – thus underlining that everyone is on a ‘learning journey’. Also, being hearing impaired, she is not averse to revealing her disability as a well-judged shock tactic to challenge disrespect – ‘you didn’t know that did you?’

Institutional drivers

While the more traditional human resources drivers around attracting the best staff and creating a more inclusive environment for staff remain very important, equality and diversity is now considered in a much more integrated way.

The introduction of student fees has clearly changed the landscape for all higher education institutions and gives a strong focus to the University of Lincoln’s work. The university has set itself KPIs about beating HEFCE benchmarks relating to widening participation and seeks to promote an ‘internationalised culture by diversifying our student and staff population.’ They recognise the need to increase the diversity of the staff population as the student body evolves and are aiming to reach 39.5% of overseas applicants for academic posts by 2016.

The Research Excellence Framework (REF) has been another driver for taking a more integrated approach to equality and diversity. The university introduced a mandatory code, the staff circumstances procedure and the associated equality impact assessment showed that without the intervention of the staff circumstance process the gender representation in the REF would have been considerably lower.

The process also highlighted the need to review how the university could encourage more colleagues to feel confident about declaring their personal circumstances or disability at the earliest opportunity to ensure support and adjustments are timely and of benefit.
Impact

Lincoln is now placed in the top half of all UK universities by the Guardian University guide 2014 and The Times and Sunday Times Good university guide 2014, having risen more places in the last five years than almost any other UK institution. The Times Good university guide 2014 described it as ‘the most dramatic transformation of a university in recent times.’

The university are clear about the vital role the equality and diversity agenda has played in enabling it to achieve the strategic goal to become a top 50 UK university.

In the past two years, the University of Lincoln has received awards for outstanding employer engagement (for the work between the Lincoln school of engineering and Siemens), the Universities Human Resources award for employee engagement, the Payroll awards for employee engagement and just recently the university was a finalist in the top employers for working families award for their support for employees through all stages of motherhood.

There have been impressive year-on-year increases in staff engagement levels, from 61% in 2009 to 65% in 2011 and 70% in 2013. In 2013 97% of respondents agreed they were aware of the university’s equality and diversity policies and 87% felt respected by managers.

There has been a significant increase in the number of women promoted via the academic promotion process – up from 25% (2012/13) to 45% in the 2013/14 round. Interestingly, over the past four years, Lincoln have also made three female appointments to senior roles working flexibly with a combination of part-time working patterns and home-working. The university also notes that they have seen progress on narrowing gender pay gaps and are continually achieving better than sector average results re pay parity.

There has also been some increase in the proportion of academic staff from BME backgrounds, rising from 9.6% in 2012 to 10.8% in 2014 (successfully exceeding one of the university’s corporate equality objectives earlier than anticipated). On the student side, the proportion of ethnic minority undergraduates has risen by 6.3% in 2011/12 and from 8.5% to 14.8% in 2013/14. At postgraduate level the rise is even higher, by 9.3% from 21.6% in 2011/12 to 30.9% in 2013/14.
This positive growth pattern has also been recorded in the number of overseas students studying at the University of Lincoln for this same period by 8.7% from 5% in 2011/12 to 13.7% in 2013/14.

Conclusion

Progress may have been impressive, but this has not led to complacency: as Professor Stuart acknowledges, ‘we haven’t got it all right, it’s a continual journey. We continuously have to be challenging; to ourselves and others to progress our culture. We need to be as ambitious as we can.’

The vice-chancellor feels that in particular there is a long way to go on ethnicity and disability – and accordingly, some stretching KPIs are being put in place.

In 2012 the university commissioned a newly designed disability focused workshop to give staff confidence in their knowledge, attitude and approach to disability.

The university’s location plays a part in making it more difficult to attract BME staff. The vice-chancellor is working to help break down the barriers by hosting community events and carrying forward identified project actions. As she explains, ‘we are really about trying to wake up the community to being global citizens in a global environment and the university plays a crucial part in that.’
Newcastle University: Quality needs diversity

The institution

Newcastle University is a member of the Russell Group, and its main teaching and research activities centre around its city-centre campus. The university also offers international study opportunities with two campuses in Malaysia and Singapore. Overall the university employs 5,429 members of staff, 45% of whom are academics.

There are 22,874 students enrolled at the university, including students based in Malaysia and Singapore, and more than 17,000 are UK and EU students. Non-EU students account for 25% of those studying and almost 1,000 students are based on the overseas campuses.

- There is an even balance of male and female students (49% female and 51% male)
- 9.1% of UK students are from a black minority ethnic (BME) background (2013 new intake)
- Data for all full time UK undergraduates shows that 4.5% were in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance (2013/14 population)

The university has a strong commitment to equality, which the vice-chancellor explains in his foreword to the university’s equality strategy: ‘Diversity is not a sufficient condition for quality, but it is necessary; without it we will not attain true quality.’

The vice-chancellor

Vice-chancellor Professor Chris Brink has been actively engaged with the equality and diversity agenda for many years and was until recently joint Chair of the Board of Equality Challenge Unit. A mathematician and philosopher, he was born and brought up in South Africa. He became vice-chancellor at Newcastle University in 2007.

His message is simple ‘quality needs diversity’ and it is something about which he writes, speaks and makes his views very clear. He sets out the rationale for making progress at the university as follows: ‘Diversity has an inherent educational value – and sociodiversity is valuable to the intellectual environment in the same way as biodiversity is valuable to the natural environment.’
However, he recognises that with diversity comes the risk of inequality and ‘the aim of the equality agenda is to decouple circumstance from destiny. Ability should be able to access opportunity regardless of circumstance.’

The vice-chancellor’s commitment to equality and diversity was immediately evident on joining the university when he initiated a number of think tank workshops on issues of institutional importance, one of which explored gender balance in academic careers at the university. This has continued to be high on the agenda ever since. ‘It helps’ he says, ‘when the message is straight from the top.’

‘A focus on equality and diversity fits well with being able to articulate the societal value of the university’ he states, and he considers there are real benefits to the university in turning diversity to advantage as a driver of learning and a source of innovation.

**Institutional drivers**

Newcastle University has a vision to be ‘a civic university with a global reputation for academic excellence.’ The vision 2021 strategy document sets out the university’s core values including a commitment to excellence, valuing diversity and responding to societal challenges. As the vice-chancellor states in his foreword: ‘For me, our equality strategy ties these three values together. We value diversity because we are committed to excellence, and we recognise the existence of inequality as a concomitant social challenge, to which we undertake to respond.’

While the university has specific equality targets and actions relating to different groups of staff and students, it also recognises that people have multiple identities and that ‘inequalities are rarely experienced in isolation, but are often interdependent.’ In summary, the university wants to ensure that ‘no one experiences disadvantage because of who they are.’

The plan that accompanies the equality strategy is divided into two parts. One part covers regular, core actions (including monitoring data and progress on key performance indicators (KPIs) – a noticeable area of strength at Newcastle compared to some other higher education institutions – and the other details time-related initiatives or one off activities with specific outcomes to encourage progress on KPIs and targets.
The university has set itself a balanced set of KPIs, which include benchmarks for staff representation (for instance, increasing the proportion of female professors to 30% by 2021) and also for cultural change and leadership (using the results from their employee opinion survey).

On the student side, the university has for many years performed strongly against HESA widening participation benchmarks in the north-east as a result of long-term, sustained outreach work with schools. The university has a strong national recruitment profile and this has an impact on its overall widening participation performance. Detailed analysis by region has shown the challenge of widening participation in regions that are more geographically remote. The further away students come from, the less likely they are to be from a widening participation background.

There is clarity about responsibilities for the equalities agenda – starting with the university council and then with the vice-chancellor, who has executive responsibility for the effective deployment of policies. Managers are responsible for ensuring the strategy is implemented within their own units or services. The director of human resources and the academic registrar have responsibilities for the monitoring of the strategy relating to (respectively) staff and students.

‘Our staff regard the university as a good place to work’ is Professor Brink’s observation on the overarching impact of the university’s work on diversity. Indeed, employees recently voted the university one of the best places to work in the Times Higher Education best university workplace survey 2014. The university ranked in the top five for positive responses to questions about leadership, recommending working at the university, work-life balance and providing a fair deal for its employees.

The employee opinion survey scores also show positive trends. The 2013 results were up from the 2010 score of 3.22 to 3.26 (out of a maximum of 4). Results from the 2013 employee opinion survey also show that positive responses on leadership have increased steadily since 2007, rising from 61% to 80% in 2013. Similarly the questions regarding experience of bullying and harassment have also reduced from 4% to 3% – below the higher education institution norm on both occasions and below the
Newcastle University: Quality needs diversity

Newcastle University’s target of 7%. There were no equality-related grievances in either 2011/12 or 2012/13.

Newcastle University can also show tangible impacts in terms of staff profiles.

Between 2011 and 2013, the number of female academics has grown steadily (apart from those at reader level) with the number of female professors notably increasing from 76 in 2011 to 90 in 2013, an increase of 18.4% (their male counterparts increased by 8.4%). The number of female senior lecturers has also grown by 20% (rising to 100 from 83 in 2011).

Newcastle University (at 11.7%) is in line with the HESA figure for the national proportion of BME academic staff. Between 2007 and 2010 applications from BME academic for promotion were 6% and 7%, since then it has been running at between 11% and 16%. In 2012/13 11% of applicants were from BME backgrounds, they constituted 11% of approved promotions and, of course, this was also broadly in line with the ethnic profile of the academic community.

On the student side, the university can show high levels of satisfaction – at 90% in 2013 – and a consistently strong and improving retention rate for undergraduates (with non-continuation reducing from 4.3% in 2001 to 2.3%).

The 2013 results on widening participation show the university is making progress on its societal challenge agenda with increases in the proportion of entry year students for:

- national statistics socioeconomic classifications (NS-SEC) groups 4-7 up from 19.4% in 2011 to 21.8%
- low participation neighbourhoods – up from 7.2% in 2011 to 8.5%
- students from BME backgrounds increasing from 7% in 2011 to 8.7%
- students declaring a disability rose from 6.9% in 2011 to 7.5%

Applications from international students have increased significantly for undergraduates (from 3,821 in 2012 to 4,915 in 2014, an increase of 28.6%). The numbers actually recruited has increased from 624 (2009) to 965 (2013) – a rise of 54.6%. There have been similar percentage increases for postgraduate students.
Satisfaction levels for overseas students has been above 90% since 2008 and stands now at its highest level of 91.7%.

**Conclusion**

The university sets out in its equality strategy the importance of acknowledging success and progress (rather than trying to influence change ‘through strict rules and fear of breaching legislation’) and progress, as outlined above, is undoubtedly being made. Of course, the university recognises that there is still much to be done to ‘develop a fully inclusive university community, which recruits and retains staff and students from all sectors of society.’

The university has aspirations for improvement across the staff and student agenda. For instance, Newcastle University has one bronze and two departmental silver Athena SWAN awards and is seeking to achieve silver status for the university as a whole in 2015.

While there are strong student retention rates overall (2.3% non-continuation) the dropout rate increases to 5.1% for low participation neighbourhoods and this is an area for future focus.

The university has a goal to increase the representation of support staff from BME backgrounds to 5% (census data for 2011 shows the benchmark for the local BME population in the north-east as 4.7%). The current representation is at 3% – versus 2.5% in 2011 – and the university has a project underway to increase this further by engaging with the local community.

The university also recognises that it needs to be consistently inclusive across its global operations and has plans to monitor and analyse issues related to equality and diversity on its overseas campuses.

Talking in 2013 to some school pupils in Barnet and emphasising ‘where you come from does not determine where you can go’ Professor Brink went on to say, ‘overcoming disadvantage is good. Overcoming advantage is better’ and you do that by ‘putting something back into society.’ The vice-chancellor has clearly embraced his own advice.
Oxford Brookes University: An evidence-based approach

The institution

Oxford Brookes University is a member of the University Alliance and started life as the Oxford School of Art in 1865. It became a university in 1992 and employs 2,190 members of staff.

In 2012/13 there were 17,864 students enrolled at Oxford Brookes University – just over 75% of these are undergraduates and 18% of students come from overseas representing 132 different countries.

= female students significantly outnumber male students (58% to 41%) with the largest proportion studying health and life sciences

= 13.9% of UK-domiciled students were from black minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds

= 12% of students declared a disability (70% of these have a specific learning disability, such as dyslexia)

The university sets out its intent to be a ‘genuinely inclusive’ organisation and recognises that this requires the recognition that some groups and individuals have particular and specific needs relating to ‘persistent and longstanding disadvantage.’ At its heart, this is about designing and operating flexible services, practices and procedures that take appropriate account of needs.

In order to do this well, the university recognises that it needs monitoring data, user feedback and research to ‘inform and improve our future practice.’

Indeed, the university seeks to draw on the research undertaken by its own centre for diversity policy research and practice. As a real sign of external recognition, in 2012-2013 the director of the centre, Professor Simonetta Manfredi, received the management and leadership textbook of the year award from the Chartered Management Institute.

The vice-chancellor

Professor Janet Beer’s first job following the completion of her PhD at the University of Warwick was with the former Greater London Council inner London education authority (GLC ILEA) during the first Ken Livingstone era. This experience was to have a lasting impact on her and once she moved on, she found that
other institutions did not have had quite the same ‘cutting edge’ attitude with regard to equality and diversity.

She took up her role as vice-chancellor at Oxford Brookes University in 2007. She chairs the university’s equality and diversity group, which convenes three times a year to discuss staff and student issues and recognises that the group helps ‘where initiatives need to be joined up.’

She is quick to see ways in which processes can have an excluding impact and understands that sometimes it is the small things that can be changed to symbolise a shift in values. For instance, the vice-chancellor receives two invitations each year to attend the Buckingham Palace Garden Party that had traditionally gone to senior academic staff. She introduced an objective criterion – that the invitations should go to the longest serving staff – and this simple action has enabled, among others, a library assistant, a gardener and a cleaner to attend. By coincidence it has always worked out that the two recipients each year so far have been one academic and one member of the support staff.

Professor Janet Beer also takes a strong, positive stance on equality externally. She became Joint Chair of Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) in 2011 and is now sole Chair. She is proud of the achievements of ECU, notably with the Athena SWAN Charter and she recognises ‘attaching research money has sharpened attention hugely.’

As one of the few female vice-chancellors or principals (17 women out of 160) she doesn’t entirely hide her frustration: ‘I feel like a broken record.’ For instance, when vice-chancellors are on the verge of having an all-male panel at a conference, ‘it is always seems to be me who says something about this and it would be nice if it was someone else.’

Central to the university’s strategy 2020, is the goal of being a university that enables a student experience of the highest standard possible and this is underpinned by the institution’s guiding principles which speak of flourishing ‘in a culture of respect and support where we celebrate difference and thrive on each other’s success.’ Combined with the core values, there has been a shift in emphasis towards using diversity to ensure an excellent staff/student experience, moving away from simple compliance.
The university is determined to take an evidence-based approach and uses data to drive change. For instance, impact assessments are at the heart of its 2013-2015 objective to ‘ensure the university’s human resources policies and procedures are fully in line with its commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion.’

This involves reviewing recruitment and selection processes, reviewing the career development website, carrying out an equal pay review, increasing data collection relating to religion and belief and sexual orientation, analysis of disciplinary monitoring data and updating the university’s flexible working policies in order to take account of employee feedback.

The university also seeks to use its staff survey as a strategic planning tool – it developed an action plan to address the diversity issues arising from the 2012 staff survey and has now set a goal to increase the percentage of staff who believe ‘the university is committed to equality of opportunity for all of its staff’ from 86% to 96%.

There is a strategy for enhancing the student experience (2016-2020) aimed at raising student performance through inclusive teaching and learning. In its equality and diversity inclusion policy, in setting out roles and responsibilities, it states teaching staff will ‘promote equality, diversity and inclusion in all learning settings.’

Again, the university is taking a data-driven approach and has undertaken in-house research into BME student attainment in order to drive the work on enhancing the student experience.

There are good indicators that the focus on equality and diversity is paying some dividends. For instance, there has been an increase in student satisfaction, up 2% in 2013 from 85% in 2012. The proportion of staff who felt bullied or harassed has more than halved – from 9% in 2009 to 4% in 2012.

Moreover, the university has clearly made strong progress on gender in both senior academic and management posts. While the HESA figures for the academic year 2011/12 show that on average across the UK 20.8% of professors are women, in Oxford Brookes University this rises to 35% (22 out of 63). In the senior

**Impact**

October 2014
leadership team, the finance director, estates director and a recently appointed human resources director are all women.

**Conclusion**

While the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) demonstrated significant progress in women’s career development, only 42% of staff returned in the REF were women, despite the fact that women outnumber men in academic and research roles (they constitute 53% of the total). However, the vice-chancellor believes good mentoring is now going on and ‘the message is starting to get out there, that it’s about quality not quantity and that you don’t have to be full-time.’

Undoubtedly, the ongoing work on impact assessments will also identify further areas for change and one priority the university has already identified is the low percentage of BME candidates shortlisted for interview.
The institution

Queen Mary University of London is a Russell Group member and has a strong heritage in providing equal education opportunities. Its founding mission is in the education of disadvantaged people and it merged with Westfield College, which was dedicated to the education of women.

Just over half of the undergraduate population are female (51% in 2012/13 and this proportion increases to 53% for post-graduates). 50% of the 4,000 staff are women. With five campuses across the east of London, where there is a strong representation of black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, 26% of staff come from BME backgrounds.

This cultural diversity is also reflected in the student population – of the 17,840 students enrolled at the university there are almost 8,000 EU and international students with 151 different nationalities. 2,000 students are studying in Beijing, China for a joint degree from the Beijing University. The profile is:

- undergraduate students – 42% white, 41% Asian-Asian British (including Chinese), 8% black, 9% other mixed and 1% Arab
- postgraduate students – 61% white, 22% Asian, 7% black, 9% other mixed and 2% Arab

Queen Mary University of London’s strong commitment to equality is also evident in that it was the first university to commit to paying all staff a living wage. It also provides research to industry on the business case for a living wage.

In its strategic plan for 2010-2015 it includes an aim ‘to nurture a culture at Queen Mary among staff and students that is mutually supportive, committed to the development of its individual members, and mindful of its obligations to the local region, to the community of nations and needs of mankind and the environment.’

The president and principal

Professor Simon Gaskell’s career has spanned several leading academic and management roles in the UK and America. Before joining Queen Mary University of London he was vice-president for research at the University of Manchester. He has been president and principal of Queen Mary University of London for almost five years.
The rationale for equality and diversity

years and he is also chair of the board of the Higher Education Statistics Agency.

As the equality and diversity champion at senior executive level, Professor Gaskell chairs the equality and diversity steering group and he decided that he would personally sign off the university’s equality and diversity statement. As equality and diversity champion, he is accountable to council on progress on equality and diversity.

His experience of working and bringing up his children in Texas was influential in shaping his approach. He saw the impact of societal and individual prejudice on his children’s Hispanic friends as they grew up – with deteriorating school performance and hence potential. He admits this was ‘an eye opening experience.’ It is notable that Professor Gaskell has himself, with his senior team, undertaken work to identify, and address the impact of, unconscious bias.

His personal values mirror the university’s values: he believes that diversity is about making the most of the talents of all individuals. He also believes having a ‘healthy’ gender mix is important: ‘an all-male (or female) group can be depressing.’ Importantly, his sense is that a diverse group are more likely to reach a decision ‘where all have contributed and all feel committed to the outcome.’

He finds that one thing he is doing is challenging colleagues where there is undue focus on what is statistically significant. For example, in reviewing gender salary parity – if the data indicates that women’s salaries consistently lag behind men’s, it is a trend about which to be concerned, regardless of ‘statistical significance’.

**Institutional drivers**

Professor Gaskell was recently challenged on how the university retained good quality research staff and had such a diverse student body (as if the two were in conflict or tension.) His response was swift – actually it was the commitment to that diverse student body that was one of the key reasons staff came and stayed at Queen Mary University of London – a big attraction and retention tool for great staff.

A further major driver for diversity at Queen Mary University of London expressed by the principal is the ‘desire not to waste
potential’ and this is publicly set out as the university’s ambition to ensure that all members of its community ‘are confident that the realisation of personal potential is in no way restricted by race, religion, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation or gender identity.’

The university has taken a good, hard look at its promotion processes. As the principal remarks, ‘we have moved beyond the realisation that systems and processes such as promotion panels are unfortunately inherently biased’, and this conclusion has led to some focused work in the leadership team on understanding their own unconscious biases.

The university recognises that there are some aspects of the process before any appointment discussions that, while the same for everyone, may disadvantage some types of people. For instance, self-nomination may seem fair, but actually as the principal himself notes ‘a disproportionately small number of women will put themselves forward for promotion.’

In light of this, the university has designed a new programme of leadership development for female and male staff. A key contribution to this programme from the principal is to encourage a broad spectrum of applicants and to communicate clearly to them ‘that there is no one single route to leadership.’ The programme is followed by six months of mentoring.

The university is also actively involved in the B-MEntor programme run in partnership with two other London universities, Kings College London and University College London. This is a cross-institutional mentoring scheme where senior academics mentor BME academic staff.

Compliance remains an essential, if lower ranked, driver of work on diversity. The university sets out its commitment to meeting the public sector equality duty, and this is supported by eight sub-objectives, each linked to a protected characteristic. These contribute to the strategic key performance indicators (KPIs) and vary in their relevance to either staff and/or students.

For instance, KPIs include reducing the attainment gap and carrying out research into the withdrawal of BME students. On the staff side, they include moving to the position where the proportion of women who apply for promotion is in line with the
proportion of their male colleagues. A further KPI is to create a culture where staff and students can be themselves, where there are good inter-faith relations, as well as actions relating to the provision of facilities for both disability and faith.

**Impact**

Student satisfaction is reported as improving, which may in part be due to the work being done to create a more inclusive culture for students. The current data shows that 89% of students are satisfied with the quality of their course compared with a sector average of 86%. This illustrates an improvement from 2010 where 86% were satisfied. Queen Mary University of London is currently ranked at 25 in England out of 126 institutions, representing an increase of 17 places on last year’s results.

Progress is also evident in terms of external recognition. At departmental level, Queen Mary University of London has received its first Athena SWAN silver award in the school of biological and chemical sciences and four bronze departmental awards have also been made. The university’s Athena SWAN bronze award status has recently been renewed.

Queen Mary University of London’s B-MEntor programme was shortlisted for the Employers’ Network for Equality and Inclusion Tapping into talent award and the Race for Opportunity developing talent award. While Queen Mary University of London did not win the Tapping into talent award, which eventually went to Ernst & Young, it is awaiting the outcome of the Race for Opportunity developing talent award.

Having been ranked 226 in the 2012 Stonewall Index, Queen Mary University of London has improved its ranking and scoring for three years in a row – moving from 226 to 196 in three years. These are small but important steps towards meeting the objective on promoting a culture in the university where staff and students can fully be themselves.

The Research Excellence Framework has had a positive impact and triggered a review of the promotion process, enabling staff specific circumstances to be formally recognised. Consequently an increase in promotion applications by female academic staff has been noticed. Since 2011/12, the application rate for promotion for women has increased from 6% to 10% in 2012/13.
Conclusion

Queen Mary University of London has clearly found it valuable to collaborate with other higher education institutions in London on the B-MEntor programme. Professor Gaskell takes this a step further and wonders whether there might be scope for greater collaboration and sharing of best practice across universities at vice-chancellor and principal level – perhaps focusing on leadership and through this subtly drawing out the challenges and opportunities of leading specifically with regard to equality and diversity.
Royal Holloway, University of London: Recognising the importance of talent management

The institution

Royal Holloway, University of London is one of 19 institutions that form the University of London. Based in Egham, the university has a single campus for 9,565 students from more than 100 countries. The university also employs 1,525 members of staff.

Of all the students:

- 42.5% are male and 57.5% are female
- 48.2% are white, 20.6% are from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds, 29.8% are non-UK nationals and 1.3% have no known ethnicity
- 7.8% of students have a known disability

Originally founded in the 19th century, Royal Holloway, University of London was the first college to admit women to its degree programmes and remained a women-only institution until 1965. It has a more women than men studying science subjects (52% versus the sector average of 47%).

The principal

Professor Paul Layzell has been principal at the university for four years. Prior to his appointment at Royal Holloway, University of London he was at University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST) where he played a key role in its merger with the University of Manchester, and he was deputy vice-chancellor at the University of Sussex.

The principal is very committed to equality and creating a diverse and inclusive environment within the university. He sees his role as one of advocate and supporter – raising the profile of the different activities that are taking place via his regular blog.

When he arrived, the university was in the middle of a high profile case around professorial pay. A much more transparent pay scheme has been introduced – there are now clear criteria and process. ‘I didn’t want the pay system to be a distraction.’

Professor Layzell sees the importance of investing in management and leadership skills – a result in part, he says, of ‘the complete inadequacy of his own preparation’ when he became a head.
of department in 1997. Subsequently, he has initiated and contributed to staff development and leadership programmes in all the institutions in which he has worked. Professor Layzell is clear that he means development rather than simply training. For instance, Royal Holloway, University of London has a leadership programme which also includes a period where attendees are mentored.

The principal takes an active role in spotting talent and helping academics make the most of their potential. For instance, he describes taking an interest in the work of a female psychologist and remarks: ‘It is important I show that I am interested and take the trouble to find out. Some of her male colleagues are more eager to tell me what they are doing to impress me. Me showing an interest, helped build her confidence to go for promotion to professor.’

Professor Layzell explains he is always looking to give people exposure and experience. For instance, one professor who needs to build her leadership skills has been deputising for the vice principal for research (‘excelling in this role, making a great contribution’). Indeed, he has set up a principal’s commission to draw on the talent below the vice-principals. This means that not only can they pick up the issues that are further down the priority list for the vice-principals, they also gain very useful development experiences.

Professor Layzell chairs the academic promotions committee. He explains his approach, ‘obviously, we have to turn some people down, but I do try and make sure everyone in the room is comfortable. You have to read the non-verbals.’ He has also stressed the need to raise issues at the time, as opposed to after a meeting. The equal opportunity statement is read out at the start of the meeting precisely to encourage this and ‘helps to empower new people on the committee to speak up.’ Typically, now deans spend more time with their people helping to prepare their case. Professor Layzell cites the example of a Russian professor who had just put a small footnote about a major grant he had obtained (because he had not realised how important this was).

This attention to development all seems to make sense for Professor Layzell and, as he comments, after all ‘universities are in the talent management business.’
Institutional drivers

‘We are all after good students. It is very competitive and becoming more so,’ observes Professor Layzell and this is underlined by the change in student financing in higher education, changing demographic and global trends, deregulation and the tight economic situation. It is therefore critical that the university maintains its reputation, international outlook and financial stability by attracting the best students and staff in the UK and from around the world. Globalisation reinforces the case for diversity and having staff with roots in other countries and cultures is seen to help attract more students, research and business opportunities.

Consultation has recently been completed on a new equality and diversity scheme which sets out a range of equality objectives as both a provider of education and as an employer. These are linked to two of the college’s strategic themes of student experience and people and culture. The equality committee has an overview of the scheme and all equality and diversity matters while the college executive and the equality and diversity steering group monitor progress against the equality goals and equality and diversity activities.

The student objectives include several that focus on embedding equality and diversity in all aspects of student engagement, learning and teaching – particularly in terms of the overall student experience (including extra-curricular and co-curricular services and activities), providing staff development opportunities that encourage and enable tutors to consider bias towards or against particular groups in teaching and assessment methods, as well as incorporating equality impact assessment into curriculum development.

A number of the objectives for staff reflect the need for greater diversity across all staff groups, in terms of gender, disability and ethnicity (notably for academics, research and senior leaders) as well as the promotion of an environment where lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender (LGBT) staff are able to be open.

Impact

Student satisfaction has increased from 85% in the national student survey 2009 to 89% in 2013 – having improved by one percent year-on-year.
Royal Holloway’s international agenda has been particularly successful. It has been ranked first in the UK and fifth in the world by the *Times Higher Education* world ranking for international outlook and their success in this area is confirmed by the increase of 23% on last year (as at May 2014) in overseas student applications. In analysing this success, Professor Layzell highlights the dedication of the international office, and the quality of pastoral care and academic support. The principal has a reception for international students in his home each year. He stresses the attention to detail. He explains that future enrolments often come from the same communities, so the key is to get the quality of the experience right, and then people will recommend that others also come.

Regarding other aspects of equality and diversity, Royal Holloway, University of London has seen most progress around gender. It has an institutional Athena SWAN bronze award and is currently awaiting the outcome of its silver submission. At departmental level, it holds two silver awards and three bronze awards. The physics department has also had its Project Juno award status renewed for a further two years.

There has also been progress on the gender balance at senior levels. The top team reporting to the principal is well-balanced with two female vice-principals and two male vice-principals. At professor level, the representation of women has risen from 22.9% in 2008/09 to just over 24%. There has been a sharp rise in representation among senior lecturers, up from 26.8% in 2008/09 to 38.1% in 2012/13.

**Conclusion**

Royal Holloway, University of London appointed a full time equality and diversity practitioner in April 2013 and among other activities, the key focus has been putting in place the framework to drive future progress. A new equality and diversity scheme is in the process of being formally adopted and will improve the quality of data collection significantly.

The ambition is still there to break new ground. The university is creating a new department of electrical engineering which will open in 2016. In line with its long history of educating women, Professor Layzell wants this new department to be the most female-friendly engineering department in the country.
The university is working closely with the architects on the design of the building which, he hopes, will ‘get the creative juices flowing.’ They are looking to break the mould and create a step change, though the principal recognises that ‘it is one thing to articulate the challenge and another to deliver it.’ Nevertheless, he is positive. He draws a parallel with employability: ‘when we started to take employability seriously, we attracted students for whom employability mattered. So, if we are really female-friendly, we will start to make it happen.’
**University of Salford: Focusing on economic inclusion**

**The institution**

The University of Salford has four campuses, including a new construction at MediaCity next door to the BBC. A member of the University Alliance, it employs more than 2,450 staff and has 20,329 students.

Of these students:

- 53% are female and 47% male
- 13.4% Asian, 9.5% black and 4.6% other/mixed – in total just under 28% of students are from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds
- 13% of students (2,801) have declared they are disabled and of these almost half have a specific learning difficulty

Widening participation is a major priority at the University of Salford and this fits with its historic roots as a working men’s college. As the university states in its access agreement: ‘Since its inception, the institution has provided educational opportunities that have enhanced the employability of local people, especially those who would not otherwise have had the opportunity of higher education.’

**The vice-chancellor**

The vice-chancellor of the University of Salford is Martin Hall, who was appointed in 2009. He has a strong passion for, and interest in, equality and diversity, and he highlights two factors in particular behind this. First he explains: ‘Like many of my generation, I was the first in my family to go to university. It was life-changing for me.’ Secondly, after undergraduate and postgraduate studies at the University of Cambridge, he moved to South Africa in 1974 and he lived and worked there through the 1990-1994 transition. He is wary of ‘anyone who tells you they have the solution’ and is aware of the intractable nature of some of the challenges around tackling disadvantage and prejudice.

In discussing why leaders choose to give profile to equality and diversity, he comments: ‘There’s always a personal element but there’s no reason why there has to be – you can argue it on principle and strategic grounds.’
For the vice-chancellor, commitment to equality and diversity absolutely sits with the university’s mission, which is about transforming lives and realising potential. Surrounded by some of the most deprived areas in the country, the University of Salford is one of the top universities for widening participation with 50% of students either from low income families or the first in the family to go to university. The university has decided to retain socioeconomic status within its equality and diversity strategy, despite its removal from the Equality Act 2010.

At the same time, Professor Hall is aware that some see a tension between widening participation and academic performance and ‘the league table game.’ He comments, ‘British higher education institutions are not required to demonstrate the value we add. If we take someone on 220 credit points and they graduate with a first or an upper second, there’s no doubt that we’ve added value.’

He is looking to switch focus from doing things to help diverse (non-traditional) groups ‘catch up’ to valuing the very diversity of experience that they bring.

He illustrates this with a story about a young female student who was schooled locally and whose parents were refugees from the Congo. When she was 14, the family returned to Congo and she is determined to make a difference there. She is now studying politics and international relations at the University of Salford and wants to use her three years studying politics and international affairs to help her prepare to stand in the 2015 elections in Congo: ‘She’s already way ahead, inspiring other students.’

Professor Hall also makes good use of the diversity of the University of Salford’s academic staff. For instance, he mentions, regarding the university’s work in Iraq, ‘we have staff who understand the differences between Baghdad, Basra and Kurdistan.’ On a very practical and personal note, a Chinese colleague helped him prepare for a forthcoming prominent visitor from China. He explains it was a very useful reminder of the importance of face-to-face time and patience.

Martin likes to be addressed by his first name by staff and students and stresses the importance of listening to both staff and students. He is a naturally inclusive leader.
For example, he lets people have his email address and gets about 40-50 a month from staff and students. He follows up every email – often talking directly to the senders, learning from their stories and even changing processes where the argument is sufficiently strong. He cites the case of a ‘very sparky’ British Asian woman who was attending university in the face of opposition from the male members of her family. She wanted to apply for a masters in biological science but felt she couldn’t pay the fees in the way required. To fund her education she was already working in a call centre. Listening to her resulted in the university offering more internships (which enabled the student to work in student admin) and adjusting the instalment plan for fees.

Martin is in no doubt that genuine culture change has to be led by him as the vice-chancellor, but recognises the danger of the heroic vice-chancellor: ‘We need dispersed leadership to get sustainability.’ He adds: ‘equality and diversity are always on the agenda at the top table and council review progress virtually every meeting.’

Legislation is not a key driver for the university’s work on equality and diversity. As Professor Hall comments, ‘we do the statutory things, do the tick boxes, but it has to be more than that’, and the university particularly highlights the relationship it sees between diversity and economic inclusion.

The university’s admission and retention policy seeks to minimise the barriers to entry for students. Applications are considered both on the basis of merit (past achievement) and potential. Outreach to specific communities (visits, student shadowing, taster days, collaborative projects) takes place to help to raise aspiration and attainment levels. Professor Muhammad Yunus (Nobel Laureate) launched the University of Salford’s social business centre and also helped with outreach in Rochdale. The university’s access agreement contains some stretching targets for progression, good degree results and employability.

The university’s focus on employability and broader social benefit is illustrated by the Salford advantage programme, comprising an enhanced curriculum, co-curricular activities and opportunities for engagement. The university has set a target of all students being engaged in either work experience or placement activity.
by 2014, with the definition of placements encompassing community engagement and volunteering. There has already been a sharp rise in participation from 2,000 in 2012 to 5,000 in 2013.

The university is in the process of finalising a new strategic plan for 2014-2018. The plan’s key aims and objectives are arranged around four dimensions all of which link to equality and diversity.

- **our culture:** delivering excellence
- **our community:** who we are
- **our partners:** making connections
- **our impact:** making a real difference

The university is in the process of aligning its equality and diversity strategy with this strategic plan.

**Impact**

The university consistently outstrips its widening participation performance indicators and benchmarks. Examples of these include:

- 42.8% of young, full time undergraduate entrants are from socioeconomic groups 4-7, as defined by the national statistics socioeconomic classifications (NS-SEC) (compared to the location adjusted benchmark of 40.1%)
- 21.9% of young full time undergraduate entrants whose home area is known to have a low proportion of 18 and 19-year olds in higher education (compared to location adjusted benchmark of 18.3%)
- 21.4% of mature full time undergraduate entrants whose home area is known to have a low proportion of HE qualified adults and have no HE entry qualifications (compared to location adjusted benchmark of 20.4%)
- 7.7% of all full time undergraduates in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance (compared to sector average of 6.5%)

Moreover, there is also a positive trend in indicators of student continuation and progression. For instance, between 2010/11 and 2012/13 there was a 3.1% increase for completion to 87.2%.

In recognition of its work with care leavers (and the University of Salford has the highest proportion of students from that background than any other higher education institution),
the university has been recognised by the Buttle UK – gaining exemplary standard in its quality mark in February 2014. It has also recently been asked to represent all UK universities at the All Party Parliamentary Group on looked after children and care leavers.

**Conclusion**

The university is looking to build upon this performance and recognition to position itself as a best practice institution for supporting access and success for all those underrepresented cohorts in higher education.

Martin Hall readily acknowledges there is work to be done. ‘What we need to get better at is integrating institutional objectives into the strategic plan and we need to get better at tracking – for instance, student performance metrics.’
University of South Wales: An inclusive approach to change

The institution

The University of South Wales was formed in April 2013 from the merger of the University of Wales, Newport and the University of Glamorgan Group which includes The Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, The College Merthyr Tydfil and the Universities Heads of the Valleys Institute (UHOVI). A member of the Alliance Group, it is one of the largest universities in the UK and is the largest in Wales, spread across five campuses with sites in Cardiff and Newport as well as Pontypridd and Caerleon.

There are 33,584 students enrolled at the university. The majority of students are from Wales (70%) and just over 5,000 are from England with a further 4,500 international students. 50% of students are women.

The university’s vision is to be ‘the university of choice in Wales and beyond, for students, organisations and communities who value vocationally-focused education and applied research, which provide solutions to problems that affect society and the economy.’

Located in South Wales, with its strong heritage around mining communities, the university wishes to play its full part in supporting the development of the local economy. In the strategic equality plan it points out that this commitment ‘is even more important during this period of economic downturn.’

The vice-chancellor

Professor Julie Lydon has an engineering industry background having joined the academic world as a lecturer after a career in sales and later mergers and acquisitions. Before her appointment at the University of Glamorgan Group she held positions at the University of Wolverhampton and University of the West of England, Bristol. In 2013 she presided over Glamorgan’s merger with the University of Wales, Newport, and was appointed vice-chancellor of the new University of South Wales.

A merger is obviously a time of profound insecurity for people and during this period a daily update myth buster was published. Julie describes herself as straightforward and authentic. She asks people to call her by her first name, and comments: ‘We need to guard against higher education pretensions getting in the way of engagement.’
Professor Lydon has an inclusive approach to change – for instance, encouraging staff to contribute to the formation of the new institution and shaping its core values (rather than these being developed only by the senior team).

This commitment to inclusion extends to the university as a whole. One of the university’s equality themes is ‘to ensure that the voice of those with protected characteristics is heard within the working of the institutions.’ In its equality and diversity policy statement the university explains it will ‘expect committee and other working groups to have due regard to diversity of their membership and to consider the impact of their decisions on those with protected characteristics.’

The vice-chancellor tends to take her straight speaking approach to engaging others with regard to equality and diversity. ‘You can quote all the stats you like but academia is full of making the argument and you can never say something is 100% sure. I take a more personal approach. Everyone has a son or daughter that they can relate diversity to.’

Institutional drivers

An important driver for diversity is the ability to meet students’ needs, which become increasingly important given the more competitive consumer led market that now exists for all of higher education.

In addition, as Professor Lydon comments, ‘having diverse students has also sped up the paradigm shift from the old to the new paradigm of teaching and learning.’ This is an interesting example of where keying into the diverse needs of students has created a wider positive shift for all students – from the lecture hall where an event is ‘downloaded’ once only, to one that is permanently available online.

The university is clear that there is a strong connection circle between staff and student diversity. It states in its strategic equality plan: ‘We recognise that responding to the diverse needs of our staff, students and visitors will help to develop services that meet the needs of the all, and will attract a workforce and students who are representative of the wider community.’
In this way, equality and diversity becomes an enabler for innovation. The vice-chancellor adds, ‘universities were, after all, set up to challenge and break moulds. They were not looking to follow the status quo.’

Another key driver for equality and diversity are the strong values in the local community regarding equality and fairness. There are still areas of significant poverty where 40% of adults in the community are on disability allowance.

Shortly before the merger in 2013, UHOVI won the Guardian University Award for commitment to widening participation. UHOVI is a ground breaking initiative, focused on improving skills and qualifications by making learning accessible across the region.

Enrolment is restricted to those people who live in the Heads of the Valley, an area of considerable deprivation. The courses offered are driven by regional needs and are delivered on the university campuses and in workplaces and community venues. The long term aim is to raise the local skills profile and make the region more attractive for employers and investors.

The university is also an important employer in the wider community, and takes that responsibility seriously. Professor Lydon proudly points out that there are members of staff in their 30s and 40s whose fathers were miners. Employment is another way in which the university can make its contribution to the development of the local community.

Compliance with the public sector equality duty does have a part to play but is a lower ranked driver of diversity now. The aim at the University of South Wales is to embed equality and diversity in everything it does.

The university’s equality objectives and associated actions draw on a range of strategies and action plans, and paying attention to equality and diversity is inextricably linked to the university’s mission and vision: ‘Transforming lives, economies and communities through accessible, distinctive and responsive education, innovation and engagement.’

There are five themes which drive activity – the culture of inclusion, voice and engagement, information gathering, pay equality and
training and awareness. The comprehensive action plan to deliver on the objectives identified within these themes sets out the steps that need to be taken, their rationale together with associated success measures, timescales and an indication of who or which team is accountable. In this way they are embedded into the day to day activities of the institution.

**Impact**

Given the University of South Wales only came together in April 2013, it is very early to be able to assess impact.

In some ways, it is the creation of the enlarged university itself, with high engagement levels, that is testament to the inclusive approach to change.

The university already has a good representation of women in senior roles (two of the four members of the senior management team, and about three quarters of the deans). Following a series of focus groups with female academic staff that identified some important messages regarding their ignorance of current university support/policies and fears about asking for support, the university has promoted the flexible working arrangements across the university, within a dedicated area of the university website covering all aspects of health and wellbeing.

Changes have also been introduced to promotion processes to include promotion from learning and teaching as well as from business engagement. Adjustments to the professorial and reader criteria have been introduced to increase objectivity and it is felt that these changes, incorporating the new routes to promotion, have enabled eight women to be appointed who otherwise would not have been.

The university has seen a significant increase in the last five years in international students numbers, on and off campus, and to support this growing cohort, University of South Wales has set up a scheme that pairs international and home students in mutual mentoring – to build a personal understanding of how another person sees the world, and to speed up the learning to navigate cultural differences.
Conclusion

In common with many higher education institutions, improving data collection on staff and students will be key to measuring progress by establishing a baseline for the new group from which to work.

There are plenty of new challenges ahead – particularly around ethnic diversity where Professor Lydon believes ‘the doors are not yet fully open.’ The work on the Research Excellence Framework established that fewer of the BME staff were able to be submitted to the process and addressing this will form part of the action plan for the next round. Already the University of South Wales has been accepted on ECU race equality charter mark trial and this will further support work on improving ethnic diversity.
The institution

The University of Wolverhampton gained university status in 1992. Located on four main campuses in the West Midlands, in Wolverhampton, Walsall and Telford, the university has 20,893 students in the UK. A further 1,700 are taught overseas.

Of all the UK students:

- 40.5% are male and 59.5% are female
- 58% are white and 38.9% are from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds
- 7.7% are known to be disabled

Wolverhampton has a history of providing education since the 19th century. Initially set up to provide education to working men, it has grown to be one of the most access driven universities in the country. In its latest five year plan (2012-2017) it seeks to build on this tradition (strengthening, refreshing and re-energising it) in its rebranding as the university of opportunity.

Equality and diversity are clearly integrated into its thinking. The strategic plan states: ‘The university will continue to be at the leading edge of promoting social mobility, enabling and contributing to the significant improvement in life chances across our communities.’ In addition to themes around the quality of the student experience and academic excellence (and associated key performance indicators (KPIs)), the plan sees a key role for the university as an agent of economic and social regeneration and has a clear goal to ‘enhance the employability of our students’.

The core values include: ‘We will behave respectfully and ethically. We will be inclusive and fair in our interactions with each other and with our wider community.’
The vice-chancellor

Professor Geoff Layer was appointed vice-chancellor in 2011 and the new strategic plan was developed shortly afterwards and launched in January 2012. Social justice is something about which he feels very strongly and he has worked with HEFCE on widening access to higher education.

In the 1990s, Professor Layer led a disability project and saw the power of moving away from the medical model of disability and he recalls the journey of moving away from, what was then, a committee to support handicapped students to the adoption of the social model and how important it is to locate the issue in a theoretical base. The social model is about focusing not on the impairment itself but on removing the barriers that mean the impairment becomes disabling. Disability ceases to be a question of charity and becomes an issue of meeting the entitlement.

He applies this thinking to education as a whole and how to widen access. ‘The reason why working class youngsters are not at higher education institutions is to do with the barriers we as a society have created.’ Widening access is something he is passionate about but he understands that it needs to be part of a wider strategy to ensure that students receive the appropriate support and encouragement. ‘If youngsters from disadvantaged communities don’t achieve, word goes back – “university is not for people like us”, he explains. ‘Social mobility is seen by many as about the young working class becoming like them (middle class). We see it differently – it’s about young people who go to university having a better chance compared to their peer group. It’s about the greater life chances for them – and then their families.’

Since his appointment, Professor Layer has been spearheading a new journey on equality and diversity, moving away from an approach that he feels had become overly focussed on compliance ‘we were off the pace for a couple of years.’

He is not afraid to draw attention to the areas for improvement. For instance, he cites the gender gap in research success which he recognises are partially to do with subject splits but, he says, ‘we can’t really defend it. We have really brilliant female and male academics, why are we not able to let all of them reach the heights they are able to? There is an opportunity cost.’ The equality and diversity manager reports that in one of his addresses to the disabled staff network, the vice-chancellor highlighted the
University of Wolverhampton: The university of opportunity

university’s performance in equality and diversity matters as ‘one of the most disappointing discoveries upon taking up the role.’

Unlocking creativity, enabling underrepresented groups to flourish, and providing role models for the communities the university serves will, he firmly believes, start to create social change and help disadvantaged communities.

Passionate though he is, Professor Layer is adamant that he does not want to personalise the issue. ‘This is the organisation’s perspective’ and he works hard to ensure that people understand it isn’t just his responsibility, it is their responsibility. He makes it clear that equality and diversity should be at the heart of everything the university undertakes and expects all faculties and corporate services to engage with equality and diversity issues relevant to their function. ‘They need to say what they are going to do about issues.’ The structure of the reporting of the equality and diversity objectives supports this.

In all of this work he is backed by the board of governors. ‘We have strong governor support. A joint committee on equality and diversity has been set up, chaired by a governor. All governors are interested and they challenge me on equality and diversity.’

Institutional drivers

The work on equality and diversity is all driven by the new strategic plan. The university of opportunity framework November 2013 provides the structure and guidance for the implementation of equality and diversity at all levels to ensure a consistency of approach.

There are 12 equality objectives – six are student related and six relate to staff. The objectives are all strongly evidence-based.

The reporting of equality and diversity objectives is logical and simple and for each it sets out why the objective is being set, what has already been done, what schools and departments can do to help, and who the strategic and day-to-day leads are. An associate dean within each faculty has strategic oversight of equality and diversity within their portfolio, with progress and accountability assured by the detailed reporting structure and approval mechanism.
One objective looks to increase the proportion of students in receipt of the Disabled Students’ Allowance. This then drove action and the university now runs an annual open day for deaf learners. The event in May 2014 (the second event) attracted over 80 participants.

Another student-related objective is to increase the proportion of BME students awarded 2:1 degrees. Attainment champions have been appointed in a number of schools.

There are also objectives to close employability gaps for BME and disabled students.

A key staff-focussed objective is to promote women in research. The 2008 research assessment exercise (RAE) had already highlighted a significant underrepresentation of women and the University of Wolverhampton had already started to take steps to attempt to reduce the gender imbalance. The HEFCE requirements for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014 provided a useful structure to report on work already in hand as well as assist the university in formalising training for those involved in deciding who should be submitted to the REF.

One further benefit from the REF was that the HEFCE requirements for the REF facilitated greater cooperation between non-academic equality and diversity professionals and academic staff. In particular, the REF equality panel included representation from those managing the REF submission, human resources and the equality and diversity unit. The training provided for REF decision-makers was delivered jointly by an associate dean and an equality and diversity specialist.

**Impact**

The University of Wolverhampton has been a major contributor to the success of the higher education sector in widening participation. The university consistently exceeds all widening participation benchmarks. For example, in 2012/13 the university reported that 53.2% of its young undergraduate students (where data was known) were from national statistics socioeconomic classifications (NS-SEC) groups 4-7 (up from 50.7% in 2011/12). The equivalent figure for all UK institutions is 32.7%.
There is a similarly significant gap between the proportion of young undergraduate students from low participation neighbourhoods at the University of Wolverhampton and the equivalent figure for all UK institutions – 19.2% for the University of Wolverhampton and 11.1% for all UK.

The proportion of BME graduates awarded 2:1 degrees has been increasing year-on-year rising from 36% in 2009/10 to 40% in 2012/13. While there is still a very significant gap versus the proportion of white students who are awarded these grades (61% in 2012/13) the gap is at least reducing (down from 24% to 21%).

There are signs that efforts to improve participation rates for full-time undergraduate disabled students in receipt of Disabled Students’ Allowance are having some impact. The percentage has increased from 4.8% to 5.2% (versus an objective of 7.5% or higher). In particular, the number of deaf students has increased significantly for 2013/14 due to this being a particular focus for improvement. The proportion of disabled students excluded or withdrawn has also improved, falling from 6.5% in 2010/11 to 4.5% in 2012/13. These rates are consistently lower than those for students with no known disability.

There are signs that the KPI to improve annually the employment and further study indicators for BME students from the destination of leavers in higher education (DLHE) survey shows significant improvement and the removal of any identifiable disparity in graduate employment outcomes (88.9% for Asian students, 89.2% for black students and 88.4% for white students in employment and/or further study).

Similarly there has also been significant improvement in the percentage of students with a known disability who are in employment and/or further study. The proportion has risen from 79.3% in 2011/12 to 90.9% in 2012/13).

**Conclusion**

It is early days for the increased focus on equality and diversity to be translated into sustained change in outcomes. However, the university’s clear strategic, evidence-based approach undoubtedly places it in a strong position to deliver on its aspiration to be the university of opportunity.
Equality Challenge Unit

ECU works to further and support equality and diversity for staff and students in higher education across all four nations of the UK, and in colleges in Scotland.

ECU works closely with colleges and universities to seek to ensure that staff and students are not unfairly excluded, marginalised or disadvantaged because of age, disability, gender identity, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity status, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation or through any combination of these characteristics or other unfair treatment.

Providing a central source of expertise, research, advice and leadership, we support institutions in building a culture that provides equality of both opportunity and outcome, promotes good relations, values the benefits of diversity and provides a model of equality for the wider UK society.

Did you find this publication useful?

Your feedback will help us to improve and develop our publications and resources, and help us to ensure that we produce materials that support your work.

Please take a few minutes to complete our publications feedback survey: [www.surveymonkey.com/s/ecu-publications-feedback](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/ecu-publications-feedback)

You can also email us with your feedback: pubs@ecu.ac.uk